

MINUTES OF THE COOP-CONNECT MEETING ON “CONFRONTING CLIMATE CHANGE : ROLE FOR COOPERATIVES HELD ON 25TH February 2010

The Coop-Connect Forum of National Cooperative Union of India,[the apex organization of the Cooperative Movement in the country] organized a panel discussion on “*Confronting Climate Change – Role of Cooperatives*” on **25th February 2010 at NCUI New Delhi**. The panel discussion was attended by the officers/staff of national cooperative organizations besides the representatives of national / international organizations in the field of development, environment and other allied fields. The Coop-Connect Forum of NCUI (www.ncui.net) has been created recently to popularize the cooperative concept by forging linkages with both cooperatives and other organizations that may not be in the cooperative field through conducting meetings / workshops on issues which may have a wider significance. The Forum has also launched a blog (URL www.ncui.net/coop_blog.php) with an objective to create a platform for serious discussions on the issues confronted by the cooperative sector as well as other inter-disciplinary issues which may have linkage with the cooperative sector. The objectives of the meeting “**Confronting Climate Change – Role of Cooperatives**” were to:

- -Assess the implications of climate change on the cooperative sector.
- -Gauge the level of awareness on this vital issue amongst the cooperatives.
- -Attempt to formulate a road-map keeping in view the current developments in climate change and the fact that cooperatives have already come up with major interventions in the field of environment.

The key panelists on the occasion were Dr. Chan-Ho Choi, Regional Director, ICAROAP, Dr. Anupam Khanna, Sr. Advisor, Global Development Network, Mr. Sudip Mitra, Asstt. Professor, School of Environmental Sciences, JNU, Mr. Sakarama Somayaji, Fellow, TERI, Mr. Naimur Rahman, Director, One World South Asia, Dr GC Shrotriya, Consultant, IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd. Dr. Daman Prakash, Consultant, IFFCO Foundation moderated the discussions.

In her opening remarks, Mrs. Anita Manchanda, Chief Executive, National Cooperative Union of India drew attention to the fact that climate change can worsen the scenario in which 1 billion people in the world are denied access to food. She said that cooperatives can tackle climate change by creating global consciousness. She further said that students and youth should connect to cooperatives and then to climate care and further take responsibility for safeguarding the environment. She highlighted the fact that so far there is no dialogue by the government with cooperatives to mitigate impact of climate change. She argued that since the cooperatives have huge infrastructure of cooperative education and training under the aegis of NCUI, the government should take services of NCUI in this regard. Reiterating the significance of climate change she suggested that ICA should add **“care for climate”** in ICA principles..

Dr Chan-Ho Choi, Regional Director, International Cooperative Alliance Regional Office for Asia-Pacific said that cooperatives being value-based organizations with a large membership base can have tremendous potentialities in the field of climate change. He said that at global level ICA has tried lobbying with international bodies like UN (UN Resolution on Climate Change) for a favourable stance on cooperatives in the area of climate change. However, he confessed that much needs to be done on this front. Dr Choi pointed out that there are many cases of direct intervention of cooperatives in climate change like forestry cooperatives and jatropha cooperatives in Thailand and India and gave the shining example of IFFCO which has done commendable work in energy saving and has won numerous awards. He strongly advocated for adopting environmental friendly initiatives at the individual level and said that the behavioral change has to be adopted in the functioning of cooperatives. He emphasized on the need to showcase cooperative best practices in climate change and environment to the widest extent. Dr Choi was of the view that ICAROAP has tremendous responsibility in collecting and disseminating information in this regard.

Dr. Anupam Khanna, Senior Advisor, Global Development Network, one of the key panelists pointed out that his interest in cooperatives stems from the fact that the futuristic agenda is action research in which involving users and stake holders will be

