

# **The Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development (ICPRD) Newsletter**

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## **INTERNATIONAL EVENTS**

### ***United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), New York, March 12-17, 2018***



Dr. Nandini Azad, the only Cooperative leader on India's official panel of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Govt. of India at the UNCSW, New York

Dr. Nandini Azad, President Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW) was part of the International Cooperative Alliance – Asia Pacific (ICA-AP) delegation to the 62nd UN Commission On The Status Of Women (UNCSW) in New York, March 12-17, 2018. She was also on India's official panel of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India at UNCSW, New York on 14th March, 2018. Speaking on the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padao' (Protect and educate the girl child), a National Campaign of the Government of India, her presentation was appreciated.

Dr. Azad also took active part in the Sessions at the Commission. Presenting the work and the role of ICA-AP – Asia Pacific Women's Committee. She also highlighted the social change being effected by the ICNW which is one of the few cooperative institutions in India and Asia that addresses both financial inclusion and violence against women.

### ***COPAC High-Level Luncheon, United Nations, New York, 1st February, 2018***

President ICNW, Dr. Nandini Azad was invited to speak at the High-Level luncheon at the United

Nations in New York on 1st February, 2018 at the 56th Social Development Ministers' Conference. The event, entitled "Cooperatives - Developing People focused strategies to eradicate poverty" welcomed more than 40 stakeholders representing member organization's of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC). 17 Country Ambassadors, UN agencies and cooperatives were invited to discuss the contribution of cooperatives to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). Dr. Azad was the only woman leader from Asia to participate in this event wherein ICA President, Mr. Ariel Guarco was a co-panelist.

Dr. Nandini Azad shared the experience of ICNW in facilitating poor women in the informal economy reduce and alleviate poverty, secure their livelihoods and seek lifetime development opportunities. She urged the cooperative movement to promote higher number of women to leadership positions. The 2017 Asia Pacific Cooperative Ministers Conference (APCMC) resolution of reservation of 33% for women at all levels of cooperatives was highlighted.

UN officials who attended the event included Mr. Vinicius Carvalho Pinheiro, Director of International Labour organization Office for the United Nations, New York; Madam Daniela Bas, Director of Division for Social Policy and Development and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA); and Ms. Carla Mucavi, Director of the FAO Liaison Office.

### ***40th Anniversary of WWF/ICNW: Partnership with Japanese Cooperatives***

The Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW)/Working Women's Forum (India) (WWF) organized an event to commemorate its 40th anniversary. The event titled "Campaign of Cooperatives for Peace and Development and



*The dignitaries of Japanese Consumer Cooperative Union (JCCU) with Dr. Jaya Arunachalam (President, WWF) and Dr. Nandini Azad (President, ICNW)*

Poverty Reduction in South Asia" was held at its Headquarters in Chennai on April 3-4, 2018. Particularly to highlight the need for 'Peace for Sustainable Development, Poverty Reduction and Women's Empowerment globally'.

ICNW was privileged to collaborate with the Asian Cooperative Leader of the Peace Movement – The Japanese Consumer Cooperatives Union (JCCU). The JCCU is the apex of the consumer cooperatives in Japan where women play a very active role in consumer cooperatives. It has 37 percent of the households countrywide in its union.

At this event, 14 ICNW Cooperative network branches from South India – Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka participated. Over 2000 women Cooperative leaders in occupations such as weavers, lace makers, fisher women, vegetable vendors and several other micro entrepreneurs participated to express their solidarity with the campaign. This is one of the first such initiatives in Asia where poor women in cooperatives took center stage in the International Peace Movement linked to the UN SDGs.

