



# Centering cooperatives and cooperative identity within the social and solidarity economy: Views from the Asia-Pacific cooperative apexes and federations

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Cooperatives  
Cooperative identity  
Social and solidarity economy  
Asia-Pacific

## ABSTRACT

The initiatives on Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) have gained momentum in Asia-Pacific and are actively pursued by civil society, taken up in policy discussions, and advocated by international bodies. Cooperatives which constitute the largest base in the SSE have been working on the basis of their identity since the 1830s. Many of the emerging SSE initiatives are close to cooperatives in their governance and management. This paper presents perspectives of cooperative apexes/federations from India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines and South Korea who represent close to 140 million members on the SSE. While the overall outlook of regional cooperatives towards engagement within the SSE is positive, their involvement is limited. The strength of cooperatives lies in their history, presence across countries and sectors, and the Cooperative Identity. However, the perception about cooperatives and their chequered performance is seeing the rise of SSE organisations (SSEOs). Cooperatives as people-centred organisations with a strong foundation in their identity, have the power to steer SSE initiatives in the post-pandemic world. This paper makes the case for centering cooperatives and Cooperative Identity within the SSE but is limited to the views of nine cooperative apexes/federations from seven countries. It could also have benefited from the direct views of non-cooperative SSEOs on cooperatives. Further research can look into how cooperatives and non-cooperative SSEOs can collaborate to strengthen SSE and the opportunities and bottlenecks for people-centred businesses post COVID-19.

## 1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the concept of SSE has spread broadly in many countries in Asia-Pacific and is “being institutionalised rapidly through legal frameworks, public policies and dedicated public administrations”. “SSEOs are guided by principles of cooperation, solidarity, ethics and democratic self-management” “SSEOs can be cooperatives and mutuals, self-help groups (SHGs), community forestry groups, social provisioning organisations or ‘proximity services’, fair trade organisations, associations of informal sector workers, social enterprises, community currency and alternative finance schemes, etc.” (ICA, 2020).

The objective of this paper is to explore with cooperative<sup>1</sup> apexes/federations what needs to be done to uphold and strengthen

cooperatives and Cooperative Identity<sup>2</sup> in Asia-Pacific amidst a rising interest in the SSE. It briefly discusses their awareness of and engagement with the SSE representative bodies. The cooperative movement is a major player in the region’s economy and society, and a main actor within the SSE. Many new SSE initiatives which are emerging under different denominations are close to cooperatives in their governance and management. The paper acknowledges that the common SSE features broadly used by other SSEOs share a substantial part of the core identity of cooperatives.

The image of cooperatives and understanding of the Cooperative Identity varies across countries in Asia-Pacific. In some countries, they are seen more as social organisations and in others as business enterprises. Politicisation of cooperatives has led to compromises in

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<sup>1</sup> A common term ‘cooperatives’ has been used in this paper to represent both cooperatives and mutuals.

<sup>2</sup> In 1995, the International Cooperative Alliance adopted the revised Statement on the Cooperative Identity which contains the definition of a cooperative, the values of cooperatives, and the seven cooperative principles.

autonomy and independence and dented the image. As cooperatives have grown in their size and membership, maintaining member cohesion and a structure that respects the Cooperative Identity has faltered. In the face of increasing competition, cooperatives have become more corporate and given less attention to cooperation. Lack of an enabling environment and increasing regulatory oversight are diminishing interest in cooperatives. These perception about cooperatives and their chequered performance is seeing the rise of other forms of SSEOs. Therefore, it is important for cooperatives to engage in the SSE discourse as it presents a political opportunity to get involved, ensure they are always explicitly mentioned as being part of the SSE, and see that formulation and adoption of SSE policies do not replace the existing legislations and policies aimed at cooperatives.

Cooperatives as people-centred organisations with a strong foundation in their identity, have the power to steer SSE initiatives in the post-pandemic world and pursue goals of an alternative/new economy in the region. The paper makes the case for centering cooperatives and Cooperative Identity within the SSE. It shows how the cooperative movement strongly supports common SSE features, which are not reduced solely to the social impact which all types of enterprises and organisations can produce. It makes the case for the distinctive common features which are SSEO's real source of social innovation and transformative power in the world.

This paper is limited to the views of nine cooperative apexes/federations from seven countries where there are either a multitude of SSE players or representative bodies for SSE. It could have benefited from the direct views of non-cooperative SSEOs on the cooperative sector. To advance the objective of centering cooperatives and Cooperative Identity within the SSE, further research can look into how cooperatives and non-cooperative SSEOs can collaborate to strengthen SSE and the opportunities and bottlenecks for people-centred businesses post COVID-19.

The paper comprises of the following sections: (1) Introduction (2) What is SSE? (3) Emergence of SSE in Asia-Pacific (4) Research questions and methodology (5) Findings and reflections (6) Recommendations (7) Limitations (8) Areas for future research (9) Conclusion.

## 2. What is SSE?

SSE is understood and defined in different ways globally. While the definitions are different in words, they carry a common underlying message that of:

- i voluntary and open membership
- ii democratic governance
- iii autonomous management
- iv entrepreneurial nature
- v reinvestments of surpluses to carry out sustainable development objectives and services of interest to their members and society

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), "SSE refers to organisations and enterprises that are based on principles of solidarity and participation, and that produce goods and services while pursuing both economic and social aims...()...It refers to enterprises and organisations, in particular cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises, which share social and economic objectives, values and operating principles" (ITC ILO, 2010).

The United Nations (UN) in 2013 established a task force through the UNTFSSSE which refers to SSE as "the production of goods and services by a broad range of organisations and enterprises that have explicit social and often environmental objectives. SSEOs are guided by principles of cooperation, solidarity, ethics and democratic self-management" (UNTFSSSE, 2014).

RIPESS (Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy) defines the SSE as "an alternative to capitalism and other authoritarian, state-dominated economic systems. In SSE, ordinary people play an active role in shaping all of the dimensions of human life: economic, social, cultural, political, and environmental. SSE exists in all sectors of the economy production, finance, distribution, exchange, consumption and governance. It also aims to transform the social and economic system that includes public, private and third sectors. SSE is not only about the poor, but strives to overcome inequalities, which includes all classes of society" (RIPESS, 2015).

The Global Social Economy Forum (GSEF), a global SSE network that aims to serve as a hub for sharing visions and experiences through cross-border collaboration and cooperation defines SSE as a "set of socio-economic initiatives from organizations and companies which have specific social goals, all of them oriented by the principles and values of cooperation, solidarity, equity, inclusion, sustainability, participation, democratic self-management, and engagement with the community, strengthening the social weave and promoting social change" (GSEF, 2021c).

## 3. Emergence of SSE in Asia-Pacific

The genesis of SSE is fairly new in Asia-Pacific compared to South America and Europe. The preliminary initiatives were focused on solidarity economy (SE), and as initiatives and actors grew in this space, the term expanded to SSE. The evolution of SE in Asia has been a concerted effort to synergize theory with practice at multiple levels, each informing the other with critical inputs, some of which are listed below:

- i Perspectives on the creation and distribution of income and wealth in SE
- ii Experiences of grassroot organisations/enterprises engaged in promoting cooperation and welfare
- iii Recognition of the contribution of welfare-based organisations/enterprises to the economy
- iv Advocacy on SE that seeks to advance the welfare of people and planet
- v Opportunities for collaboration and networking to widen the SE

In what can be called as the initial phase for SSE initiative in Asia-Pacific, several deliberations were held between 2007–2013 by the Coalition of Socially Responsible Small and Medium Enterprises in Asia (CSRME Asia, which was re-registered as the Asian Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC) in 2013) to arrive at a common understanding of SE (Appendix A). These deliberations focused on the definition of "cooperation", emergence of SE in the West, and "how can cooperation be achieved in building Solidarity Economy in Asia amidst a competitive market environment" (Jayasooria, 2013, p. 55). The early initiatives between 2007 and 2009 were motivated by altruism, ethics and social responsibility which got finetuned between 2011–2013 to accommodate real experiences from the field by grassroot enterprises, some of which did not necessarily harbour anti-profit sentiments according to Dr. Denison Jayasooria, who in the book 'Developments in Solidarity Economy in Asia' noted the following:

"Not all those who participated in CSRSME Asia's advocacy forums were motivated by altruistic, 'triple-bottom-line' ideals of being responsible for protecting the environment, helping the marginalised, and maintaining economic sustainability for the benefit of all. Many of them just wanted a better deal for their own efforts sans the concern about social responsibility. On the other hand, not all those who were motivated by ethical considerations and social responsibility had the knowledge and skills to advance towards the

more ethically-oriented and altruistic paradigm of SE" (Jayasooria, 2013, p. 57).

