

MAPPING: KEY FIGURES

NATIONAL REPORT: MYANMAR

ICA-EU PARTNERSHIP

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Republic of the Union of Myanmar- Key Figures National Report

I. Introduction and context

This report is part of a global mapping exercise launched by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and its regional offices within a partnership signed with the European Commission for the period 2016-2020, which aims to strengthen the cooperative movement and its capacity to promote international development. Other research projects include a worldwide legal frameworks analysis, and several thematic researches on themes of significance for cooperatives.

Responding to challenges and existing knowledge gaps facing the cooperative movement, this research provides exhaustive information on cooperatives worldwide. This has been achieved by collecting the input of ICA members through an online questionnaire, and completing it with relevant national statistics, in order to obtain an accurate picture of the national situation. Mapping out cooperatives in each country provides a more precise picture of the cooperative context at national and regional levels, enhances the movement's visibility, networking, partnerships opportunities, as well as advocacy, and empowers cooperators by providing them tools for positive change.

Within this framework, the present report showcases information about the cooperative landscape in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, hereafter referred as Myanmar.

i. Historical background

The cooperative movement in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) originated under the British administrative rule in the early 20th century. Post its independence in 1948, cooperatives continued to be promoted. During the centrally planned social economy from 1962 to 1988, cooperatives developed a negative image owing to centralized control and operational inefficiencies. However, democratic reforms in the post-socialist era have helped overhaul the image of cooperatives positively. Today, cooperatives play an active important role in strengthening the agricultural sector and promoting financial inclusion in the country.

Cooperatives were introduced in Myanmar with the enactment of the Indian Cooperative Societies Act in 1904 when it was part of British India. Myanmar Agricultural Credit Cooperative Society in Myinmu Tsp of Sagaing region was the first cooperative established in 1905. Credit cooperatives were set up to overcome exploitation by informal money lenders. By 1929, credit cooperatives became popular in British India's rural agrarian environment and Myanmar had 4,000 credit cooperatives. The prosperity of credit cooperatives was drastically affected by the Great Depression of the 1930s which led to fall in their numbers from 2,000 in 1930 to 57 in 1935.

Following independence in 1948, the newly formed government promoted the establishment of cooperatives as a primary vehicle to advance the socialist economy and reject the reforms propagated under British administration. During the initial years after independence, cooperatives were largely state-controlled and operational in agricultural and financial sectors. In 1962, the post-independence government was overthrown by a military-socialist regime under Army Chief General Ne Win. Cooperatives during this time continued to be state-controlled entities, dominant in the agricultural and financial sector and used as a means to promote socialism. In 1975, the military-socialist regime established the Central Cooperative Society (CCS) to regulate and promote cooperatives. Under the socialist regime, Myanmar's economy suffered from economic downturn and state-controlled cooperatives failed to generate economic growth. Additionally, cooperatives became synonymous with government and were characterized by forced participation of people, poor supervision and management, minimal emphasis on education and training of members, and ignorance of cooperative values and principles. In the wake of the economic downturn in the 1980s, Army Chief General Ne Win renounced socialist policies and adopted the framework of a capitalist economy for nation building. This marked the first phase of post-socialist era in Myanmar (1988-2011).

With the opening up of the economy, the focus on cooperatives got weakened and they were still largely controlled by the state. However, the new legislation on cooperatives passed in 1992, paved the way for adoption of cooperative principles in law, a four-tier cooperative structure based on levels of operation, and autonomy and independence of cooperatives from the government. The restructuring of CCS in 2002 allowed it to function as an autonomous and independent national apex federation responsible for business and promotion of cooperatives in the country. It also started working towards education and training of cooperative members. With the objective to develop rural cooperatives, collaborations with international non-governmental organisations were forged to promote local farm-based organisations. One such example is of AVSI, an Italian-supported organization which in 2003 focused its efforts on the promotion of rural cooperatives. In 2008, it provided technical assistance to cooperatives in the Delta Region, affected by Cyclone Nargis. Initiatives like these helped uplift the image of local cooperatives.

Post 2012, higher education and training on cooperatives has been promoted in Myanmar. Two former cooperative colleges in Thanlyin and Sagaing were converted to universities to offer post-graduate diploma and Masters programmes to educate youth about cooperatives and develop specialised human resources. The second phase of post-socialist era in Myanmar started in 2016 with the National League for Democracy coming to power. Since 2016, industrialization, manufacturing and tourism sectors have seen a boost. However, agriculture continues to be the dominant sector in the economy. In 2019, cooperative societies in agriculture (including livestock and forestry) constituted 81% of the total cooperatives in Myanmar. Agricultural, savings and thrift, and microfinance cooperatives are being promoted for poverty alleviation, sustainable agriculture and financial inclusion. Post 2014, CCS and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (MoALI) have collaborated with international organisations to promote cooperative development in the country.

ii. Public national statistics

For a more comprehensive picture of the cooperative movement in Myanmar, the present section provides key data from the country's public registers as a useful background context to the ICA members' data showcased in Section II of the report.