The highlight of the program was that Ms. Daniela Bas, Director, Division for Social Policy and Development, UNDESA, New York who is the UN focal point for cooperatives worldwide was kind enough to render the inaugural address (in absentia) for the event. The inaugural address was read by Dr. Nandini Azad, President, ICNW as requested. In his video message, Mr. Eiichi Honda,

President, JCCU recalled the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the launch of the "Hibakusha Appeal", a signature campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons by citizens. He also congratulated the ICNW at commemorating its 40th anniversary. Ms. Chitose Arai, Vice President of JCCU & Vice President of the International Cooperative Alliance – Asia and the Pacific (ICA-AP) rendered the keynote address. She spoke about the working of the Japanese consumer cooperatives mentioning its role for the revitalisation of communities. Mr. Haruyoshi Amano, Manager, International Department, JCCU, conveyed the message of Japanese co-op members who are taking action for realizing peace through cooperative solidarity. Ms. Kanako Miyazawa, Senior International Officer, International Department, JCCU, through her Power Point presentation, provided in-depth details about the history of war in Japan and the peace activities of JCCU. Mr. Yoshikazu Koike, Officer, member Relations Department, JCCU also participated in the function towards the signature campaign of JCCU.

Dr. Jaya Arunachalam, President, WWF said that WWF is a grass root's organisation of working class women in Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and shared the experience of initiating the movement.

Later, an activist street theatre program on gender issues was conducted by the young men and boys



*2000 Members of the ICNW from the Three Southern States at the event*

of the forum of the Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development (ICPRD) and traditional dance's by the children of Kamaraj Illam, (orphanage girls home). The dignitaries were appreciative and also joined in the Kummi (clap dance) with the WWF/ICNW staff.

Over 600 members participated in the field meeting held at Aladithoppu area in Kancheepuram branch of ICNW on 4th April, 2018. The dignitaries were given a warm traditional welcome at the branch and area. They were acquainted with the initiation of the Kancheepuram branch and how the cooperatives had transformed the lives of poor women, especially silk weavers and their communities.

**Given below is the newspaper item on the event from "THE HINDU", April 4th, 2018**



### Celebrating co-operative networks

Staff Reporter

Chennai, April 04, 2018 00:57 IST

Women co-operative leaders from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh came together to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Indian Co-operative Network for Women (ICNW) and the Working Women's Forum of India (WWF), on Tuesday.

A campaign on co-operatives for peace, development and poverty reduction in South Asia was the focus of the anniversary celebrations and a contingent from the Japanese Consumer Co-operatives Union (JCCU) were part of the event. The JCCU is the apex of the consumer co-operatives in Japan where women play a very active role.

Nandini Azad, president, ICNW, said co-operatives had proven to be an effective channel for promoting gender equality in diverse circumstances. "On the 40th anniversary, we can see how co-operative is an instrument of change, as it is based on shared values of non-violence which is the most fruitful way to strengthen peace," she said.

Jaya Arunachalam, president of the WWF, India, said that the representatives from the JCCU would interact and spend time with women leaders from the ICNW co-operative network branches of South India to study and learn from their functioning. The women co-operatives leaders which included weavers, lace makers, fisher women, vegetable vendors and other micro entrepreneurs took an oath to declare their solidarity with the campaign.

Chitose Arai, vice-president of the JCCU spoke about the working of Japanese consumer co-operatives and said that they worked for the revitalisation of communities. "Our goal also has been to encourage more women to participate and be more involved in the International Co-operative Alliance and have been focussed on women's capacity building and related training activities," she said.

**ICA-AP and ACFSMC, China Regional workshop on "Re-Work, Re-Imagine and Re-Shape: Advancing Women CEOs in Cooperatives, April, 2018, China**



Participants of the ICA-AP and ACFSMC Workshop at the opening ceremony, Dr. Nandini Azad seated 2nd from left

Towards achieving gender equality in decision making in cooperatives, a two-day workshop titled "Re-Work, Re-Imagine and Re-Shape: Advancing Women CEOs in Cooperatives" was held. This was jointly organized by the ICA-AP Committee on Women, ICA-EU Partnership on Cooperatives in Development and the All China Federation of Supply and Marketing Cooperatives (ACFSMC) from April 17-19, 2018 in Guiyang, Guizhou Province, China. The participants were Women CEOs, Deputy CEOs and Senior Managers from 10 countries (Australia, China, India, Iran, Nepal, Palestine, Philippines and Singapore).