Careful examination of the practical examples of solidarity based enterprises from the grassroots presented in earlier forums by ASEC (between 2007 and 2009) helped break an abstract and altruistic image of SE. According to Dr. Jayasooria, it refined the focus of ASEC from what SE stood for to what it comprised of:

"Solidarity Economy is an economy with compassion and sympathy; it gives priority to the welfare of the people and not to increasing profits for self-gain" (The Tokyo Statement of Commitment, Second Asia Solidarity Economy Forum, Tokyo, November 2009).

"The supply chain of social enterprises can be recognised as a more explicit socio-economic representation of the Solidarity Economy in Asia." (Consensus arrived at by stakeholders present at the Asian Forum on Value Chain Financing for Agriculture, Manila, the Philippines, 2010).

"A supply chain approach is one that fosters solidarity between all actors. All organisations may not be motivated by the ideals of being responsible for protecting the environment, helping the marginalized, and maintaining economic sustainability for the benefit of all. On the other hand, not all organisations who are motivated by ethical considerations and social responsibility may have the knowledge and skills to advance towards the more ethically oriented and altruistic paradigm of SE. It is hence construed as a supply chain of social enterprises, where one can translate the ethical foundations of SE into a culture of social responsibility, reciprocity and solidarity among the stakeholders and the uninitiated so that they may embrace SE as a way of life" (Jayasooria, 2013).

The consensus of various stakeholders on the theory of supply chain of social enterprises representing SE, led to the development of a Value Chain Development Program (VCDP) by ASEC comprising of the Social Dialogue Toolkit for Supply Chain Development. Organisations that adopted VCDP were encouraged to join ASEC thereafter. Today, ASEC works with 18 national/continental networks in 21 countries in Asia (RIPESS, n.d.; RIPESS, n.d.).

2013 was an important year for developments in SSE initiatives at global level and in Asia for many reasons.

First, RIPESS partnered with ASEC to organise the 5th International Meeting on the Globalisation of Solidarity in the Philippines on the theme of 'Building Social Solidarity Economy as an Alternative Model of Development'. The meeting was attended by 650 participants from 31 countries of all continents (RIPESS, n.d.; RIPESS, n.d.).

Second, Asia became the seat of leadership for RIPESS handed down by North America (Jayasooria, 2013). Dr. Ben Quinones Jr., the then Coordinator of ASEC, became the Executive Coordinator of RIPESS and represented the Inter-Continental Network for the Promotion of SSE at the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) conference in Geneva. One major outcome of the conference was the formation of the UNTFSSSE. RIPESS enjoys the formal observer status at UNTFSSSE since then (RIPESS, n.d.; RIPESS, n.d.).

Third, GSEF, was launched in South Korea following the Seoul Declaration in 2013. The roots of the Seoul Declaration lie in the financial instability in Asian countries brought by the financial crisis of 2008 and European fiscal crisis of 2011 (GSEF, n.d.; GSEF, n.d.). The Seoul Declaration of 2013 was an indigenous initiative by Seoul city and was adopted by eight local governments and nine social economy organisations in the country to promote global solidarity for SE (GSEF, n.d.; GSEF, n.d.). The Seoul Declaration stems from the understanding that "the current challenges facing mankind cannot be resolved by any one country... and that a multilateral international network must lay the foundations of global social economic solidarity that encompasses regional communities and countries". The Secretariat of GSEF is based in Seoul. Post its establishment in 2013, GSEF has had three international events in South Korea (2014), Canada (2016) and Spain (2018) each

resulting in widening of the GSEF network of members and partners, and affirming the global solidarity agenda on SE. RIPESS was one of the members of the organising committee of the GSEF, is a member of GSEF at present and is also present on its Board. GSEF is also a member of RIPESS (RIPESS, n.d.; RIPESS, n.d.).

The popularity of SSE in Asia-Pacific has grown since 2013. Countries in the Oceania-Pacific region including Australia and New Zealand are part of RIPESS Oceania.<sup>3</sup> (RIPESS, n.d.; RIPESS, n.d.).

Carrying forward the work pioneered by GSEF on public policies on SSE, the Ministry of Employment and Labour of the Republic of Korea (MoEL) joined hands with the ILO in 2019 to "enhance the understanding on the SSE in Asia-Pacific and provide technical support to countries in need to develop/strengthen their SSE policy" (ILO, n.d.). The project on 'Strengthening Social and Solidarity Economy Policy in Asia' (2019–2021) by the ILO and MoEL has two phases (ILO, 2020). The first phase which concluded in 2020 comprised of a research study to map SSEOs in six Asian countries- China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, and South Korea. The second phase started at the end of 2020 and includes capacity building of key stakeholders<sup>4</sup> in these six countries for developing and strengthening national SSE policies. ILO's implementation partner in this project is the Korea Social Enterprise Promotion Agency (KoSEA) (ILO, 2020).

The findings of the research study presented by the ILO in collaboration with KoSEA and Seoul National University in an international research conference in Seoul, in 2020 shows that while Asia has a "rich and broad SSEOs sector" the "concept of SSE is relatively new for all Asian countries" (Kim & Miura, 2020a, 2020b). According to Kim and Miura who presented the findings of the research, SSEOs including co-operatives in this study are considered as hybrid organisations "in which all or part of core features of the SSE (social, economic and democratic features) are simultaneously institutionalised". The proceedings from the conference pointed towards policy implications for strengthening SSE in Asia as per which a "macro-level pathway" for these six countries is advocated. This includes "advancing a discourse, awareness and inter-and trans-national collaboration among Asian countries".

Two ICA members from South Korea received a noteworthy mention under best case practices. National Agricultural Cooperative Federation (NACF) was recognised for strengthening their democratic governance by introducing direct elections for union representatives in 2015 (under transforming strategy). iCOOP was recognised as "the most well-known life cooperative in Korea" (under civil society strategy). iCOOP is a consumer cooperative association. However, the term life cooperative was used to show that the "scope of consumer cooperatives is not limited to consumption but pursues cooperation in all aspects of life".

## 4. Research questions and methodology

### 4.1. Statement of research problem and questions

Cooperatives are explicitly recognised as one of the SSEOs by virtue of their historical presence, numbers, success, relevance and Cooperative Identity. However, looking at the growing momentum on SSE in Asia-Pacific and initiatives taken by international agencies mentioned in earlier section, few critical questions arise which this paper attempts to address:

<sup>3</sup> RIPESS Oceania is an informal network of people and organisations involved in the social economy and new economy in Australia, New Zealand and other countries in the region (RIPESS, n.d.; RIPESS, n.d.). New Economy Network for Australia (NENA) which was formally incorporated as a not-for-profit cooperative in 2019 is a member of RIPESS Oceania and focuses on transforming Australia's economic system for ecological health and social justice (NENA, n.d.).

<sup>4</sup> Key stakeholders including government bodies, and workers' and employers' organisations, among others.

