

# Less Words, More Action

How to Increase Women's Participation  
in Leadership and Decision-Making in Co-operatives

*A Trainer's Manual*



Asian Women In Co-operative Development Forum (AWCF)

*and*

International Co-operative Alliance Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (ICAROAP)

58

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## Foreword

In the Foreword of the final report on the regional conference “Women in Decision-Making in Co-operatives” held in Tagaytay City, Philippines, on May 7-9, 1997, I wrote: “Having done what we should in the Regional Conference and also having the final print of the well-defined Declaration and Platform for Action and the proceedings of the Regional Conference, is certainly not enough and, hence, just the beginning. The Regional Conference has shown that there is readiness for change, the reinforcement of this change must follow suit. Thus, we certainly cannot rest satisfied with the conduct of the formal proceedings and processes alone. Real action must follow, and collaborative strategies must be implemented, tested, and subsequently monitored in the field.”

Making available in popular form the ideas contained in the Declaration and Platform for Action as in this publication “Less Words, More Action”, is precisely one of several steps that both the AWCF and ICAROAP are taking to ensure that real action follow our ideas, our plans and good intentions. Publishing this material with the objective of having primary level co-operatives as target users is a step in the right direction. For while it is true that actions are needed at the regional and international levels to increase women’s representation and participation in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives, only a critical mass from the grassroots, primary co-op level can bring about and sustain these actions.

We are grateful to the regional conference participants, resource speakers, guests, and organizers—cooperators and gender advocates, women and men alike—whose ideas provide the meat and substance of this material. We are pleased to share herewith all of our ideas and views that will be useful and valuable not only for gender- or women-related activities but for the daily activities in your co-operatives. We do hope that this popularized version of the Declaration and Platform for Action will contribute to the improvement of your co-operative movement.

We acknowledge the significant contribution of Misereor of Germany, the European Commission and the Japanese Consumers Credit Union for their financial contribution in the publication of this material. We truly appreciate their belief in and support to our work that contributes to the betterment of life of many peoples in the world through co-operatives.

*Robby Tulus*  
Regional Director  
International Co-operative Alliance  
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

## Preface

Many ideas on how to increase women's participation in leadership and decision-making in co-operative structures came up during the AWCF-ICAROAP regional conference "Women in Decision-Making in Co-operatives" held in Tagaytay City, Philippines, on May 7-9, 1997. Coming from the resource speakers, panelists and participants of that conference, these ideas are contained in two publications, namely, "Women in Decision-Making in Co-operatives," which is the final report and proceedings of the conference, and "A Declaration and Platform of Action for the Enhancement of Women's Participation in Leadership and Decision-Making in Co-operatives," which contains the important outputs of the conference.

The document (the Declaration and Platform of Action) is more than just a conference declaration or a call to action issued by participants of that conference. The document is really an organized compilation of ideas of people from various sectors in the co-op movement as well as from NGOs, government, and women's organizations on how women's participation in leadership and decision-making in co-ops can be increased. These ideas are addressed to cooperators and governments in countries in Asia and Pacific, and also to all regions in the world because the problem of women's under-representation (or marginalization) in co-op leadership is global, and the actions that need to be taken must be done both globally and locally. This document is probably the first and only one dealing with this issue that has been published in the world.

The call to increase women's participation in leadership and decision-making in co-ops is addressed to many sectors: governments, NGOs, co-operatives at all levels—primary, secondary, tertiary, regional and international. Both the ICAROAP and AWCF have exerted efforts to distribute all printed copies to these sectors in the hope that the ideas and information therein contained would be disseminated and would bring about results—more women in leadership and decision-making positions, more co-ops having women in decision-making positions.

Indeed, it is crucial to make the ideas in the Declaration and Platform of Action reach institutions, groups and individuals from which actions for change are expected. Governments and co-operative organizations at international, regional and national levels in some countries in Asia may have access to this document and understand it. However, co-operatives, self-help groups, people's organizations and NGOs working at the grassroots level that do not have any representation at the national level may not be aware of and may not have access to this document. This dilemma makes it extremely important that AWCF and ICAROAP find a way to ensure that this document **reaches** the primary co-ops and grassroots level. Another important matter to ensure is that they **understand** the important ideas and information on how to increase women's participation in leadership and decision-making in co-ops. And, consequently, having understood, they will **act**.

With these intentions, AWCF and the ICAROAP once again collaborated to publish the Platform of Action in popularized form as a trainer's manual. "Less Words, More Action" presents the Platform of Action in a more direct and simpler way so as to ease understanding of the ideas for action that it contains. In turn, it is hoped that implementation of these ideas would come sooner.