Delivering her address on the inaugural panel, Dr. Nandini Azad, Acting Chairperson, ICA-AP Committee on Women said that the commitment of the Asia-Pacific region to gender equality is reaffirmed by National/International covenants. Further, she enlightened the participants of the bottlenecks to gender equality that include patriarchal attitudes, socio-cultural norms, lack of provisions in the co-operative bye-laws, lack of productive inputs (credit, land, training), educational levels and limited business experience. In terms of salient strategies to overcome these bottlenecks, she stressed apart from laws, policies over all, there is a need for capacity building, gender analysis tool to help examine the challenges, assistance with statistical data collection, monitoring and tracking gender

equality indicators. Dr. Azad highlighted the work of the ICA-AP Committee on women and the 33% reservation for women at all levels passed at the ICA Asia-Pacific Cooperatives Ministers' Conference (APCMC) at Hanoi in 2017.

As the moderator for Panel II – 'Data leads the way: Strengthening data collection and analysis on the status of female executive leadership in co-operatives', Dr. Azad briefed the participants of the pioneering study that she had undertaken for the ICA-AP Committee on Women titled 'Gender is more than a Statistic: Status of Women in Cooperatives in the Asia-Pacific Region' the findings, the salient methodologies, and the way ahead.

#### ***International Cooperative Alliance-Asia Pacific (ICA-AP) Regional Board Meeting, Kathmandu, Nepal, April 6, 2018***

The ICA-AP Regional Board Meeting was held in Kathmandu, Nepal on April 6, 2018 in conjunction with the Second National Co-operative Congress of the National Cooperative movement (Nepal) and was inaugurated by the Hon. President of Nepal.

The board meeting of ICA-AP was attended by the ICA Global President, ICA-AP Chairperson/Vice Chairperson's, Regional Director and Board Members.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Ariel Guarco, Global President of ICA said, "I am delighted to participate, for the first time as President of ICA, in the board meeting of ICA-AP. The ICA respects and values the full range of our differences as it derives its unity and strength from its diversity."

As the Chairperson (officiating) of the ICA-AP Women's Committee, Dr. Nandini Azad, presented the report to the ICA-AP board. She highlighted the history of ICA-AP's Committee on women and its objectives and functions. She described the activities organized by the Committee and the forthcoming activities. She urged the board to forward names of potential members to the Women's Committee. She also informed the committee that the target membership has been reached.



*The ICA-AP Board, Kathmandu, Nepal. Dr. Azad is seen third from right*

#### ***ICA-AP Women's Committee Office Bearers Meeting, (OBM) Kathmandu, Nepal***

The OBM and office bearers meeting of the Women's Committee was held with the office bearers of JCCU, Officiating Chairperson Dr. Nandini Azad (ICNW), Ms. Chitose Arai Vice President of JCCU & ICA-AP Vice President, Mr. Haruyoshi Amano, Manager, International Department, JCCU, Ms. Kanako Miyazawa, Senior International Officer, International Department, JCCU, Regional Director ICA-AP, Mr. Balasubramanian Iyer and Ms. Annam Mitra, the Secretary of the Committee. Back to back to the ICA-AP board meeting, the OBM met. She reported the progress particularly increased membership, Regional and National activities both at the policy and national level. A decision was taken to hold the Regional Assembly in Malaysia in December 2018 alongwith the data workshop committed in the Women's Committee's Gender Strategy Plan. Dr. Azad thanked all stakeholders particularly the donors i.e., the JCCU for their continued generous support and the ICA-AP.

#### ***Strengthening Women's Co-operatives, National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), Workshop, Chennai - 16th August, 2018***

The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) organized a one day Regional Workshop on "Strengthening Women Co-operatives" in the Natesan Institute of Cooperative

Management, on August 16, 2018 in Chennai. 100 participants included members of women's cooperatives in the southern region covering the States/UTs of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry and Lakshadweep.

Delivering the inaugural address, Dr. Azad stressed the need for special consideration for increasing women's participation in the cooperative movement, particularly at the management and leadership levels. Women have to become leaders in cooperatives, she said. She also referred to the UNSDG's goals that emphasized the importance of gender equality. Stressing the need to bring about professionalism in the cooperative business models to turn them into vehicles of inclusive growth.



