



ICA-ACFSMC Regional Workshop on “Re-work, Re-imagine and Re-shape: Advancing Women CEOs in Co-operatives”

April 17 to 19, 2018, Guiyang, Guizhou Province, China

Time will not solve the gender leadership gap; action will¹

Women have made significant progress in graduation rates in the field of business administration and law; natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, health and welfare (though the numbers need to improve in engineering, manufacturing and construction)² and the gender gap in participation between men and women in the workforce is narrowing, even though participation in the workforce for women is 49.6% compared to men at 76.1%.³ But, when it comes to leadership, the numbers are stark. According to the 2016 Grant Thornton Report⁴, women held under a quarter (24%) of senior roles across the world in 2016—an increase of only 3% from 2011; one-third (33%) of global businesses had no women in senior management roles, a number which has not changed since 2011. Men may be still viewed as default business leaders, affirming the “think-manager-think-male” mindset. The percentage of women in senior roles is slowly growing worldwide; but, at this rate parity won’t be reached for decades. Data from UN Women shows that less than 1/3 of senior and middle management level positions are held by women⁵. Across the spectrum of literature, there is overwhelming evidence of a large presence of women getting ‘stuck’ at the middle management level, with no means or support to move higher up.⁶

Are Co-operatives Different?

The 2015 ICA Study, *Advancing gender equality: The Co-operative Way* showed that within the co-operative movement, there has been a growing attention to gender issues, a progression of women into leadership roles, albeit slow, and an increase in the number of women-owned co-operatives. However, even in co-operatives, the asymmetry in leadership position between men and women exists. Women comprise over 50% of membership and over 50% of the clientele. Almost 75% of survey respondents stated that among the co-operatives with which they are most familiar, women comprise less than 50% of the co-operative board. A quarter of those same respondents reported that women occupy less than 10% of the board. As these figures suggest, women are among the most involved in and served by co-operative organizations, but among the least likely to hold high-ranking and decision-making roles.

Status in the Asia-Pacific region

ICA-AP currently has 98 members in 30 countries; of these members, only 10 have a woman Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The *Gender is more than a Statistic*, sex-disaggregated data study by ICA-AP (2015) in which 28 ICA members (various sectors and levels of businesses) from 19 countries responded,

¹ Barriers and Bias: The Status of Women in Leadership

² Education at a Glance 2017. OECD INDICATORS

³ <http://www.oecdilibrary.org/docserver/download/9617041e.pdf?expires=1515558745&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=EB153C02B373A4EAA4B7A6EA35AD71EE>

⁴ Women at Work: Trends 2016 - http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_457317.pdf

⁵ Grant Thornton 2016 report Women in Business: Turning Promise into Practice

https://www.grantthornton.global/globalassets/wib_turning_promise_into_practice.pdf

⁶ [2] UN Economic and Social Council (2017). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General* (E/2017/66).

⁷ https://percapita.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Elizas-Report_Final.pdf

showed that there are only 18% women CEOs working at the top level of executives. The *Eliza Project* which studied 'Gender Inclusion in the Co-operatives and Mutual Enterprises (CME)' space in Australia, showed that while women make up 46% of the Australian workforce, but in every industry and sector, women are under-represented in leadership positions. This is true for the corporate sector as well as the CMEs. The analysis of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) data of the top 100 CMEs in Australia showed two significant findings: that women are under-represented in top management positions, and that occupations are divided along gender lines. The *Gender is more than a Statistic* report had a more hopeful outlook, "*Both quantitative and qualitative data considered, the data from success stories, gender-based interventions, gender planning etc. reveals a higher level of gender sensitivity/ programming since the last 10 years. It is, however, clear that women are being empowered by using co-operative business models to support themselves, their households and communities at leadership levels in several instances. Indeed, a new upsurge is on the swing with the momentum at the grassroots noticeably.*"

Why does the leadership gap matter?

According to the report, *Barriers and Bias: The Status of Women in Leadership*, achieving gender parity in leadership is, first and perhaps most important, a matter of fairness. Leaders are powerful, so when women are excluded from top leadership, they are denied power to make a difference in the world. Leaders enjoy high status and privilege, and leadership in one area opens doors to other opportunities, which further amplifies the perks of leadership. Leadership also pays. In most organizations, the top leader is also the most highly compensated, and managers and supervisors tend to have higher salaries than workers who are not in leadership roles. Diversity matters, and nowhere is it more important than in leadership.

Not an issue of competency

A 2012 study⁷ by Dr. John H. "Jack" Zenger and Dr. Joseph Folkman which covered 7,280 men and women both public and private, government and commercial, domestic and international organizations found that, at all levels, *women are rated higher in fully 12 of the 16 competencies that go into outstanding leadership*. And two of the traits where women outscored men to the highest degree — taking initiative and driving for results — have long been thought of as particularly male strengths. Men outscored women significantly on only one management competence in the survey — the ability to develop a strategic perspective (see chart below).

