



ICNW president Nandini Azad felicitated in Chennai

Nandini Azad has been re-elected to the board of International Raiffeisen Union

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Dr. Nandini Azad, President, Indian Cooperative Network for Women being felicitated by Prof. V. Balambal (left) University of Madras, G. Suresh, Director, Natesan Institute of Cooperative Management and Prof. S. Thenmozhi, Department Head of the Counselling Psychology, University of Madras are in the picture.

Members of Working Women's Forum and personalities from various fields felicitated Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW) president Nandini Azad for being re-elected to the board of International Raiffeisen Union (IRU), one of the oldest cooperative unions in the world, in Chennai on Thursday.

This is the second stint of Ms. Azad at IRU based in Germany. She was felicitated for being the first Indian woman to be re-elected to the board of IRU for the second time. The international voluntary organisation of national co-operative organisations has 53 members in 33 countries, including Japan, Canada, Italy and Netherlands.

Many personalities from various walks of life and micro entrepreneurs lauded Ms. Azad for inspiring and leading one of the largest women's

cooperative societies in south India. The Working Women's Forum and its credit arm, ICNW was formed in 1981 and now has six lakh women members in 14 locations, including Karnataka and Telangana. The organisation facilitates access to low interest loans, encourages entrepreneurship and enhances financial independence of women of economically weaker sections in the informal sector.

Speakers noted that the organisation has empowered nearly 1.5 million women micro entrepreneurs in 276 occupations. Silk weavers, vegetable vendors and fisher women are among the beneficiaries. They lauded Ms. Azad for her dedication as a social worker and acclaimed co-operator that has led the grassroot movement into the international arena.

Ms. Azad recalled the struggles involved in being chosen to the board of IRU. The organisation has evolved as a role model with its unique strategies and team efforts of women members. The focus is now on land reforms and promotion of women's land rights.

DECCAN Chronicle

Chennai Social Worker Dr. Nandini Azad Makes History

Deccan Chronicle. | [DC Correspondent](#)

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Elected Twice to International Raiffeisen Union



Dr. Nandini Azad, President, Indian Cooperative Network for Women and Working Women's Forum India was felicitated in Chennai on Thursday for getting elected for the second time to the world's prestigious International Raiffeisen Union (IRU), Germany. (Image: DC)

Chennai: An acclaimed social worker and cooperative woman from Chennai was felicitated in Chennai on Thursday for getting elected for the second time to the world's prestigious International Raiffeisen Union (IRU), Germany. Dr. Nandini Azad, President, Indian Cooperative Network for Women and Working Women's Forum India, is the first woman from South India to get elected to the more than a century-old International Raiffeisen Union with 53 members in 33 countries.

The Raiffeisen model influenced Madras city (Chennai) leading to the emergence of cooperative movement and rural finance in India in the late 19th century.

Working Women's Forum (India), (WWF) - Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW), a social organization launched in 1978 with 800 women to develop the total human resource potential of poor women workers in the informal sector, both in the urban/rural areas in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

WWF had unionized vendors, hawkers, other service specialists, fisher-women, landless women, lace makers, beedi workers, silk weavers, agarbatti workers, embroidery workers, and several other working class women providing them a

platform to voice their needs. After successful service, the social movement has touched the lives of 6 lakh women in 6000 villages in the southern States.

The forum's success lies in its innovative attempt to integrate the poor women at all levels in its institutional framework, using them as an effective delivery mechanism to reach other poor women extensively.

Now, it has branches in Central, North, South in Chennai, Kancheepuram, Vellore, Adirampattinam, Dindigul, Dharmapuri in Tamil Nadu, Narasapur, Bhimavaram, Palakol in Andhra Pradesh, Secunderabad in Telangana, Bengaluru, Bidar, Bellary, Channapatna in Karnataka. Having provided around 5 billion U.S \$ with low interest small/petty loans to micro entrepreneurs in 276 occupations and enterprises in rural and urban areas with 90 per cent repayment.