**Table 1**

Top four SSEOs in seven countries in Asia-Pacific according to cooperative apexes/federations.

| Cooperative apexes/federations | Country     | Rank 1       | Rank 2             | Rank 3              | Rank 4     |
|--------------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------|
| NCUI                           | India       | NGOs         | Cooperatives       | Social enterprises  | FPOs       |
| INKUR                          | Indonesia   | NGOs         | Social enterprises | Social provisioning | Fair trade |
| JCA and JWCU                   | Japan       | Cooperatives | NGOs               | –                   | –          |
| ANGKASA                        | Malaysia    | Cooperatives | Social enterprises | Group based         | NGOs       |
| NCF                            | Nepal       | Cooperatives | Community forestry | NGOs                | FPOs       |
| FPSDC                          | Philippines | Cooperatives | NGOs               | Social enterprises  | FPOs       |
| iCOOP                          | South Korea | Cooperatives | Social enterprises | Village enterprises | –          |
| KFCCC                          | South Korea | Cooperatives | Social enterprises | NGOs                | NPOs       |

- i What is the understanding of cooperatives in Asia-Pacific, mainly national and sectoral apex organisations for cooperatives, about SSE?
- ii What is the level of involvement of cooperatives in SSE initiatives undertaken by international/national SSE representative/promoting organisations in their countries?
- iii What role can apex organisations for cooperatives, with their rich experience and expertise, play in steering the dialogue and public policies on SSE?
- iv How, according to cooperative apexes/ federations, do non-cooperatives SSEOs perceive the cooperative sector?
- v As other forms of SSEOs, such as social enterprises/start-ups, gain popularity across sectors and among youth, and receive increasing financial and technical support from the government and private sector, how can an enabling environment be created that maintains, protects, and strengthens Cooperative Identity?

## 4.2. Methodology for sampling, data collection and analysis

### 4.2.1. Research method

A qualitative research methodology was adopted for this paper. Data collection was carried out through secondary (literature review) and primary research (survey with cooperative apexes/federations to address the five research questions mentioned above). The tool used to collect primary data was an open-ended survey and the questionnaire was internally designed by the authors of this paper.

### 4.2.2. Sample size and method

The sample size was nine cooperative apexes/federations from seven countries. They were selected on the basis of Purposive Sampling methodology. This allowed the authors to take into account their prior interaction with the sample organisations and experience in the domain of cooperatives to determine which cooperative apexes/federations can effectively respond to the questionnaire. While the sample size of cooperative apexes/federations is small, the number of members/member organisations they represent, makes them representative of cooperatives in their countries. The list of nine cooperative apexes/federations surveyed are as follows<sup>5</sup>:

|    | Country     | Cooperative apex/<br>federation name | Members/ Member organisations                         |
|----|-------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | India       | NCUI                                 | 120 million members                                   |
| 2. | Indonesia   | INKUR                                | 6,800 members   |
| 3. | Japan       | JCA                                  | 17 member organisations                               |
| 4. | Japan       | JWCU                                 | 27 member organisations with<br>13,000 worker members |
| 5. | Korea       | iCOOP                                | 293,000 members                                       |
| 6. | Korea       | KFCCC                                | 1,300 member organisations                            |
| 7. | Malaysia    | ANGKASA                              | 6.06 million  |
| 8. | Nepal       | NCF                                  | 6.3 million   |
| 9. | Philippines | FPSDC                                | 154 member organisations                              |

<sup>5</sup> Data on members/member organisations has been taken from the website of sample cooperative apexes/federations included in this paper.

Further details on the nine cooperative apexes/federations, who are also ICA members, is given in Appendix B.

### 4.2.3. Data collection

The survey form (Appendix C) was sent to the nine selected cooperative apexes/federations via email, and they were given the option to either fill out the form or have an online discussion. The responses collected was a combination, filled in questionnaire and through online discussion. In both cases, the respondent was more than one person, either the Chairperson or the Chief Executive with support from staff. Consent was sought from respondents to use the information collected from them for the purpose of this paper.

### 4.2.4. Data analysis

The responses collected were analysed in line with the research questions to understand the degree of involvement in the SSE environment/dialogue, the reasons for involvement or lack of, understand engagement with SSEOs, the perception they feel SSEOs have about cooperatives, get suggestions to strengthen participation, and ways in which the Cooperative Identity could be leveraged to enhance the role of cooperatives in the SSE. The detailed responses have not been included in the paper. These can be made available upon request. The methodology adopted to analyse data was Textual Analysis and it was conducted manually. No software was used to analyse the data due to the small sample size.

## 5. Findings and reflections

### 5.1. Findings

#### 5.1.1. Understanding of the SSE and SSEOs

All cooperative apexes/federations had heard about the SSE. They acknowledged the need to have an alternative economy that values inclusivity, gender sensitivity, diversity, environmental sustainability, food security, and financial security. In South Korea, SSEOs includes among others, cooperatives and social enterprises. The Korea SSE Network has been working to enact the Framework Act on SSE for ten years and promotes exchanges, policy development, and advocacy. In Malaysia, there is not much talk about the SSE as a holistic concept. Within the SSE, there are cooperatives, mutuals, farmers associations, and community associations. Social enterprises came into the picture in 2012; the government plans to boost them through the Malaysia Global Innovation and Creativity Center (MaGIC). In Indonesia and Philippines, cooperative apexes/federations have engaged with ASEC and participated in their events. In India, discussion around the SSE is mostly in academic forums while in Japan and Nepal it is at a nascent stage.

Six out of eight cooperative apexes/federations (iCOOP, ANGKASA, JCA/JWCU, NCF, FPSDC, and KFCCC) listed cooperatives as the number one SSEO in their country. INKUR and NCUI listed Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as number one. Social enterprises in most countries was listed as number two, followed by NGOs and other organisations (Table 1).

In South Korea, the 2012 Framework Act on Cooperatives provided a boost to cooperatives which saw their numbers increase to 19,000.

**Table 2**

Awareness/engagement of cooperative apexes/federations in Asia-Pacific about/with SSE representative bodies.

| Cooperative apexes/<br>federations | Country        | Awareness about SSE<br>representative body | SSE representative<br>body | Engagement with SSE representative body                          | Type of engagement           |
|------------------------------------|----------------|--|----------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| NCUI                               | India          | No   | NA                         | No   | NA                           |
| INKUR                              | Indonesia      | Yes  | ASEC                       | No   | NA                           |
| ANGKASA                            | Malaysia       | Not as a whole                             | Sometimes                  | No   | NA                           |
| NCF                                | Nepal          | No   | No                         | No   | NA                           |
| JCA/JWCU                           | Japan          | No   | No                         |  | Email, SMS                   |
| FPSDC                              | Philippines    | Yes  | ASEC                       | ASEC   | Meetings, WhatsApp           |
| iCOOP                              | South<br>Korea | Yes  | Korea SSE Network          | National Cooperative Association of Korea<br>under Framework Act | Meetings, media<br>platforms |
| KFCCC                              | South<br>Korea | Yes  | Korea SSE Network          | No   | NA                           |

Unlike the cooperatives under eight Specific Laws (Agriculture, Small and Medium Enterprises, Forestry, Fisheries, Tobacco, Community Credit, Consumer, and Credit Union), the Framework Act on Co-operatives with its simplified requirements opened up businesses/sectors in which cooperatives can be formed (except finance and insurance). In Japan, specific laws on cooperatives helped in the growth of agriculture, consumer and credit cooperatives and the recent passage of the Workers Cooperatives Act (2020) has given an added boost to the sector. In Malaysia, cooperatives are easy to form and have easy access to finance/credit from the government. In Nepal, cooperatives are recognised in the Constitution and dominate in numbers, presence and capital. In Philippines, the Constitution recognises cooperatives as “instruments of equity, social justice and economic development”. In India a conducive government policy has encouraged cooperatives; in particular to meet the credit needs of the farming community.