important and here cooperatives fit in the scheme of things. Global Development Network[headquartered in Delhi] is a leading international research organization promoting knowledge for the purpose of development. Dr Khanna in his presentation highlighted that climate change is a big threat to social and economic development in which poor are most affected. He rationalized that climate change is not merely water level rising, or some other environmental hazard, instead climate change affects human security which leads to migration resulting in conflict of resources as it happened in the past. He emphasized that despite having national and international summits on climate change, the problem of climate change has to be differentiated at local level. He lamented over the fact that there is little awareness about effective adaptation as far as climate change is concerned, and there is little in public discourse on what adaptation means. He pointed out that research in climate change in developed countries is in accordance with the conditions which may not work in the developing context. In this regard he elaborated that there is inadequate information about understanding local economic conditions resulting in imbalance. His presentation highlighted six knowledge clusters on Global Warming, amongst which he felt that behavioral dimension is very important. He further said that in this multi-disciplinary approach is important where psychology, sociology and cooperative learning on the ground become very important. Emphasizing the importance of information, education and communication in the field of climate change, he felt that cooperatives can play a pivotal role here. Finally he concluded that cooperatives can play important role in sharing knowledge of policies with members and public at large.

Mr. Sudip Mitra, Asstt. Professor, School of Environmental Sciences, JNU in his presentation highlighted that in the field of natural resources the cooperative model has many opportunities. He felt that the cooperative model has sense of ownership which is unique. He cited many instances of success in this regard at places like Koraput, Jabalpur, Kodukuttai etc. He further substantiated that people's participation differentiates cooperative programmes from other programmes. He felt that as compared to nationalization and privatization where the issues of equity and sustainability are not given emphasis as compared to the factor of efficiency, the cooperative model very well addresses these issues. Pointing out to many success stories he cited the notable case of Tree Growers' Association in Gujarat which is

working quite well. Drawing attention to the problem of soil deterioration, he said that this can be tackled efficiently by cooperatives which have strong community base. Enumerating the tools of adaptation like soil carbon bank, water bank, fodder banks, inputs bank and knowledge bank he said that the cooperatives can diversify in these areas.

Mr Sakarama Somayaji, Fellow, TERI throwing light on the conceptual base of cooperatives based on ILO definition said that as member-driven democratic organizations cooperatives can formulate a strategy that is environmentally, socially, economically and politically sustainable. He pointed out that migration and displacement are two key impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. He said that the breakdown of ecosystem-based activities in the areas such as subsistence herding, farming and fishing will be the prime drivers of forced migration. Arguing for the case of cooperatives he however said that cooperatives are present in all these areas. More importantly, he advocated for an inclusive programme through cooperatives in climate change for creation of awareness on environmental and other allied issues by reaching out to the members, more particularly the youth

Mr Somayaji further said that an effective media for communication for all the steps enumerated above can come through cooperatives. He called for involvement of around 6 lakh cooperatives in the programme in which grass root level cooperatives through a bottom-up-approach can come forward. He highlighted the key action points for this programme with involvement of cooperatives at all levels. These are- creation of a model centre of cooperative education, energy resources and water savers methodologies / technologies. As regard funding he said that the entire programme can be funded by governmental / bilateral, multilateral, private organizations. The various components like health, environment, education, plantation, natural resources management etc. can be funded by various agencies as per their CSR priorities.

Mr. Naimur Rahman, Director, One World South Asia (a reputed ICT international organization dealing with equity, justice, communication etc.) pointed out the importance of understanding equity with a community centric approach. He emphasized that community- centric adaptation is very important to help farmers to

cope up with the changes in climate. He felt that in the era of knowledge economy communicating knowledge to the community is very important. He suggested that NCUI being the apex organization of the Indian cooperative movement should take the lead in bringing grass- root issues about climate change to the fore-front. Clean Development Mechanism[CDM] is an arrangement under the Kyoto Protocol allowing industrialized nations with greenhouse gas reduction commitment to invest in ventures that reduce emissions in developing countries. He also suggested that an organization like NCUI can provide facilitation to many of its activities brought within the perspective of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) so that extra resources in terms of climate mitigation can be approached. He was of the view that in reduced emission for forest degradation cooperatives can play an important role. He also came up with a vital suggestion that as the formulation of National Solar Mission is still in evolutionary stages, NCUI should engage itself with the concerned Ministry to provide community-centric perspective to the Mission. Mr. Rahman offered free community-centric knowledge application (www.bhoogyan.net) for the community based organizations like cooperatives.. Bhoogyan is one world South Asia integrated knowledge system on climate change adoption.

