

2021 Wrap-up from the Regional Director.

How has the last year been for your organisation?

We are grateful as an organization to be able to write to you again at this point and time. We know it has been a challenging year for our members and especially the thousands who work in frontline services. We have experienced tough times but collectively we have been able to respond so that we accomplish what we had planned for this year.

Despite another challenging 12 months in the Africa region, there has been a lot that we can celebrate. We look back at the year as we highlight some of the important milestones that we have achieved;

- We started 2021 by having some regional events like the Health Cooperative Stakeholders Meeting with our member and other stakeholders in DR Congo. This was a follow-up activity to explore the potential of health cooperatives in member countries in Africa - promotion of good health and well-being. We were also able to connect virtually for most of our statutory meetings throughout the year and only held one in-person meeting in November for the new regional board members. In mid-year, we had a Consultation meeting on Cooperative Identity for members in the MENA region that we organized jointly with the ICA-AP. Then later organized for a regional webinar on 'Leveraging Digital Innovation to Improve Resilience of Agricultural Cooperatives in Times of Crisis'. This webinar saw the participation of government officials, cooperative leaders and other stakeholders to deliberate on some of the strategies agricultural cooperatives can use to expedite digital innovation, especially during times of crisis.
- As part of capacity building and training targeting members, we conducted a training on Functioning and Advocacy towards European Union Delegations (EUDs) and did another one on Effective business Communication. Some of our members also benefitted from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Government of Japan partnered with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) for a training course that aimed at empowering rural women to improve their leadership and business management in Asia and Africa.
- Under research; together with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), we carried out a research on the Promotion of Micro-Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) Formalization through leveraging the cooperative enterprise model. Notably, within the ICA-EU partnership project, we were able to contribute to the global youth research 'Young people and cooperatives: a perfect match', did 11 country researches on Mapping of Cooperator Actors from 11 countries, contributed to the global research on environment and cooperatives 'Cooperation for the Transition to a Green Economy' and 18 country researches on the legal framework analysis. In collaboration with the U.S Overseas Cooperative Development Council, we were able to do a research on the 'Adoption of Climate-Smart Agricultural Practices that Contribute to the Resilience of Small-Scale Farmers: Incentives, Barriers and Lessons Learnt from Coffee Cooperatives in East Africa' and we are at the final stage of the report.

- Youth – we continued to engage the youth in the region through different platforms. Once again, the youth from the region benefitted from the training sessions on cooperative entrepreneurship through the Global Youth Forum 2021. We have been having a close engagement with the Global Cooperative Entrepreneurs (GCE) ambassadors to help them in realizing their ideas as they had planned. Together with Fairtrade Africa we brought the youth on board to celebrate the milestones that they are making to accelerate sustainable development. We organized for an event in line with the International Youth Day theme - transforming food systems: youth innovation for human and planetary health. This focused on acknowledging, recognizing and celebrating youth innovation that has contributed to transforming food systems across the globe.
- Gender – together with the regional gender committee and the ICA Gender Equality Committee, we showcased the important role of cooperatives regarding women in leadership for a just recovery in Africa.
- We continued with follow-ups with the Pan African Parliament's Committee on Monetary and Financial Affairs on the proposed Africa Cooperative Model Law, by making a presentation on the legal basis for a model law on cooperatives in Africa.
- The opening of the Sub-regional and the African Organization of Housing Cooperatives office in Maadi – Egypt was a vital step in realization of operationalization of ICA-Africa sub-regional offices in all the continent (North, South, Central, East and West).
- We had the regional board elections during the 15th Regional Assembly that saw a smooth transition of leadership. Chief Ayeola Tajudeen Oriyomi from the Cooperative Federation of Nigeria (CFN) was elected as the ICA-Africa 3rd President taking over from Mr. Japheth Mogomere who voluntary retired after servicing in the ICA-Africa regional board for 13 years.

We are very grateful for the collaboration with our members, governments, partners, donors and other stakeholders in the cooperative development mission. These milestones couldn't have been achieved without your valuable support; we look forward to continued cooperative engagement in the year 2022.

Happy holidays and a joyful new year!

What are your hopes for the future?

- Having a new regional board in place after the elections in October and the ICA 2020-2030 Strategic Plan - A People-Centred Path to a Second Cooperative Decade, we are now going to work toward our regional strategic plan too.
- We have already started follow-ups on the operationalization of the sub-regional office in Egypt and we look forward to continue with the same conversations with our members in the south and west Africa too.
- Service to our members so the we increase and retain membership.
- More cooperation and collaboration on cooperative development.

- Having done a number of researches and materials on other activities, we look forward to promote and disseminating them so that they are put in the right use.
- Hoping to resume our in-person regional conferences more so looking forward to the Africa Ministerial Cooperative Conference and other thematic sessions.