In many countries, social enterprises are being formed in increasing numbers. In South Korea, they are certified in accordance with the Social Enterprise Promotion Act (2007) and promoted by KoSEA. In Malaysia, social enterprises are promoted through MaGIC; which provides technical support and funding. Social enterprises have traction among youth, and investors are ready to finance and support. In Philippines, the social enterprise is gaining ground with a number of young entrepreneurs leaning towards it. In Indonesia, social enterprises get support through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In India, social enterprises are of relatively recent origin, but they have spread very fast. Many NGOs have transformed into social enterprises by increasingly depending on self-earned income.

There were no clear SSEOs to list under 3 and 4. This was reflective of the diversity of organisations classified under the SSE. NGOs, Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs), village enterprises, social provisioning organisations, fair trade organisations were among the organisations mentioned. One form worth mention here are Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs). In India, FPOs are of recent origin and it is estimated that there are about 6,000 FPOs. In Philippines, FPOs are a vulnerable sector in dire need of change. Despite being a predominantly agricultural country, farmers in Philippines still remain at the bottom of the pyramid.

#### 5.1.2. Involvement in the SSE environment/dialogue

Cooperative apexes/federations from South Korea, Japan, Nepal, Philippines and Indonesia have been involved in the SSE environment/dialogue. However, the engagement has been more at individual cooperative or personal level rather than at an apex/federation level. In South Korea, there is no national apex organisation for cooperatives. At an individual level, sector-based cooperatives, have been involved in the SSE dialogue. The most active solidarity activities can be seen among consumer cooperatives, credit unions and cooperatives under the Framework Act on Cooperatives. In Malaysia, ANGKASA as the apex

organisation has not engaged in the SSE environment/dialogue. They had engaged with social enterprises when they were defined as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). But now, any organisation can be classified as social enterprises as per MaGIC. They are trying to get cooperatives defined under MaGIC's classification to further promote cooperatives. In Philippines, FPSDC is involved in the SSE environment as they believe that cooperatives are the best vehicle to achieve an alternative economy that works. In Nepal, NCF is involved with other organisations in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and on local issues at the community level. In India and Japan, efforts are underway to get the SSE outside the realm of academia and research. In Indonesia, INKUR feels that the SSE efforts is in a closed environment with a handful of organisations/individuals.

#### 5.1.3. Role of cooperatives in the SSE

Cooperative apexes/federations see cooperatives as important actors in the SSE and their role on the basis of 6th and 7th Cooperative Principles (Cooperation among Cooperatives; and Concern for Community, respectively). The cooperative movement is strong in many countries and the basis of cooperatives and their identity, has stood the test of time. In South Korea, the large, sector-based cooperatives have the wherewithal to support smaller cooperatives and SSEOs. Similarly, in Japan, the large sector focused cooperatives are unaware of other SSEOs and do not recognise themselves as one. The recently passed Workers Cooperative Act in Japan can introduce SSEOs into the cooperative movement and help other cooperatives to engage. In Malaysia, ANGKASA sees a role for itself to promote cooperatives as the best SSEO and in bringing cooperatives to play a role in implementation of SDGs. In Nepal, NCF plans to organise a national program with other SSEOs to create a platform. In India, NCUI hopes to help SSE counterparts in terms of technology transfer and to negotiate with the state for a more conducive ecosystem. INKUR in Indonesia feels cooperatives can play a role in promoting democratic enterprise model and disseminating its values. FPSDC sees cooperatives serving as a strong voice for SSEOs in Philippines as the movement can make strong representation with policy makers.

#### 5.1.4. Perception of SSEOs about cooperatives

The views of cooperative apexes/federations on how other SSEOs perceive the cooperative sector varies from country to country. In South Korea, new cooperatives formed under the Framework Act on Co-operatives and smaller SSEOs would like the older and more established large-scale cooperatives to be included under the Framework Act on SSEs. The large-scale cooperatives with their resources and experience are important for the development of smaller cooperatives, SSEOs and communities. In Malaysia, the feeling is that the SSEOs may view cooperatives as rivals given they are established with their own law and



**Table 3**

Awareness/engagement of cooperative apexes/federations in Asia-Pacific about/with global SSE promoting bodies.

| Cooperative apexes/federations (ICA members) | Country     | Awareness about international/global body promoting SSE | SSE promoting body       | Engagement with SSE promoting body | Type of engagement                              |
|--|-------------|---|--------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| NCUI   | India       | Yes   | ILO                      | NA                                 | NA  |
| INKUR  | Indonesia   | Yes   | ASEC                     |                                    | Seminar   |
| ANGKASA                                      | Malaysia    | No  | No                       | NA                                 | NA  |
| NCF  | Nepal       | No  | No                       | NA                                 | NA  |
| JCA/JWCU                                     | Japan       | Yes   | GSEF, Mont-Blanc Meeting | Yes                                | Attended conferences organised by GSEF          |
| FPSDC  | Philippines | Yes   | RIPPEF, GSEF, ASEC       | Yes                                | Attended exchange learnings facilitated by ASEC |
| iCOOP  | South Korea | Yes   | GSEF                     | Yes                                | Attend biennial General Assembly                |
| KFCCC  | South Korea | Yes   | GSEF                     | NA                                 | NA  |

ministry. However, they do see scope for engagement around SDGs. In Japan, NPOs seem to perceive cooperatives not as SSEOs but as business enterprises. In Nepal, the NGOs and community forestry groups are positive towards cooperatives. At local level, they work together on programs and take up issues with the local government. In Philippines, SSEOs see cooperatives as a complementary partner that uphold similar objectives and values. At times, some of the flaws in the way co-operatives conduct their businesses (decision making takes time, consensus, mismanaged cooperatives, etc.) serves as red flags for them. In Indonesia, cooperatives are seen as an important SSEO. However, because existing SSEOs are more driven by NGOs, their orientation has not encouraged wider role for cooperatives. In India, many of the community based organisations (SHGs), social enterprises and even FPOs prefer to have financial transactions with cooperatives.

#### 5.1.5. Engaging with SSE promoting organisations

The absence of representative platform for SSEOs in a country was seen as a reason for limited engagement among cooperatives and other SSEOs. South Korea was an exception with the Korea SSE Network providing a platform for SSEOs to meet, plan and advocate. In Indonesia and Philippines, ASEC provided a platform; but the interaction was more with individual cooperatives rather than with apexes. There was general awareness of regional bodies such as ASEC and GSEF working in a few countries (Tables 2 and 3).

#### 5.1.6. Views on cooperative identity within the SSE

**5.1.6.1. Upholding the Cooperative Identity amidst rising interest in the SSE and SSEOs.** The power of cooperatives comes from the Cooperative Identity and is the common thread that binds cooperatives. The same cannot be said for the multitude of other SSEOs. Cooperatives need to capitalise on the Cooperative Identity and use it to continue positioning cooperatives as a key actor in the SSE. JCA and KFCCC felt that co-operatives tend to be member centric and this limits their scope in the eyes of others. The 7th Cooperative Principle provides for cooperatives to act in the interests of society, and this needs to be expanded. According to NCUI, most social enterprises in India are either non-profit or incorporated as private limited companies – in both cases they are not primarily member driven. ANGKASA and iCOOP said that their governments, both at the national and local level, are increasing support to other SSEOs by enabling their formation (e.g., ease of registration and number of persons required to set up other SSEOs) and making it easy to raise resources (from the government and private sector). Cooperatives, therefore, need to ensure they are provided level playing field (in order to raise resources and form new age cooperatives) and also reach out to include others in their fold.