Mr G.C. Shrotriya, Consultant, IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd in his presentation touched upon the vital aspects like global warming, contribution to global green house emissions, impact of climate change on agriculture, potential role for cooperatives, some initiatives by Indian cooperatives etc. Elaborating on the role of cooperatives, he said that cooperatives can carry out awareness programmes by reducing CO2 gaseous emission, reduce fuel consumption, adopt energy efficient technology, manage waste disposal etc. He presented a sectoral picture of environment initiatives with emphasis on fertilizer cooperatives, sugar cooperatives, forestry cooperatives, dairy cooperatives, oilseed cooperatives, etc. As major highlights he said that KRIBHCO and IFFCO are recognized for environment protection and energy conservation, and they encourage tree plantation, bio-gas, vermin-compositors, etc. While on one hand dairy cooperative have promoted tree growers cooperatives, recycling of milk pouches, solar water-heater, on the other hand sugar cooperatives are involved in efficient treatment, recycling of effluent water, promotion of bio-gas etc.

Mr Mukesh C Gupta, Sr. Specialist, EIIP, ILO speaking on the occasion said that poor are disproportionately affected by climate change. Calling for creating strong awareness in this field he said that strategies have to be formulated and suitable mechanisms devised to cope up with the affects of climate change. He noted that most of the members of cooperatives are poor and acknowledged that cooperatives are effective service delivery agency and have strong value orientation. He suggested that cooperatives must be sensitized to integrate climate change in their various sectoral areas of operations and felt that formulating effective strategies in this regard would be paramount for a more pronounced role of cooperatives in climate change.

Dr Daman Prakash, Consultant, IFFCO Foundation who moderated the discussions observed that members' awareness and participation are vital for a stronger role of cooperatives in climate change. While pointing out the role of Indian Farm Forestry Development Cooperatives in planting trees and regenerating degraded lands, he also mentioned about Nasik Euclyptus Growers' Cooperatives which has checked soil erosion. Talking about the role of IFFCO Foundation he said that the Foundation conducts member education programmes for the members of PACs so that they can be aware about climate change, soil erosion etc. Citing the example of Japan where this year's theme is "*Agriculture Cooperatives – Clean and Green*" he said that all cooperatives with brand JA conform to parameters laid down by Copenhagen Declaration. He informed that climate change is the central focus for all the agricultural cooperatives in Japan.

Dr Prakash felt that the cooperative sector should evolve a strong coping mechanism so that the farmers not only adopt perils and climate change but are also insured against losses of crops. He suggested that NCUI should create an environment in which cooperatives are not only linked to agriculture and consumer safety but they must also educate members on adverse impact of climate change.

In the open house discussion, the panelists and other participants came up with suggestions / ideas on multi-farious issues. Mr Mukesh C Gupta, ILO representative suggested that National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme[NREGP] with different ministries focusing on climate change has to be linked with cooperatives.

Dr Chan-Ho Choi, Regional Director, ICAROAP said that if cooperatives have to be used as developmental agency in tackling major issues then they should be provided incentives.

Recognising the significance of cooperatives, Mr Sudip Mitra, Asstt. Professor (Environmental Sciences) JNU said that the cooperatives should not lose their golden touch while handling the issues concerning climate change.

Mr. Naimur Rahman, Director, One World, South Asia said that cooperatives being community based organizations the incentives for them can be in terms of collating Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) benefits which become important for them to address mitigation in climate change. He suggested that NCUI can take lead in gearing up for getting incentives for cooperatives to adopt mitigation and adaption measures as integral part of their activities. He said that cooperatives under the aegis of NCUI must focus on getting Global Adaptation Funds which needs a lot of efforts.

Dr. Anupam Khanna, Sr. Advisor, Global Developmental Network commented over the fact that issues of climate changes are absent in policy formulation. He argued for setting up of rural electricity cooperatives in power distribution. He emphasized that though advantages of cooperatives in terms of economic efficiency may not be there but the cooperatives effectively address the issues of equity. In this respect he pointed towards Nobel Prize in Economics winner Elinor Ostrom whose work revolves around the model of alternative institutional organizations like cooperatives in South Asia, He also informed that in this model the problems of coordination, market failure etc are eliminated..

Dr. Suvokamal Dutt, a noted columnist speaking on the occasion highlighted the grave problem of soil erosion. He suggested that cooperatives can act as an effective pressure group for addressing the problem of climate change. He also said that for effective climate change policy there is need for inter- disciplinary approach by making the people aware through involvement of government agencies, media etc. besides forging strong connectivity with the academic world.