President ICNW Dr. Nandini Azad delivering the inaugural address (NCDC) at the Regional Workshop on Strengthening Women's Cooperatives in Chennai

### **National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI) and Indian Cooperative Network for Women Collaborate in the Orientation of cooperative officials/staff**

A two day orientation programme for 30 women co-operators of the ICNW was organized in February, 2018 at Chennai HQ. Women co-operators from all the 14 branches i.e. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka participated. The objective of the program was to impart knowledge and competencies to enable women co-operators to utilize it in their day-to-day work as leaders.

Inaugurating the orientation programme, Dr. Nandini Azad thanked the National Cooperative

Management, on August 16, 2018 in Chennai. 100 participants included members of women's cooperatives in the southern region covering the States/UTs of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry and Lakshadweep.

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**Strengthening women co-ops: NCDC collaborates with ICNW**

Posted in [From States](#) on August 20, 2018 by [Amit Awana](#)

Cooperative lender National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) organized a workshop on 'Strengthening women cooperatives' in Chennai in collaboration with Indian Cooperative Network for Women which is headed by Nandini Azad well-known in cooperative circles.

Speaking on the occasion Nandini said the promotion of cooperatives will make the economy more diverse and better equipped to provide sustainable growth and jobs to women," she said. Nandini is also active at ICA advocating the cause of women co-ops.

Credited for organizing one of the largest co-op networks of women in South India, Nandini Azad and Padma Awardee Jaya Arunachalam of WWF have received global recognition for their pioneering work. "For the rural women, cooperatives are a panacea given their invisible low-paid work, lack of access to legal protection and productive inputs. There is a need to bring about professionalism in the cooperative business models to turn them into vehicles of inclusive growth," Dr. Azad said.

Speaking on the occasion NCDC managing director Sundeep Kumar Nayak said Tamil Nadu has a strong presence of women cooperatives. NCDC would do every bit to strengthen them, Nayak added.

D.N.Thakur, Deputy Managing Director also visited the ICNW and met its office bearers and staff discussing the future perspectives of cooperatives. Thakur felt that women when united can face any challenge.

The venue of the Workshop was Natesan Institute of Cooperative Management, Chennai, one of the ICMs of NCCT. ICNW President Nandini Azad also sought support from NCDC in terms of investment, from the government enabling environment, legal frame work for necessary member control and ownership, especially women.

Azad raised the issue such as how co-ops can promote gender equality and how women's cooperative can take advantage of the govt schemes which have been denied to them so far. She referred to UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and said gender equality is a fundamental right for women as it leads to a peaceful and prosperous world.

Indian Cooperative Network for Women is today a social movement of 1 million in three southern states of India with 14 branches spread over 3840 villages and 2426 slums in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Union of India and the Chief Executive, NCUI for the partnership. Dr. Azad added that ICNW is a role model worldover and she was privileged to represent ICNW in various important meetings like the High level meeting held at the United Nations, New York, Hanoi (APCMC) etc. Digitalized 18 years ago, she stated that the trainees should utilize the training programme and enrich their knowledge even higher. Dr. Stanley, Deputy Director, Natesan Institute of Cooperative Management praised the WWF/ICNW for its work amongst poor women.



ICNW Staff attending the Orientation Program in the WWF Auditorium, Chennai

This institution he said is an iconic landmark in Mylapore, Chennai for women's cooperative's because of the presence of this organisation.

The two day training focused on cooperative principles, bye-laws, important provisions/amendments, credit appraisal, accounting /auditing of cooperatives, basics of using Microsoft windows desktop properties, digital economy, digital cashless transaction, digital lockers and personality development. The curriculum had been a relevant one for their day-to-day work where trainees said they had learnt various skills/knowledge and would implement it in their work.

#### ***Visit of Students from University of Leipzig, Germany, February 14 – 15, 2018 to WWF/ICNW, Chennai, HQ.***

Professor Dr. Bruni Landwehr led a team of 18 students who are pursing teacher training course from the University of Leipzig, Germany to the WWF-ICNW Chennai headquarters on February 14, 2018. Dr. Jaya Arunachalam, President, WWF welcomed the students and shared her views with them. Dr. Nandini Azad, President, Indian Cooperative Network for Women briefed them on the origin and activities of the organisation that works for poverty alleviation and development of poor women by engaging them in micro enterprise activities. On February 15, 2018 the team visited the Kanchipuram branch. The staff of the Kanchipuram branch apprised the team about the initiation of the branch, the hardships faced by the poor women, especially the women silk weavers.