**5.1.6.2. Leveraging the statement of cooperative identity.** Society is seeing the negative impact of widening inequality, individualism over collaboration, unsustainable consumerism, and increasing conflict. Cooperatives address not only economic issues but also many of the problems that afflict society. This is done by building bottom-up organisations, democratising participation, promoting collaboration and creating wealth of members. Long before the concept of SSE was defined, the cooperative sector had already been founded by its principles and values. Co-operatives are clearly distinguished from profit-seeking businesses and they solve problems without relying on external support. The Statement of Cooperative Identity should be projected as an instrument of economic advantage as it is not just about maintaining the cooperative character, but also about a strategy to achieve business success. The merits of Cooperative Identity with its values and principles needs to be actively spread to the public, governments (national and local), and SSEOs. Cooperation among cooperatives needs to be projected as effective means to achieve business sustainability and enhanced confidence to counter neo-liberal markets.

**5.1.6.3. Bringing the potential of Cooperative Identity into full play.** FPSDC felt that cooperatives must take into account the importance of “future-proofing”. Since most of the concepts within the SSE are already present in the cooperative model, the cooperative sector must be mindful that it does not compromise the proven and tested principles. For NCUI, the crisis of pandemic has underlined the significance of “acting locally and supporting local economy and local community”. Cooperatives are the ideal instruments to get formed locally, identify the local needs, use local resources and help local communities. For INKUR, it is through economic democratisation in all sectors. For ANGKASA, to bring the potential of Cooperative Identity into full play, cooperatives need to invest in themselves. Currently, many cooperatives rely on government funding. They need to understand and implement values like self-help, etc. Similarly, for iCOOP, the power of cooperatives is derived from self-help and cooperation. Cooperatives can perform relationship-based services from a public perspective. They can play a major role in areas such as social care that takes care of each other in crisis situations and long-term medical services that for-profit businesses would not consider. For JCA/JWCU, cooperatives should focus on the 7th Cooperative Principle and open themselves more widely and deeply to other civil society movements including the SSE, trade union movements, etc. There is need to rethink the essential nature of our identity as “cooperatives”.

**5.1.6.4. Formulation and adoption of SSE policies, not at the expense of existing legislation and policies for cooperatives.** Cooperative apexes/federations were in agreement with ICA's position on the SSE that the

formulation and adoption of SSE policies should not replace the existing legislation and policies for cooperatives at the national level. In Japan, it was strongly expressed that cooperatives should maintain legal and political advantages, which predecessors gained through their bitter struggles, while urging the governments to adopt new policies for the SSE. The Workers Cooperative Act enacted recently defines worker cooperatives as not only a cooperative but also as an NPO. In South Korea, the Framework Act on Cooperatives recognises the importance of cooperatives and gives the space for new cooperatives. In Malaysia, the government could ensure the environment is more cooperative business friendly and provide flexibility when it comes to forming cooperatives, in financing and procurement. Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) can get soft loans; but cooperatives cannot. Also, in order to enter certain type of businesses (e.g., health care and tourism), cooperatives need to first form a subsidiary company. In Nepal, the need was for congruence in Cooperatives Act (2017) across the three levels of government (local, provincial and central) and in ensuring the 47 laws/acts were amended to make them cooperative friendly. In India, with the states largely withdrawing from direct participation in market and leaving it to the private sector, there is an urgent need for organisations that meet the economic needs of those who are on the periphery. In the light of this, governments should allow cooperatives to enter all their chosen area of activities, provide a level playing field in terms of legislations and resource availability. In Philippines, cooperatives continue to be vigilant while engaging in advocacy for a more conducive policy environment for the growth and improvement of the cooperative movement. According to INKUR, ICA must actively keep members in the loop on SSE related developments and provide guidance.

**5.1.6.5. Government's role in strengthening cooperatives and the Cooperative Identity.** The major hindrance is the lack of understanding of cooperatives among government ministries and departments. Officials are familiar with traditional forms of company and not very aware of the unique characteristics of cooperatives. They misunderstand cooperatives and subject them to regulation which are unsuitable or provide types of support which undermine the principles of self-help. In many developing countries, governments do not necessarily play a positive role. For e.g., in the long history of cooperatives in Indonesia, the government has acted as both creator and destroyer.

Politicians and government functionaries need to understand and recognise that cooperatives and other SSEOs can provide services in fields that conventional companies cannot reach. According to KFCOC, there is need for policies to promote the SSE ecosystem, so that social economic actors can establish themselves in the market; and the need to create an institutional framework for SSEOs to cooperate and unite with each other. It is necessary for cooperatives to spend time educating government officials, dialoguing with policy makers, and advocating with politicians to abide by recommendations made by the ILO and the ICA Asia-Pacific Ministers' Conferences.

## 5.2. Reflections

The reflections drawn from cooperative apexes/federations on the status of SSE are as follows:

- i The network of SSE promoting organisations in the region is expanding as is their interaction with local stakeholders including local cooperatives, SSEOs, CSOs, academia and governments. The engagement with cooperatives is not uniform across countries. It is more active in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and South Korea when compared to India, Japan and Nepal. It may or may not be through and in the knowledge of cooperative apexes/federations.

- ii In some of these countries, the environment for social enterprises is becoming increasingly favourable even though cooperatives continue to be present in large numbers. The favourable environment for social enterprises includes dedicated agencies/programmes promoting social enterprises/entrepreneurship. For e.g., MaGIC in Malaysia and KoSEA in South Korea.
- iii Cooperatives don't seem to be recognised fully for their distinct Cooperative Identity by government, policymakers, academia and other SSEOs. This could be because the Cooperative Identity in its entirety may not be promoted and seen in practice. Public perception about cooperatives could be that they are just another collective business enterprise (or an NPO in some cases). There is lack of understanding and misconception about cooperatives among government ministries and departments. Officials are familiar with traditional forms of company and not very aware of the unique characteristics of cooperatives. The private sector looks at some of the ways in which cooperatives conduct their businesses (decision making takes time, voting rights, and consensus, etc.) as slow and inefficient. Youth are attracted to the newer models of SSEOs over cooperatives as they see these better supported and easier to start.
- iv The negative perceptions or issues regarding chequered performance of cooperatives were: 1) The dual nature of cooperatives as economic enterprises and as social organisations not very clear (India, Nepal); 2) Weak internal governance and adherence to values and principles (Philippines); 3) Politicisation and excessive role of the government in cooperative management may compromise its autonomy and independence (Malaysia, Indonesia); 4) Enabling legal environment and policy support needed for visibility and sustainable growth of the cooperative movement (South Korea); and 5) As cooperatives have grown in their size and membership, maintaining member cohesion and a structure that respects the cooperative identity has faltered. In the face of increasing competition, cooperatives have become more corporate and give less attention to cooperation (Japan).
- v The growing discussion on SSE in Asia-Pacific presents an opportunity to make a strong case for cooperative model and to advocate the model among relevant stakeholders at the national and regional levels. The strength of cooperative model lies in: 1) the Cooperative Identity which allows cooperatives to address immediate needs of the people while creating space for increased socio-economic equality and equity among them; and 2) its ability to dextrously cut across sectors, age-groups, and different social identities.
- vi Cooperative apexes/federations from India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines and South Korea have positive views on the SSE and are interested in promoting it.

## 6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to strengthen the role of cooperatives in the SSE environment/dialogue in Asia-Pacific:

### 6.1. Engagement of cooperative apexes/federations

Cooperative apexes/federations could undertake the following proactive measures:

- i Establish a formal position on the SSE in their capacity as national/sectoral representative organisation.
- ii Build the understanding of local cooperatives on the SSE and SSEOs.
- iii Engage with international/national SSE promoting organisations (E.g., ILO, RIPESS and its regional chapters for Asia and Oceania, GSEF, etc.)

- iv Engage with the government/ministries to build/enhance the understanding of and need for cooperative model of business and advocate for favourable policies and legislations that helps strengthen the enabling environment.

## 6.2. Opportunity to leverage growing interest towards people-centred businesses

The economic setbacks accrued from the global financial crisis of 2008 and COVID-19 pandemic show the need for resilient, adaptable and people-centred models of businesses. Worker buyouts of failing industries have pointed to the importance of stakeholder owned enterprises. The recent passage of the Workers Cooperative Act in Japan shows the need for encouraging democratically owned structures which place people at the centre. Sectors/industries that require a people-centred approach such as healthcare and education have shown the need to have need-based, low-cost, reliable and efficient solutions. National cooperative apexes/federations and cooperative departments could leverage the growing interest towards people-owned/centred businesses to promote the cooperative model of business in new sectors/industries.