In recognition of her service to the women, Nandini Azad was the first woman to be elected to board member of the Global Board in 50 years of the IRU in 2018. She has been elected to the Board for the second time in 2023 for a term of five years. Now after 124 years again a woman has attained that place in the Cooperative Universe from Chennai - Making History linking Chennai to Raiffeisen.

During the felicitation ceremony, Dr. Nandini Azad said the Indian Co-operative Network for Women, as an effective credit wing of WWF enhances the social/financial independence of poor women, provides low interest loans encouraging their entrepreneurship. To take the opportunity of the current liberalization and economic restructuring process for poor women in India.

She said WWF is a future oriented, multi-pronged initiative and a pro-poor strategy that helps the Indian poor women to cease the opportunity of globalization and minimize its constraints. Currently, WWF's initiative is to transfer this strategy of pro-poor advocacy to other NGOs through orientation.

Lauding the role of Nandini Azad, G. Suresh, the Director of the Natesan Institute of Cooperative Management in Chennai, under the Union Ministry of Cooperatives, has emphasized Dr. Nandini Azad's achievements.

Former Professor of History, Dr. Balambal, R. Adivarahan, Auditor, Venkat and Ranga Associates (Cooperatives), Krishnamurthy, Secretary of Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha, a 130-year old sabha in Chennai, Prof. Dr.S.Thenmozhi, Head, Department of Counselling Psychology, University of Madras, Senthil Kumar, Deputy Director Nehru Yuva Kendra, Tamil Nadu and Dr. Azad's brother Aravind have lauded the role of Nandini Azad in serving the poor women. A large number of women from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have attended the programme.

AGRIBUSINESS

Nandini Azad felicitated for re-election at the International Raiffeisen Board

November 27, 2023 - by BK Jha - [Leave a Comment](#)



Nandini Azad made history as the first Indian woman to be re-elected on the board of the International Raiffeisen Union, the world's oldest cooperative union based in Germany

Recently in Chennai, the Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW) and the Working Women's Forum (WWF) celebrated the re-election victory of their President, Dr. Nandini Azad. With a membership exceeding 600,000 women across 14 locations in South India, ICNW stands as a beacon of progress and empowerment, playing a pivotal role in providing over one million loans and fostering economic independence. Dr. Nandini Azad, a trailblazing co-operator, made history as the first Indian woman and Chennai resident to be re-elected on the board of the [International Raiffeisen Union](#) (IRU), the world's oldest cooperative union based in Germany with 53 members spanning 33 countries. In 2018, she became the first woman board member of the Global Board in 50 years of the IRU Germany. WWF-ICNW is the only women-only cooperative organisation in 50 years to be elected to senior positions in both the IRU and Women Farmer Organization.

The historical significance of Chennai in the cooperative movement was highlighted, tracing back to 1892 when the Madras Presidency government initiated the mission 'Find Raiffeisen.' Dr. Azad's election marks a historical moment, echoing this connection to Raiffeisen after 124 years.

ICNW actively engages in securing land reform strategies and titles for landless women, challenging traditional family farming systems that perpetuate gender inequality. A significant accomplishment is that 36 per cent of ICNW/WWF's women members now hold land titles, symbolising a transformative shift in redistributing land resources and capital into the capable hands of women. This success is not merely about ownership; it signifies a transformative shift in redistributing land resources and capital into the capable hands of women, challenging conventional norms, and dismantling patriarchal structures. Dr. Azad supports the efforts to tackle the adversaries of [climate change](#) by advocating the use of organic manure from the fields, single-hoe furrows, and topsoil (carbon credits). She will attend [COP28](#) (UN Climate Change Summit) in Dubai, UAE now as representative of 600,000 poor women farmers from south India.

A panel and over 500 women cooperative leaders from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu participated in the celebratory event. Parvathy, the Treasurer of WWF, underscored Dr. Azad's profound impact, noting her role as a compassionate leader and problem solver.