The visiting team learned the strategies/solutions of WWF members in their personal and occupational lives.



Students interacting with the President of WWF & ICNW

#### ***Extension of the Post of Committee Chairperson: Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (National Women's Fund)***

Dr. Nandini Azad was appointed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development as the Chairperson of the Outreach Committee of the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (National Women's Fund) in December, 2017; and was extended for a one year period in July, 2018. Dr. Nandini Azad provides guidance in expanding the national network of the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh and Mahila e-haat (e-protal for women entrepreneurs), an online marketing platform where participants can display their products for sale and transact business. 6000 products have been identified upto now with about 5,00,000 beneficiaries.

#### ***Development Projects of ICPRD in Jharkhand and Karnataka***

##### ***Building Indigenous Women's Institutions in Jharkhand***

Since 1998, the Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development (ICPRD) has been engaged with the indigenous (Santhali) women's groups in the 'high risk' and challenging districts of Jharkhand to strengthen, support and build their capacity for economic and social empowerment.

Its current project, 'Building Indigenous Women's Institutions to Combat Development Denial', initiated in December 2017, aims at facilitating

inclusive development rights of the indigenous Santhali women at the policy and program levels in the three districts of Godda, Dumka and Jamtara. It focuses on developing grassroots indigenous women's power through empowered women's groups, so as to make them visible, bargain with sources of power to counter development denial. Also to access basic services, healthcare, financial services, housing - those denied to them.

Several workshops meetings and discussions - "Voices from the Ground", group mobilization were held with the Santhali women's groups in their language alongwith pictorial nuances. Their Voices were heard in terms of the obstacles they regularly face in their families, community and society (their socio-economic/local problems). Major areas of concern were lack of employment, drinking water, health facilities, scarcity of water etc.

The project has begun the intermediation between the state and indigenous women, building groups with knowledge and awareness for advocacy on entitlements, alongwith the support of media. This is a very major step for poor Santhali women, nearly illiterate to advocate and demand their entitlement to sources of power.

#### ***Youth Forums for Gender Equality: Innovative Governance Mechanisms for Women's Safety and Security***

Young men and boys are being transformed as catalysts and change agents for women's equality in the villages of rural Karnataka by the Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development (ICPRD). It has initiated the path breaking model of Engaging Men and Boys to combat gender based violence and promote gender equity. Innovative mentoring by ICPRD of young men and boys has helped turn around patriarchy in low income communities of Channapatna and Mysore Districts of Karnataka. This has been done through systematic capacity building, countering traditional stereotypes of gender equality through street theatre and cricket. Training of trainers workshop have been held on substantive gender equity and GBV issues (gender based violence) i.e., identifying inequality issues.

Multi-stakeholder alliances have been formed with Anganwadi/Asha workers (government child day care/health workers), panchayat, village heads, teachers, women self help groups at the local level to create new forms of gendered behaviour and norms of gender equality.

The project has systematically built several tiers of mechanisms for women's safety and security such as:

- Youth forums for gender equality
- District Level Co-ordinating Committee for Women's Safety and Security
- Village Level Platforms and Village Level Committees for Women's Safety and Security.

The objective of these several tiers of mechanisms has been to create an enabling environment for women's empowerment; to support action, interventions, and solutions in cases of girl-child discrimination, eve teasing, closing illegal liquor shops, (that could be co-related to exacerbated violence) wife beating and dowry; to promote women's rights through better access to victim redressal, government schemes, and resources for women's development.

#### ***Cultural Activism***

Performance of street theatre through fusion imagery at village squares by men and boys on gender based issues such as countering dowry, eve teasing, wifebeating female foeticide with audience participation on redressal methods leads to sustainable changes in behaviour. As gatekeepers to the future in these low income communities, the youth forums highlight resocialization methods and the manner in which it could impact norms and perception.