## 6.3. Share learnings and support other SSEOs

In many countries, the large, well-resourced and experienced cooperatives could support the development of smaller cooperatives and SSEOs. In South Korea, new cooperatives formed under the Framework Act on Cooperatives and smaller SSEOs see this as an important role for established cooperatives. In India, a number of SHGs have been promoted and supported by cooperatives. Initiative could be taken by cooperative apexes/federations to participate, voice opinion and share best practices and use-case models for SSEOs to emulate.

## 6.4. Joint efforts by SSEOs

Cooperatives and other SSEOs could collaborate to increase the impact of the SSE in their countries. This collaboration could be in the form of financial, technical and educational support. Sector-based cooperation among SSEOs would be helpful in completing value-chains where SSEOs individually may face difficulties. Providing financial support such as loans, low-cost credit and marketing support to ensure stable growth in the early stage of business of SSEOs would help in the creation of credible forward and backward market linkages in primary sectors. Cooperative apexes/federations could exercise the 5th Cooperative Principle (Education, Training and Research) to widen the scope, visibility and impact of the SSE.

## 6.5. Play the role of a centripetal institution to represent and promote the SSE

The ILO-KoSEA-Seoul National University conference in 2020 recommended strengthening centripetal institution among SSEOs to promote multiple aspects of the SSE and public awareness. A centripetal institution would be an "SSEO which is representative organisation to "raise, diffuse and deepen the public awareness and understanding of the SSE and its embedded core values" (Kim & Miura, 2020a, 2020b).

Cooperative apexes/federations with rich experience and well-established network capital, could play the role of a centripetal institution that represent and promote the SSE.

## 6.6. Advocate with the government to promote the SSE as an emerging alternative economic paradigm in Asia-Pacific

Cooperative apexes/federations could collaborate with international/national SSE promoting organisations and advocate with the government for enhanced recognition and inclusion of SSEOs in formal as well as informal economy, national economic statistics, national development plans and budgets, and national/sectoral legislations. They could also ensure that cooperatives are always explicitly mentioned as being part of the SSE, and see that formulation and adoption of the SSE policies do not replace the existing legislations and policies aimed at cooperatives.

## 6.7. Maximize ICA's transnational network of cooperatives to strengthen the SSE in Asia-Pacific

ICA's 110 members from 32 countries in Asia-Pacific make a large transnational network of cooperatives which cuts across diverse sectors including agriculture, credit and banking, consumer, education, fisheries, forestry, housing, and insurance. International SSE promoting organisations could work with this network to reach out to the millions of primary/secondary cooperatives across countries and sectors who constitute a significant part of the SSE. ICA members across countries and sectors could also make use of this network and share their experiences and best case practices for active promotion of the SSEs.

## 7. Limitations

The limitations of the study are as follows:

**Sample size:** The number of countries and cooperative apexes/federations targeted for the study was small. They were selected on the basis of Purposive Sampling methodology, allowing the authors' prior interaction and experience in the domain of cooperatives to determine which cooperative apexes/federations could effectively respond to the survey. The countries targeted were those where either a multitude of SSE players exist or there were representative bodies for SSE and cooperative apexes/federations would have had the opportunity to engage.

**Data collection:** The survey respondent was more than one person, either the Chairperson or the Chief Executive with support from staff. In some cases, the views/remarks made by respondents were in individual capacity and did not necessarily represent official views/perspective of the organisation.

**Scope of the study:** The paper could have benefited from the direct views of non-cooperative SSEOs on the cooperative sector to understand the reasons why they don't opt for cooperative form of business and their lack of engagement with cooperative apexes/federations. The authors are practitioners in the field of cooperatives and the study was directed at addressing five broad research questions mentioned under section 4 (a) to provide action-oriented recommendations to center cooperatives and Cooperative Identity within the SSE.

## 8. Areas for future research

To advance the objective of centering cooperatives and cooperative identity within the SSE, some of the areas where further work can be pursued are collaboration between cooperatives and non-cooperative SSEOs to strengthen SSE; opportunities and bottlenecks for people-centred businesses post COVID-19; and document case studies and best practices on the role and contribution of cooperatives to the SSE.



## 9. Conclusion

SSE initiatives have gained momentum in Asia-Pacific and are actively pursued by civil society, taken up in policy discussions, and advocated by international bodies. This paper provides an overview of SSE initiatives at the regional level and explores what needs to be done to uphold and strengthen cooperatives and the Cooperative Identity amidst a rising interest in the SSE. The perspective of nine cooperative apexes/federations from India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines and South Korea, where SSE initiatives are more prominent, was gathered and recommendations were provided for strengthening the SSE in the region.

The cooperative movement is a major player in the region's economy and society, and a main actor within the SSE. Many new SSE initiatives which are emerging under different denominations are close to cooperatives in their governance and management. The paper acknowledges that the common SSE features broadly used by other SSEOs and enshrined in many legal frameworks share a substantial part of the core identity of cooperatives.

Amidst the rise of other forms of SSEOs, it is important for cooperatives to engage in the SSE discourse. The perception about cooperatives and their chequered performance in many countries is seeing the rise of other forms of SSEOs. This could be because the Cooperative Identity in its entirety may not be promoted and seen in practice. Cooperatives could be considered as just another collective business enterprise (or an NPO in some cases) which seems affect the public perception about cooperatives. It is important for cooperatives to engage in the SSE discourse as it presents a political opportunity to get involved, ensure they are always explicitly mentioned as being part of the SSE, and see that formulation and adoption of the SSE policies do not replace the existing legislation and policies aimed at cooperatives.

Cooperative apexes/federations in Asia-Pacific see the growing SSE environment in positive light and are willing to engage in the SSE environment/dialogue in order to promote it. Through this paper, the case is made that while it is important for cooperatives to play an active role in the growing SSE discourse/environment in the region it is also important to place the Cooperative Identity at the centre of SSE discussions and advocacy. Cooperatives as people-centred organisations with strong foundation in their identity, have the power to steer SSE initiatives in the post-pandemic world and pursue goals of an alternative/new economy in the region. The strength of cooperative model lies in: 1) the Cooperative Identity which allows cooperatives to address immediate needs of the people while creating space for increased socio-economic equality and equity among them; and 2) its ability to dexterously cut across sectors, age-groups, and different social identities.

The paper makes the case for centering cooperatives and Cooperative Identity within the SSE. It shows how the cooperative movement strongly supports common SSE features, which are not reduced solely to the social impact which all types of enterprises and organisations can produce. It

makes the case for the distinctive common features which are SSEO's real source of social innovation and transformative power in the world, particularly in the face of the unprecedented global crises. Cooperatives and international/national SSE promoting organisations need to collaborate not only to advocate for public policies on the SSE but also push for recognition and inclusion of cooperatives and SSEOs in the formal as well as informal economy, national economic statistics, national development plans and budgets, and national/sectoral legislations. They need to jointly promote the SSE by laying emphasis on people-centred businesses driven by principles and values, and create sustainable and responsible value-chains in the economy. There is need to promote the SSE at the regional level by leveraging ICA's transnational network of cooperatives that spans 32 countries and diverse sectors to widen the scope, visibility and impact of the SSE in Asia-Pacific.

## Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors report no declarations of interest.