G. Suresh, the Director of the Natesan Institute of Cooperative Management, appreciated Dr. Azad's remarkable achievements and tireless efforts in advocating for women's economic rights. Renowned historian Dr. Balambal and Adivarahan, Auditor at Venkat & Ranga Associates ([Cooperatives](#)), also commended Dr. Azad's resolute decisions and inspirational endeavours.

Professor Dr. S Thenmozhi, Head of the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of Madras, congratulated Dr. Azad as a true embodiment of [women's empowerment](#). Dr. Thenmozhi underscored the significance of Bharathiyar's quote, "Bharathiyar Kanda Puthamai Pen," affirming that Dr. Azad stands as a true embodiment of women's empowerment. Senthil Kumar, Deputy Director of Nehru Yuva Kendra, also affirmed her as a consistent history-maker and a role model for cooperative leaders.

Branch members from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh expressed gratitude for ICNW's transformative impact on their lives. In testimonials, they specifically acknowledged and thanked Dr. Nandini Azad for her leadership and contributions to grassroots development.

In her acceptance speech, Dr. Nandini Azad attributed her victory to a decade of hard work and challenges. She highlighted ICNW's significant impact, propelling it to join the five trillion economies, and emphasising that her triumph was a collective victory for women in cooperatives worldwide. Dr. Azad also shared ICNW's pandemic response, demonstrating commitment by supporting nearly 120,000 women members during lockdowns. The organisation's resilience earned them the "Corona Micro-Entrepreneur Warrior's Award."

ICNW's success in addressing intersecting barriers of caste, class, and gender was acknowledged, along with its innovative approach to establishing local [supply chains](#), climate change initiatives, and [digital literacy](#) programmes. Dr. Azad noted the transformative journey of ICNW members, starting with modest loans and now receiving substantial financial support. These women have achieved remarkable

milestones, educating their children and inspiring others to transition to the pre-formal sector.

Egammai, Secretary of WWF and CEO of ICNW emphasised ICNW's collective success, now represented in two global union organisations – the IRU and the Women Farmer Organization. This victory reaffirms that a large women's cooperative movement like ICNW can compete with moneyed corporate cooperatives due to its sheer mass character of women workers and their force in a democracy.

The event celebrated a decade of Dr. Azad's leadership, highlighting ICNW's collective strength and resilience in fostering a global symbol of hope and empowerment.



HOME, LIFE & STYLE, NEWS, PUBLIC NEWS

Dr.Nandini Azad President of Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW) Working Women's Forum (India) (WWF) Celebrating Global Victory Twice IRU – Internationale Raiffeisen Union

ADMINISTRATOR NOVEMBER 23, 2023



Introduction:

The Working Women's Forum (WWF) & the Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW) have 14 branches across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh & Telangana, reaching 6,25,000 poor women members.

ICNW provides low-interest small loans to micro-entrepreneurs in 282 occupations, transforming women from survival to development.

The gender & equity model aligns with SDGs, emphasizing the transformation of women into co-operators and leaders.

Financial Inclusion for Sustainable Development:

ICNW's innovative financial inclusion program empowers women with credit, training, mobility, and market opportunities, preventing gender-based violence.

Women in ICNW-WWF save, become bankable, invest, accumulate assets, and assume leadership roles, building a network connecting marginalized communities.

Raiffeisen Model and Historical Connection:

The Raiffeisen model influenced Madras city (Chennai) in the late 19th century, leading to the emergence of rural finance in India.

ICNW's cooperative approach replaces moneylenders, aligning with global cooperative movements.

National and International Acclaim:

Prominent figures like Queen Mother Juliana of the Netherlands, Hillary Clinton, and Indian leaders admire ICNW's unique grassroots women's empowerment.

Latest Achievements:

ICNW's commitment to women's empowerment through capacity building has yielded remarkable achievements. The empowerment training provided by ICNW has not only enhanced women's leadership qualities but has also positioned them as influential decision-makers in

households and communities. Through gender awareness training, women are equipped with the knowledge of their rights, enabling them to emerge as local leaders.