*Youth Forum members performing street theatre*

## Upscaling the model

The model, one of the largest on the ground in Asia, highlights the role of non state actors at the cutting edge on gender equality issues developed and owned by the community towards zero violence zones. Advocacy is required with multi-lateral and state actors to upscale the model at National and Regional levels i.e. grassroots, mezzo level that such Governance mechanisms that are upscaled from the grassroots to macro levels created by non state actors is a long term sustainable model.

## About Us

The Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development (ICPRD), a national advocacy coalition was formed in 1996 to protect the rights and development of the vulnerable constituencies particularly women, indigenous people, workers, farmers and youth. It is a broad coalition of development practitioners, advocates, academia, cooperatives, policy makers, international and national opinion makers, and the media. ICPRD's main activities include policy advocacy, mobilization at the grassroots, capacity building, attitudinal research, training technologies, building alliances and networking.

Over two decades, ICPRD has engaged approximately 1,000 voluntary agencies, CBOs and civil society agencies participating in 21 states and 158 districts in India. Undertaken such activities as transforming indigenous and poor women into social entrepreneurs through group building, micro credit programs, citizen's interface with Parliamentarians on good governance, combating trafficking of women and children etc. ICPRD developed a pioneering model in Karnataka and Rajasthan wherein male youths have been mobilized to combat gender based violence.

ICPRD's focus has been on gender and pro-poor issues, particularly empowerment of women both economic and social; resocializing male youth to combat gender based violence, financial inclusion through cooperatives for informal sector workers, revolving credit funds and multifaceted credit plus strategies, combating agricultural distress caused through droughts, pro-poor advocacy in states of India where the poorest live.

ICPRD is involved in international, regional, national advocacy through research and training on gender in co-operatives. Training and capacity building of cooperative leaders, gender sensitization of cooperatives in the region and elsewhere, developing gender manuals, case studies and best practices are a forte. Training on gender disaggregated data collection is also now being undertaken in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Visit the new website of the Indian Cooperative Network for Women – [www.icnw.in](http://www.icnw.in)  
Your feedback would be valuable.

# 'Women have to become leaders of cooperatives'

Meet calls for increased participation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI

Women continue to face discrimination, oppression and human rights violations because of restricted access to leadership in cooperatives, said Nandini Azad, president of Indian Cooperative Network for Women.

Speaking at the regional workshop on 'Strengthening women cooperatives' organised by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), Ms. Azad stressed on the need for special consideration for increasing women's participation in the cooperative movement, particularly at the management and leadership levels.

### Governance style

Women have to become leaders in cooperatives.

"You have to change the governance style of women cooperatives. A priority role has been given to cooperatives in government ventures. As cooperatives contribute to stable and resilient economies, their promotion will make the economy more diverse and better equipped to provide sustainable growth and jobs to women."

said Dr. Azad.

"For the rural woman, cooperatives are a panacea given their invisible low-paid work, lack of access to legal protection and productive inputs. There is a need to bring about professionalism in the cooperative business models to turn them into vehicles of inclusive growth," Dr. Azad said.

She advocated the adjustment of working conditions for women in cooperatives to help them manage work and family responsibilities.

### Support needed

"Cooperatives need support in coping with change and competition brought about by the open market economy, the process of globalisation and technological innovations," said Ms. Azad.

NCDC managing director Sundeep Kumar Nayak said Tamil Nadu has a strong presence of women cooperatives.

"We need to have a strong federation of women cooperatives," he said.

Handloom Department secretary K. Phanindra Reddy and Social Welfare commissioner Amuthavalli spoke.

## ICPRD

The Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development

A-13, Nizammudin East, New Delhi - 110 013 India

Tel.: 91-41825823 Telefax: 91-11-24356570

E-mail :icprd@ndb.vsnl.net.in,  
nandiniazadicnw@gmail.com

### Editorial Team

Ms. Nandini S  
Ms. Neelam Prakash

### Administrative Support

Mrs. Sumita Chakraborty  
Mr. Sanjay Samantara  
Mr. Rahul Kumar