Dr. Vagish Jha, Consultant, National Institute of Social Defence speaking on the occasion pointed out towards a ground level reality which indicates significance of the

cooperative model. He draw attention to a recent development in which a large number of farmers in Gaya (district) of Bihar faced with the problem of dropping of ground water have shown interest in reviving age-old system of irrigation through cooperatives.

Mr K. L. Nalwaya, Former Executive Director, NCUI speaking on the occasion said that as cooperatives primarily represent poor, and the poor are most vulnerable to climate change. He pointed out towards the rising level of CO₂ as main concern for environmental problems.. He emphasized on developing various substitutes for renewable energy and suggested that sweet sorghum can be used as a substitute for co-generation in the sugar factories. He advocated forming of cooperatives/ SHGs so that the surplus waste and other renewable energy options can be developed in a coordinated way for addressing the problem of climate change.

Dr G. C. Shrotriya, Consultant, IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd speaking on the occasion said that as cooperatives are working at the grass-root levels they can collect traditional wisdom in climate change and disseminate amongst the members

Ms Mallika Kumar, Asst Professor, Shri Ram College of Commerce speaking on the occasion said that creating awareness on the issue of climate change is very important. She said that at individual level undertaking energy-saving initiatives is imperative.

Summarizing the main points of the panel discussion, Dr Daman Prakash, Consultant, IFFCO Foundation said that creating awareness and devising effective action strategies by involvement of apex cooperative organizations like NCUI will be very important as far as confronting climate change is concerned. He further said that NCUI should coordinate with the government and other agencies to mobilize funds and other resources for more intensive national level awareness programme.

Dr T.Paranjothi , Secretary, NCCT proposed a vote of thanks

on the occasion. He said that NCCT under the aegis of NCUI may take the lead in devising effective training component on climate change for all the training programmes. Sanjay Verma, Nodal Officer, COOP-CONNECT coordinated the meeting.

Following suggestions/action-points which emerged after the panel discussion are as under-

- Government should utilize the education and training infrastructure of NCUI for strong interventions in climate change.
- Role of cooperatives is very important in information, education and communication as far as climate change is concerned.
- As far as climate change is concerned, the futuristic agenda is action research in which involving users and stake-holders will be very important. Cooperatives can play an important role in sharing knowledge of policies with members and public at large.
- Cooperatives can check soil erosion, and come up with strategies like soil carbon bank, water bank, fodder banks , inputs banks, knowledge bank.
- Need to formulate an inclusive programme through cooperatives in climate change through creation of awareness, and reaching out to the members, more particularly the children and youth.
- NCUI should take the lead in bringing grass-root voices about climate change to the fore-front
- .NCUI can provide facilitation to many of its activities brought under the perspective of Clean Development Mechanism[CDM] so that extra resources in terms of climate mitigation can be approached.
- As formulation of National Solar Mission is in evolutionary stage NCUI should engage itself with the concerned Ministry to provide community-centric perspective to the Mission.
- One World South Asia's free community-centric knowledge application[www.bhoogyam.net] can be made available to the community-based organizations like cooperatives.
- Need for effective lobbying on climate change in national/international bodies, and also show-case best practices in climate change on a wider scale.
- NCUI should create an environment so that cooperatives can educate members on adverse impact of climate change.
- Cooperatives at all levels must integrate climate change in their areas of operation.

- National Rural Employment Gaurantee Programme[NREGP] should be linked to cooperatives as NREGP has multi-sectoral convergence framework with different ministries focusing on climate change.
- Cooperatives should come up in the field of rural electrification.
- Cooperatives must act as a pressure group for tackling climate change, and there is need for taking inter-disciplinary approach in this regard.
- Efforts for climate change must be undertaken at the individual level. The weaker sections of the society like fishermen must be made aware, and provided assistance of all types for tackling climate change.
- As cooperatives consist mostly of poor, the programme of climate change has to go down to the grass-root levels.
- Renewable energy options must be developed in the cooperative sector. Sweet sorghum must be considered as a strong substitute.
- Efforts have to be coordinated by NCUI with governmental and other agencies to mobilise funds and other resources for more intensive national level awareness programme.
- National Centre for Cooperative Education and National Council for Cooperative Training may devise a specialized component of one session on climate change for all their training programmes.

