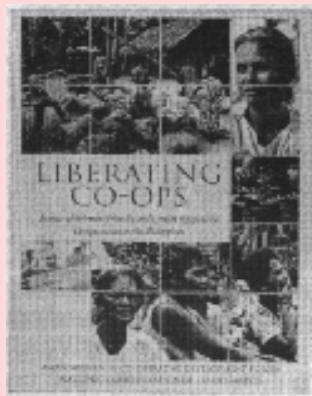


Women and Co-operatives

Women comprise at least half of the membership of Philippine co-operatives. But do their numbers influence the co-ops to recognise their needs and concerns? Co-operative values and principles do not discriminate against women; but a co-op culture that has no gender perspective puts women at a disadvantage.

Within many co-operatives, it is a reality that women lack substantial participation in the decision-making process and in managing its affairs. Whereas they comprise the majority of the membership, only a few of them can be seen in the leadership.

Since 1990, the Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF) has been undertaking the difficult but challenging task of motivating and enabling co-operatives in Asia to be active players in promoting gender equality, both in their own organisations and in society. From the AWCF come four interesting publications on women's participation in co-operatives:



LIBERATING CO-OPS: STORIES OF WOMEN-FRIENDLY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE

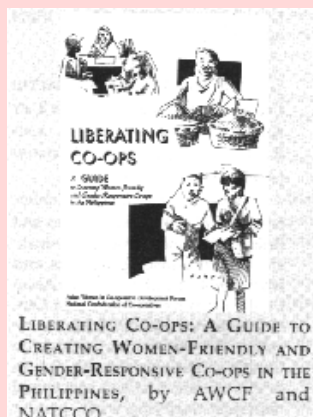
Co-operatives in the Philippines, by the Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and the National Confederation of Co-operatives

Liberating Co-ops features the unique experiences of nine primary co-ops affiliated with the National Confederation of Co-operatives (NATCCO). NATCCO is the member in the Philippines of the AWCF. The stories here tell of women co-operators—Board members, co-op managers, organizers and trainers—gender advocates all who, with courage and commitment, led their co-operatives to the awareness of the marginalised situation of their fellow women.

The projects and places of these co-operatives range from handloom weaving in La Union,

to a dairy co-op in Cebu, to cashew nut processing in Cagayan de Oro, to a day-care center in Leyte. The book reveals the fascinating world of women in co-ops with their tales of pain and isolation, awareness and personal awakening. It brings to the fore the results that can be expected when women and men work together as equal partners.

Liberating Co-ops is also available as a video-documentary. (Philippines: Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and National Confederation of Co-operatives, 1995. 181pp. ISBN 971-91623-1-7)



LIBERATING CO-OPS: A GUIDE TO CREATING WOMEN-FRIENDLY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE CO-OPS IN THE PHILIPPINES, by AWCF and NATCCO

This handbook serves as a companion material of *Liberating Co-ops: Stories of Women-Friendly and*

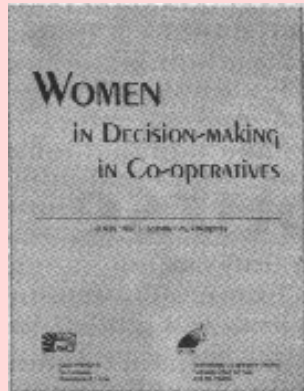
Gender-Responsive Co-operatives in the Philippines. Whereas the casebook contains stories that describe the process of change from awareness (of gender issues) to action, the guide/handbook contains the steps or the how-to's in carrying out the actions (addressing gender issues). It is a documentation of ideas and tools for action that were actually carried out by co-operatives in the Philippines. This material is intended for co-operatives, specifically, the field workers or community organisers as well as managers and elected officers.