A year after its initial publication, a review of the ideas that the Platform of Action contains makes us in AWCF realize that there are still more that can be done to increase women's participation as leaders and decision-makers in co-ops. We view the Platform, therefore, as a documentation of only some ideas, that is, only those that came up at that time of the regional conference. As such, the Platform will increase in volume as more ideas are created.

Another important matter that we realize is the need to have a tool and system for monitoring the implementation of the Platform of Action. The presentation of the ideas in this popularized version would help in developing that monitoring tool. Again, the AWCF and ICAROAP can collaborate in developing and implementing a monitoring system to ensure that the Platform of Action is implemented.

The collaboration between the ICAROAP and the AWCF proved catalytic and synergistic in fact, as can be gleaned from the results and further actions that the regional conference in 1997 have spawned. We thank the ICAROAP for working together with AWCF in the cause of gender equality in power and decision-making in co-ops.

*Lota Y. Bertulfo*  
Regional Coordinator  
Asian Women in Co-operative  
Development Forum

## Acknowledgment

AWCF and ICAROAP would like to acknowledge the ideas and suggestions of the resource speakers, panelists and participants of the "Women in Decision-Making in Co-operatives" regional conference held on May 7-9, 1997 in Tagaytay City, Philippines. "Less Words, More Action" is only as rich as the ideas that they presented and the experiences that they shared.

We would like to give special mention to our two main resource speakers, Lorraine Corner from United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and Victoria Licuanan from the Asian Institute of Management (AIM). Their analysis of the situation of women's under-representation and marginalization in decision-making in various areas and fields helped cooperators analyze their own situation in co-operatives.

The global women leaders of the co-op movement led by Raija Itkonen, Katarina Apelqvist and Sen. Rahaiah bt. Baهران provided a lot of inspiration and encouragement. They serve as good role models for other women cooperators to emulate and follow. The panelists, namely, Hatsoku Omori, Dr. Somporn Rod-anant, Ibu Bambang Wibowo, Teresita De Leon, Rameshwari Ramachandra, Robby Tulus, Paul Sinnappan, Shanta Raj Sharma, Remedios Rikken, Laura Vance, and Lalita Krishnaswami provided interesting insights into their experiences and posed challenging ideas for action to improve women's participation in leadership and decision-making in co-operatives.

The AWCF wishes to thank Misereor of Germany and the European Commission for their support in the publication of "Less Words, More Action" as the popularized version of the Platform of Action. We also thank SEAGEP-CIDA for its support in having the regional conference "Women in Decision-Making in Co-ops" organized.

There are many more individuals whose contributions we would like to acknowledge but they are very many to name, including the full-time staff of AWCF and ICAROAP alike who worked long hours and behind the scenes to produce this trainer's manual.

We thank you all.



# How to Use this Trainer's Manual

## The Target Trainers

“Less Words, More Action,” the popularized version of the Platform of Action, is intended for trainers, field workers and community organizers who have direct access to members of primary co-ops and to people at the grassroots level. In the form of a trainer's manual, the popularized version will serve as a teaching and information tool for primary co-op members and people at the grassroots to be aware of the problem (of women's marginalization in co-op leadership) and to get ideas on how they can address this problem at their primary co-op.

## The Contents and Format

The trainer's manual contains a lot of illustrations as a way of simplifying the messages or ideas in the Platform of Action. The **text** of what the trainer may say are provided below each illustration. The text, which are quoted, are mere suggestions and should not be taken as what the trainer should actually say about the illustration or the message. The text provide further explanation on the illustration and message being presented.

Some illustrations are not provided with text but rather with a **Note to the Trainer**. The Note to the Trainer contains instructions on what the trainer may do to explain the illustration. Furthermore, in a number of illustrations, particularly the statistics on participation profile of co-op members in various aspects, very little instruction is written in the Note in order to allow the trainer to explain the message using the illustration itself.

The trainer's manual also contains the full text of the Declaration and Platform of Action as found in the original document published in 1997.

The sequence in which the ideas are presented in this trainer's manual is based on how the messages would be taught in training. The ideas are not presented in the same order as they are in the Declaration and Platform of Action. In the manual, similar ideas are clustered to show that the messages are related. Broad categories of ideas were set up, the related ideas were placed under these broad categories as sub-messages. All broad categories of ideas and sub-messages were illustrated.