## Acknowledgements

This paper has been possible with the support of cooperative apexes/federations in Asia-Pacific who are actively promoting the work of cooperatives, a key actor within the SSE. We would like to acknowledge the inputs provided by Ms. Christie Rowena C. Plantilla, Federation of Peoples' Sustainable Development Cooperative (FPSDC), Philippines; Mr. Dae-Hoon Kim, iCOOP, South Korea; Mr. Osamu Nakano, Japan Cooperative Alliance (JCA) and Japanese Workers' Cooperative Union (JWCU), Japan; Mr. Daewoong Jung, Korean Federation of Community Credit Cooperatives (KFCCC), South Korea; Mr. Nasir Khan Yahaya, Malaysian National Cooperative Movement (ANGKASA), Malaysia; Mr. N. Satyanarayana, National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), India; Mr. Suroto, National Federation of People-based Cooperative Enterprises (INKUR), Indonesia; and Mr. Min Raj Kadel, the National Cooperative Federation (NCF), Nepal. Their inputs gave us better insight into the relationship, challenges, and ways to help enhance visibility of cooperatives within the SSE. The paper falls within the scope of the ICA-European Union (EU) partnership on 'Cooperatives in Development: People-Centred Businesses in Action (#coops4dev project)', co-funded by the EU as part of its commitment to support Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) active in development. We thank the EU for supporting this research and accompanying initiatives. We would also like to acknowledge the ICA Domus Trust for providing its facilities and resources in preparing this paper.

## Appendix A. Evolution of the Social Economy in Asia

Fig. A1<sup>6</sup> shows the evolution of SE in Asia as promoted by ASEC. These forums were important avenues for stimulating research, conduct trainings, carry out discussions, undertake advocacy, promote networking and collaboration between different socio-economic stakeholder groups interested and/or involved in SE. Discussions at the regional level on SE took place in 2007 for the first time. The CSRME Asia is recognised as the first organisation to initiate a regional level dialogue between practitioners and advocates on SE in Asia (Quinones, 2015). The first Asia Solidarity Economy Forum organised by CSRME Asia in Philippines in 2007 brought together 700 participants from 26 countries, kickstarting a series of roundtable discussions, workshops, and networking on SE in many Asian countries such as India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand (Quinones, 2015). CSRME Asia which was re-registered as ASEC in 2013, has been one of the main organised networks in the region to organise a chain of Asian Solidarity Economy Forums in East Asia, South-East Asia and South Asia from 2007 onwards (Quinones, 2015). The earlier forums were held in close collaboration with existing networks such as the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO), Pacific Asia Resource Centre

<sup>6</sup> The Fig. A1 is created by authors of this paper based on qualitative research on SE.

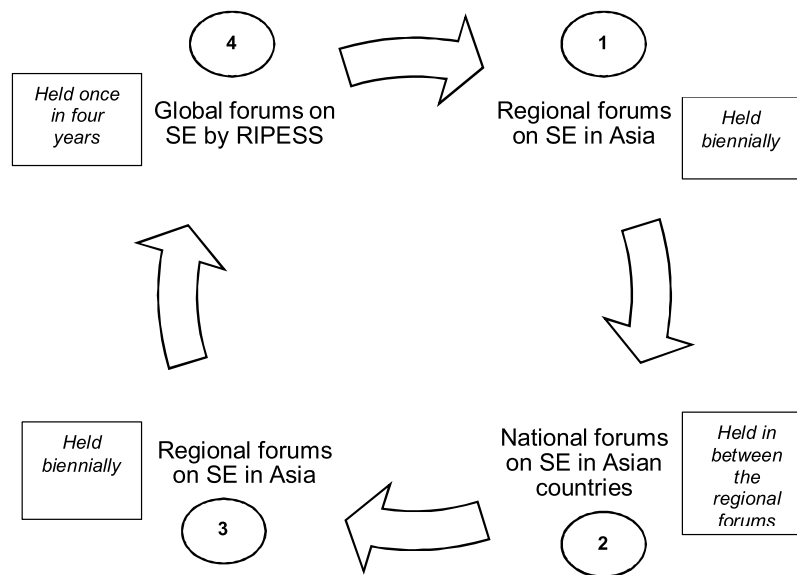


Fig. A1. Evolution of SE in Asia as promoted by ASEC.

Japan, Bina Swadaya Indonesia and others, each making a significant contribution to advance the understanding, knowledge and commitment on SE (Jayasooria, 2013).

## Appendix B. Details of nine cooperative apexes/federations

### 1 Federation of Peoples' Sustainable Development Cooperative (FPSDC), Philippines

FPSDC is a secondary type cooperative with membership composed of NGOs, peoples' organisations, and co-operatives nationwide that provide financial and non-financial services to empower marginalised sectors, ensuring the development of its stakeholders (people), and preservation of the environment while ensuring economic viability in the ultimate hope of promoting harmonious co-existence within and among communities. FPSDC has forged partnerships beyond borrower-creditor relationships to also support member organisations to become more efficient and effective in their operations through technical assistance, trainings, coaching, and facilitating strategic partnerships with other organisations and their initiatives. FPSDC also includes members to support advocacy on sustainable agriculture and engage in activities that take into consideration sustainable development – people, planet, prosperity and peace.

### 2 iCOOP, South Korea

iCOOP Solidarity of Consumer Cooperatives is the organization established by consumers and producers who pursues 'safe food system' being concerned about environment and Korean agriculture. Extension of 'Ethic Consumption' leads to promote, to increase 'Ethic Production' for oneself, neighborhoods and the globe. On the basis of business and activities for the goal mentioned above, we desire such a society in where urban consumers and rural producers are able to coexist together. iCOOP Korea develops the following businesses for popularization of consumer cooperative movement: Building safe foods system in local societies; Natural/Dream Foods and Bakery outlets; Delivery business foods for School Meal; Building of production infrastructure – cluster of organic foods production.

### 3 Japan Cooperative Alliance (JCA)

Collaborations among Japanese Cooperatives have been undertaken through the Japan Joint Committee of Cooperatives (JJC, established in 1956). In order to further promote those collaborations, the JJC was positively reorganized into the Japan Cooperative Alliance (JCA) with the launch on April 1, 2018. The main functions of JCA are to (1) Promote inter-co-operative collaborations (2) Make policy proposals; engage in public relations activities and (3) Provide education and conduct research. The newly formed alliance encourages collaborative efforts among local co-operatives, make policy recommendations and strive to solve social problems through the promotion of the spirit of solidarity and cooperation among co-operatives nationwide. JCA consolidates the power of Japanese co-operatives with 65 million members nationwide to solve social issues, such as revitalizing the community, providing jobs for the elderly and creating child-friendly society.

#### 4 Japanese Workers' Cooperative Union (JWCU)

JWCU represents and unites worker cooperatives throughout Japan, embracing 10,900 worker-members. JWCU consists of 69 member organizations, primarily worker cooperatives, older persons' cooperatives and affiliated organizations. Each worker cooperative is owned and democratically controlled by the worker-members and dedicated to creating jobs to promote the well-being of communities through associated work of the members and community residents. In addition to contributing to the community through the businesses, JWCU tries to strengthen its bonds to the community by performing activities for social solidarity. These include organizing seminars and symposia on a broad range of human and social issues.

#### 5 Korean Federation of Community Credit Cooperatives (KFCCC), South Korea

KFCCC was built by Community Credit Cooperative law for the sound development of the Community Credit Cooperatives and the promotion of mutual growth. The main business and works are as follows: Supervision and examination of CC, Management advice, credit and cooperative insurance business, Education of KFCCC and CC employees, Research, public relation and international cooperation. Various management consultancies of KFCCC have been the backbone of the implementation for cooperative businesses.

#### 6 Malaysian National Cooperative Movement (ANGKASA), Malaysia

Angkatan Koperasi Kebangsaan Malaysia Berhad or ANGKASA, literally means Space, perhaps depicting the unlimited possibilities of cooperation. This national apex cooperative of Malaysia is governed by a representative system. The National Assembly which is held annually approves the ANGKASA annual budget, makes policies and approves any amendments or changes to ANGKASA by-laws. As the apex organization for cooperatives in Malaysia, ANGKASA plays an important role in guiding the cooperative movement in Malaysia, with the following specific objectives: To unify Malaysian cooperatives and to champion the aspirations and rights of the movement; to represent the cooperative movement at national and international level; to propagate cooperative concepts and principles amongst cooperators and Malaysians in general through educational programmes; and to assist the development of member cooperatives.