A shining example of this transformative impact is Padmavathy, who, once in extreme poverty, is now a landowner thanks to ICNW's financial inclusive strategies. Padmavathy's journey includes diversifying into farming, adopting organic techniques, and expanding her market influence. With ICNW's support, women farmers, like Padmavathy, gain bargaining power, diversify income sources, and enhance family food security. Importantly, these efforts not only strengthen resilience against climate change through financing but also promote biodiversity practices, recognizing and leveraging the valuable indigenous knowledge of women in tackling climate challenges. The Padmavathy case study exemplifies the tangible and empowering outcomes resulting from ICNW's holistic approach to women's empowerment.

Creating Supply Chains During Pandemic:

In response to the challenges posed by the global pandemic in 2020, WWF-ICNW took proactive measures by launching an Asia-Pacific digital financial literacy program during the lockdown. This initiative aimed to educate staff and members across the region on the use of digital financial platforms such as G-Pay, Phone Pe, and NEFT, providing training in regional languages. A pivotal aspect of this program was the "Training of Trainers" workshop, where 65 women leaders were equipped to impart digital financial literacy to underserved women. This strategic move has revolutionized ICNW's operations, as participants embraced digital skills and adopted fair growth strategies for their businesses.

One success story is that of Ms. Sasikala, a 33-

year-old entrepreneur from Central Chennai. Through the digital literacy training provided by WWF-ICNW and financial assistance, Sasikala initiated a successful online business during the pandemic. Starting with an initial loan of Rs. 5,000, she purchased various clothing items from a wholesaler and retailed them through six loan cycles. Leveraging her digital skills, Sasikala used her mobile phone to take online orders for household requirements and ensured doorstep delivery. Grateful for the support from WWF-ICNW, Sasikala acknowledges the organization's president for the unwavering assistance provided even amidst the challenges of the pandemic.

During the lockdown, ICNW demonstrated its commitment to supporting nearly 120,000 women members who faced difficulties in travel and accessing loans. The organization provided continuous financial assistance, pandemic preparedness guidance, and essential supplies. Remarkably members, displaying exceptional resilience and commitment by never defaulting on their obligations, were honored with the **“Corona Micro-Entrepreneur Warrior’s Award.”** This recognition, bestowed upon them for their outstanding efforts, garnered attention from dignitaries and the media, highlighting the impactful role of micro-entrepreneurs as essential warriors during challenging times. Today WWF-ICNW 43 years old starting as a small grassroots cooperative has reached the global tables were poor womens voices on cooperatives policy and programs they participate alongwith nearly 14 members represented.

Successful Impact & Outcomes

The outcomes achieved by ICNW through its Growth Process – Gender and Equity Model stand as a testament to the transformative power of collective action. Empowering individual,

marginalized women in the informal sector, ICNW has successfully turned them into co-operators and trade unionists, significantly enhancing their collective bargaining power. By challenging societal norms and improving working conditions through cooperative models, ICNW addresses intersecting barriers of caste, class, and gender. This innovative approach has not only led to the creation of local supply chains, climate change initiatives, and digital literacy but has also infused confidence among its members, elevating their standard of living.

ICNW's success stories, where women initially supported with minimal loans now own houses and have become successful entrepreneurs, underscore the organization's impact. As a beacon of inspiration, ICNW demonstrates that with the right support, marginalized women can overcome challenges, contribute to society, and lead fulfilling lives, making it a global symbol of hope and empowerment.



Author: ADmiNIstRAtor

Youtube Link:

1. https://youtu.be/Lo7Sucnw_7s (with sub title Mega TV)
2. <https://youtu.be/BWjpSrR8LqQ?si=gY5WqaxYDk8kJI8a>
3. <https://youtu.be/IMJCDKdBJw4>
4. <https://youtu.be/G7zSKSqj1uw>
5. <https://dtnewstv.com/?p=8697>
6. <https://youtu.be/GSbMzhQaTjk?si=R86bNrKH2SXk4ckd>