(Philippines: Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and National Confederation of Co-operatives, 1998. 96pp. ISBN 971-91623-0-9)

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING IN CO-OPERATIVES: REPORT OF A REGIONAL CONFERENCE, by Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

The Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF) and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Asian Women (ICA ROAP) agreed to collaborate on organising a regional conference with the theme, "Women in Decision-Making in Co-operatives." The conference brought to the fore

the serious and important issue of women's underrepresentation in the leadership positions and decision-making processes in co-operatives. The proceedings of the conference are contained in this 182-page report.

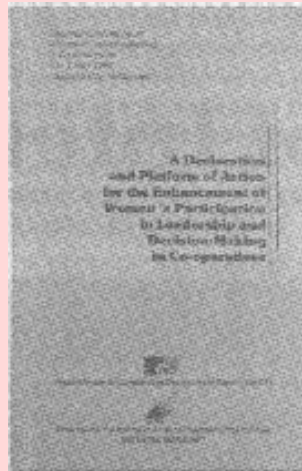


Held in Tagaytay City, Philippines from 7 to 9 May 1997, the conference was attended by 85 participants from 11 countries. They represented 69 national and primary level co-operatives, five NGOs, a social development training institute, and CIDA-Philippines.

Four major topics were tackled: 1) State of Women's Participation in Leadership and Decision-Making in Society and in Co-operatives: Global, Regional and Local Perspectives, 2) A Comparative Analysis of Women's and Men's Styles of Leading, 3) Why Women are Not in Leadership and Decision-Making in Co-operatives: Women's and Men's Perspectives, and 4) Practical Actions on How to Increase the Number and Participation of Women in Leadership and Decision-Making in Co-operatives. The Report contains all the papers that were presented, as well as the open forum after each presentation, the workshop proceedings and the syntheses.

The conference also drafted "A Declaration and Platform of Action for the Enhancement of Women's Participation in Leadership

and Decision-Making in Co-operatives," published as a separate document from the proceedings. (Philippines: Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1997. 182pp. ISBN 971-91623-2-5)



A DECLARATION AND PLATFORM OF ACTION FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING IN CO-OPERATIVES, by Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

These are two important products of the conference referred to above. The Declaration and the Platform propose concrete steps toward increasing the number and level of participation of women in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives. They can serve as a guide for co-operative organisations at all levels, governments, NGOs, women's organisations and grassroots organisations.

(Philippines: Asian Women in Co-operative Development Forum and the International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 1997. 80pp.)

understanding of the links between gender and women's health as a framework for action.

(Kuala Lumpur: Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women, 1997. ISSN 1394-4444)

THE FABULOUS FIFTIES WHEN LIFE REALLY BEGINS: INTERVIEWS WITH AUSTRALIAN WOMEN IN THEIR FIFTIES by Jan Bowen

For many women, the fifties is a landmark decade—a time when the demands of others give way to a search for personal happiness and fulfillment. It can be a time for reassessment and analysis—of looking forward and back—when inner growth and outward achievement are possible to an extent undreamed of in earlier years. At fifty, there's time to ask, "Who am I?" "What do I want?"

In *The Fabulous Fifties* nine Australian women from a variety of backgrounds reflect on the myths and realities of turning fifty. Along with their contemporaries, these women have seen more change in their lifetime than any previous generation. They grew up in an era when the traditional role of wife and mother was hardly questioned. As young adults, they were at the cutting edge of the feminist revolution. Now they are redefining the parameters of age.

The women come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, but whatever their story and personal circumstances, some things are common to all them. There was no one who did not express a sense of liberation, of glowing self-confidence, of an awareness, often only recently realized, that they could achieve more than they had ever imagined. They have a sense of energy and vitality and competency greater than at any previous stage in their lives.

These are the inspiring stories of Quentin Bryce, Anne Ferguson, Sara Henderson, Nene King, Helen Leonard, Eve Mahlab, Wendy McCarthy, Jeannette McHugh and Kendra Sundquist. (Australia: Angus and Robertson, 1995.

143 pp. ISBN 0-207-18653-7)



Sandra Torrijos