#### 7 National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI), India

NCUI is the apex organisation representing the entire cooperative movement in the country. It was established in 1929 as All India Cooperative Institutes Association and was re-organised as Indian Cooperative Union through the merger of Indian Provincial Cooperative Banks' Association with All India Cooperative Institutes Association and later in 1961 as National Cooperative Union of India. The National Cooperative Union of India has travelled a long way since then to now emerged as the sole representative of the Cooperative movement in the country. Being the apex organisation of the Indian cooperative movement in the country, the NCUI is committed to lend dynamism and vibrancy to the cooperative sector in the twenty first century.

#### 8 National Federation of People-based Cooperative Enterprises (INKUR), Indonesia

INKUR is a national cooperative federation in Indonesia whose members are cooperatives from different sectors that are genuinely community-based, people-based, and member-driven. It provides investment management services, education, training and Assistance, system support capacity, joint buying, and export-import to members' primary cooperatives to ensure standardized sustainability.

#### 9 National Cooperative Federation (NCF), Nepal

The National Cooperative Federation of Nepal (NCF) is the apex body of cooperatives of all types and levels in Nepal. NCF was founded on June 20, 1993 based on the universally accepted cooperative values and principles. It functions as a bridge between cooperatives and the government at the national and international levels and leads the cooperative movement of Nepal. NCF is the leading advocate for the cooperative movement at the national policy level. In coordination with cooperative organizations at different levels, NCF was able to endorse the cooperative sector as the third pillar of the economic development in the Constitution of Nepal 2015. After the state restructuring, a three-level government is envisaged which consists of federal, provincial and local level governments. To adapt to the new federal structure, the Cooperative Act 2017 was promulgated and came into effect. NCF has been instrumental to provide tangible feedback regarding national cooperative policies and programs to strengthen cooperatives and to promote an inclusive, equitable and sustainable development of the country.

### **Appendix C. Survey form**

| Section 1: Understanding of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and SSE Organisations (SSEOs) |  |
|---|--|
| Q No  | Questions  |
| 1.  | Have you heard about SSE?  |
| Response  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> No  |
| 2.  | If yes, in what context?   |
| Response  |  |
| 3.  | If no, (1) if the survey is being conducted over a call, the interviewer will explain the concept of SSE to the respondent and share examples of SSE organisations from the respondent's country and/or (2) skip to the next question (Q. 4) |
| Response  |  |
| 4.  | What do you think of the state of SSE in your country?   |
| Response  |  |
| 5.  | From the list given below, which are the SSE organisations present in your country? Tick mark <input type="checkbox"/> the box where applicable.   |
|   | Association of informal workers <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|   | Community forestry groups <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|   | Cooperatives <input type="checkbox"/>  |
|   | Community based organisations <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|   | Farmer producer organisations <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|   | Fair trade organisations <input type="checkbox"/>  |
|   | Mutual associations <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|   | NGOs <input type="checkbox"/>  |
|   | NPOs <input type="checkbox"/>  |
|   | Social enterprises <input type="checkbox"/>  |
|   | Social Provisioning <input type="checkbox"/>   |

|          |   |  |
|----------|---|--|
|          | Other   | <input type="checkbox"/><br>(Please mention other organisations in the box, if applicable) |
|          |   |  |
| 6.       | Which of the four SSE organisations from the above list are more popular compared to others in your country?                            |  |
| Response |   |  |
| 7.       | What would be the reason for these organisations ( <i>organisations mentioned in response to Q. 6</i> ) to be more popular over others? |  |
|          | SSE organisation 1: ( <i>please mention the type of organisation here</i> ):  |  |
|          |   |  |
|          | Reason: ( <i>please mention your reason in the box</i> )  |  |
|          | SSE organisation 2: ( <i>please mention the type of organisation here</i> ):  |  |
|          |   |  |
|          | Reason: ( <i>please mention your reason in the box</i> )  |  |
|          | SSE organisation 3: ( <i>please mention the type of organisation here</i> ):  |  |
|          |   |  |
|          | Reason: ( <i>please mention your reason in the box</i> )  |  |
|          | SSE organisation 4: ( <i>please mention the type of organisation here</i> ):  |  |
|          | Reason: ( <i>please mention your reason in the box</i> )  |  |
|          |   |  |
| 8.       | If cooperatives are not part of the list of four popular organisations, what are the reasons?   |  |
| Response |   |  |



| Section 2: Assessing the interest of cooperatives in SSE |   |
|--|---|
| Q. No  | Questions   |
| 1.   | Cooperatives in many countries are considered as one of the main organisations in SSE.<br>Are you involved in the SSE environment/dialogue in your country? |
| Response   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/> No   |
| 2.   | If yes, can you share more details?   |
| Response   |   |
| 3.   | If no, can you share the reasons for not being involved?  |
| Response   |   |
| 4.   | What role do you think cooperatives can play within SSE environment/dialogue in your country?   |
| Response   |   |
| 5.   | What are your views on the current level of engagement between cooperatives and other SSE organisations in your country?                                    |
| Response   |   |
| 6.   | What would be your suggestion to improve/strengthen the engagement between cooperatives and other SSE organisations?  |
| Response   |   |
| 7.   | Will you be willing to engage in order to improve/strengthen the engagement between cooperatives and other SSE organisations?                               |
| Response   |   |

### Section 3 Assessing engagement of SSE organisations with cooperatives.

| Q. No    | Questions  |
|----------|--|
| 1.       | What is the perception of SSE organisations about cooperatives in your country? (SSE organisations other than cooperatives) (interviewer to give examples of SSE organisations such as farmer producer organisations, social enterprises, etc.)  |
| Response |  |
| 2.       | Is there any body representing SSE and/or SSE organisations in your country? If yes, can you tell us its/their name(s)?  |
| Response |  |
| 3.       | Do you have any engagement with the body representing SSE and/or SSE organisations? Are you aware of any engagement between the representing body for SSE (SSE representing body mentioned in response to Q.2) and cooperatives in your country? |
| Response |  |
| 4.       | If yes, can you tell us more about this engagement?  |
| Response |  |
| 5.       | Are you part of any SSE information/knowledge-sharing network (email group, social media, etc.)?   |
| Response |  |
| 6.       | If yes, which ones?  |
| Response |  |
| 7.       | Are you aware of international organisations which are promoting SSE and/or SSE organisations in your country?   |
| Response |  |
| 8.       | If yes, can you tell us its/their name(s)?   |
| Response |  |
| 9.       | Have you engaged/participated in any event/dialogue organised by the above organisations?  |
| Response |  |
| 10.      | If yes, can you share more details?  |
| Response |  |

### Section 4 Views on Cooperative Identity within SSE.

| Q. No    | Questions   |
|----------|---|
| 1.       | With the rising interest in SSE and SSE organisations, what should be done to uphold/strengthen Cooperative Identity?   |
| Response |   |
| 2.       | How can cooperatives use the Statement of Cooperative Identity to their advantage in the context of emerging SSE?   |
| Response |   |
| 3.       | With the world undergoing dramatic changes and challenges, how do we bring the potential of Cooperative Identity into full play?  |
| Response |   |
| 4.       | ICA's position paper on SSE emphasises that the formulation and adoption of SSE policies should not replace the existing legislation and policies for cooperatives at the national level.<br>What needs to be done to make national legislations and policies conducive for cooperatives in light of current challenges and emerging needs? |
| Response |   |
| 5.       | How can Governments and ministries/departments responsible for cooperatives help in strengthening cooperatives and the Cooperative Identity?  |
| Response |   |

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