The Top 16 Competencies Top Leaders Exemplify Most

	Male Mean Percentile	Female Mean Percentile	T value
Takes Initiative	48	56	-11.58
Practices Self-Development	48	55	-9.45
Displays High Integrity and Honesty	48	55	-9.28
Drives for Results	48	54	-8.84
Develops Others	48	54	-7.94
Inspires and Motivates Others	49	54	-7.53
Builds Relationships	49	54	-7.15
Collaboration and Teamwork	49	53	-6.14
Establishes Stretch Goals	49	53	-5.41
Champions Change	49	53	-4.48
Solves Problems and Analyzes Issues	50	52	-2.53
Communicates Powerfully and Prolifically	50	52	-2.47
Connects the Group to the Outside World	50	51	-0.78
Innovates	50	51	-0.76
Technical or Professional Expertise	50	51	-0.11
Develops Strategic Perspective	51	49	2.79

Source: Zenger Folkman Inc., 2011

⁷ Are Women Better Leaders than Men? <https://hbr.org/2012/03/a-study-in-leadership-women-do>

Lost economic opportunity

McKinsey Global Institute in their report, *The Power of Parity*⁸, show that *\$12 trillion could be added to global GDP by 2025 by advancing women's equality*. According to the report, gender inequality is not only a pressing moral and social issue but also a critical economic challenge. If women—who account for half the world's working-age population—do not achieve their full economic potential, the global economy will suffer. On the dimension of Gender Equality in work, the report looked at five indicators: the ratio of labor-force participation rates by gender, the ratio of men and women with professional and technical jobs, the perceived wage gap for similar work between men and women, the ratio of women and men in leadership positions, and the distribution of unpaid care work among men and women and found that on. On four of these five indicators, the gender gaps remain extremely high globally. The gender gap in leadership is almost twice that in labor-force participation, making it an extremely high inequality issue globally.

"We cannot change what we are not aware of, and once we are aware, we cannot help but change."
— Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*

Since co-operatives are exposed to serious competition from the open market and specialized private businesses, it is time to be professional in approach and delivery. Keeping in view the market demand, many co-operatives are hiring qualified CEOs to run the businesses. Moreover, there are a number of women working in senior and middle managerial levels in many co-operatives and a pool of qualified talent is already available. Women CEOs in co-operatives have already proved their mantle.

The narrative is compelling that it is time for co-operatives to take note and utilise the talent and ability of women in leading the coop businesses. There is need to design a succession plan and groom a cadre of women executives to take over senior leadership and the position of CEO. The principle of good governance demands that women and men, who possess equal skills and capacity, both get equal opportunity to rise in their working career and fulfill their aspirations to rise to the top. Co-operative businesses, by providing opportunity to have a career growth path, may attract more women to take up the CEOs position resulting in gender equality in execution of business plans and in enhancing income and services for members.

The quest towards achieving gender equality in decision making in co-operatives begins by looking within. This is ICA-AP's first attempt to look for 'Women CEOs' in the region and find out about their journey to the 'top job', to contemplate on why they are almost invisible, what are the challenges and opportunities, and what can be done to tackle the issues.

In the process of conceptualising and structuring the workshop, we reached out to the women CEOs in the Asia Pacific network to seek their opinion and suggestions to make the workshop need based and participatory. The broadly suggested areas include: i) men who are on boards to present from their perspective why there is disparity in the number of women CEOs ii) learning and sharing - how do women CEO balance career, family, social and other areas of their life. Is there a formula or a secret or is it because balancing is already included in women's DNA? and iii) training for skill and capacity building and mentoring of the women at the second tier of the management.

⁸ The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality Can Add \$12 Trillion to Global Growth
<https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>

Workshop details

The Workshop will be jointly held by ICA-AP and its member, All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Co-operatives (ACFSMC) held from April 17 to 19, 2018 in Guiyang, Guizhou Province.

The workshop will bring together women CEOs from the ICA-AP network, ICA Board of Directors, and Chairpersons of co-operatives.

There will be total 30 participants - 20 participants will be invited from ICA-AP network including 9 women CEOs and Board of Directors of ICA-AP from selected countries. ICA has 4 members from China and being the host country, 10 local women/men CEOs/ Chairpersons will be invited from China.

Participation in the workshop will be on self-financing basis.

Objectives

The objectives of the workshop will be to:

- Create awareness on the status of women in leadership positions in co-operatives and the need to promote gender equality in decision making.
- Reflect on the legal and policy environment and co-operative governance practices in the Asia and Pacific region and identify gaps on how it impacts gender equality at top decision-making level.
- Formulate concrete action points/guidelines for co-operatives to adopt to achieve gender equality. Conscious human resource development plan resulting into equal opportunity for women to get at the position of CEO.
- Formulate an action plan for ICA-AP to support, monitor and evaluate progress in gender equality

Intended Outcomes

The intended outcomes of the workshop would be:

- Recognise that qualified and competent women are already there. Co-operatives need to be aware of gender disparity and lack of opportunity for women executives to take the CEOs position.
- Develop and recommend “organisational policy and HRD plan” for co-operatives to adopt for promotion of equal opportunity for women managers/executives in career growth and take up the position of CEO

Participation and logistics

International participants are expected to bear their travel costs. Accommodation in China, local hospitality such as airport pick up, meals and local transport for study visits will be arranged and provided by ACFSMC.

How to reach Guiyang, Guizhou Province

Guiyang, provincial capital of Guizhou Province has easier accessibility for international participants with its own international airport. Guiyang could be reached via Hongkong, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou. The cooperatives in Guiyang have developed rapidly recently in fields like cooperative finance and high-tech that could better represent up-to-date development of primary co-operatives in Southwest China. Taking these into consideration, this Workshop will be held in Guiyang.