The data presented here stems mostly from the Cooperative Department, Nay Pyi Taw in Nay Pyi Taw Council.

NUMBER OF COOPERATIVES:

In 2017, there were 40,613 cooperatives.

EMPLOYMENT:

In 2017, there were 132,551 employees in 40,613 cooperatives.

COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP:

In 2017, there were 4,251,841 members in 40,613 cooperatives.

iii. Research methodology

The aim of the mapping research is to collect and make publicly available reliable and up-to-date data to understand what the cooperative movement represents in the targeted country. With this view, the data detailed in the present report has been collected using the methodology detailed below.

The methodological tools include a questionnaire used to collect the data, which was distributed online to the members, as well as a methodological note provided for further guidance. They were built jointly with all ICA regional offices with the support of external experts from the European Research Institute on Cooperative and Social Enterprises (Euricse) and are applied in a harmonised way in all the target countries.

The classifications used in the research are consistent with the internal system used within the ICA movement (e.g. on membership status and types of cooperative organisations) and with standards increasingly adopted in recent studies and by international organisations like the ILO – e.g. using international classifications of economic activities such as the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) rev. 4, which ensures the comparability of statistics both nationally and internationally, as well as with statistics on other forms of enterprises.

Regarding the target organisations, considering that a worldwide survey has very challenging goals, and while the value of directly collecting data from non-member cooperatives must be recognised, the present Mapping exercise targets cooperative organisations members of the ICA.

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Furthermore, in order to complete the ICA members' data, the decision was taken to also look at external sources, to provide additional and more exhaustive cooperative statistics for the country. As a result, the data is collected following two strategies contemporaneously: 1) collecting statistics already available in the country; 2) carrying out a survey targeting ICA cooperative members.

In Myanmar, the Mapping questionnaire, was distributed to, and completed by one ICA member organisation in the country. After some additional follow-up and clarifications from the member, the figures provided were compiled to be presented in the next section.

II. Key figures

This section presents the results of the data collection directed by the ICA members.

Myanmar has one ICA member organisation:

1. Central Cooperative Society Ltd. (CCS):

Established in 1975, CCS is a full ICA member¹ and the national apex organisation² for cooperatives in Myanmar. CCS conducts various activities for its members which includes (1) training and education, (2) enhancing cooperation among cooperatives, (3) assisting cooperatives in their economic and financial needs, (4) strengthening international relations through global cooperatives, (5) advocating the needs of Myanmar's cooperative movement, and (6) assisting the implementation of bilateral projects for member societies.

Its member organisations are active in these sectors: (1) Agriculture and food, (2) finance, (3) wholesale and retail trade, (4) transport, and (5) construction. CCS became a member of ICA in 1993.

i. ICA member data

The collected data was provided by CCS for the year 2017. While a significant portion of the questionnaire was completed, data could not be provided for the following variables:

¹ This category covers members with voting rights – as opposed to associate members (which can include for instance governmental agencies).

² Defined in the present research methodology as “the umbrella organization at national level in which all sectors of cooperatives (and/or mutuals) converge and that is responsible for promoting the cooperatives (and/or mutuals) in the country and providing services to the cooperative(and/or mutuals) members.”

- Sector-wise distribution of membership and employment in cooperatives represented
- Sector-wise proportion of female and youth membership and employment in cooperatives represented
- Turnover of CCS

ii. General overview

The present section provides an overview of the ICA membership data for Myanmar. It is displayed in several categories and with the support of graphs, for clarity purposes.

Category	Total (as of 2017)
Number of cooperatives represented	40,613
Number of memberships in cooperatives represented	4,251,841
Number of employees in cooperatives represented	132,551
Number of employees in CCS	76
Percentage of female employees	46% (35)
Percentage of youth employees	22% (17)

Table 1: Cooperative statistics received from CCS (2017)

ICA member, CCS represents 40,613 cooperative societies in Myanmar with a total number of 4,251,841 memberships and total number of 132551 employees.

On the other hand, CCS had 76 employees, of which 35 were women employees (46%) and 17 were youth employees (22%) as of 2017.

iii. Sector overview

The sectors used below correspond to the categories used in the ISIC rev. 4. to classify the economic activities carried out by the organisations concerned.

Sectoral overview of cooperatives by CCS

Sector	Agriculture and food	Finance	Wholesale and retail trade	Transport	Construction	Others
Number of cooperatives	32,243	4,000	2,448	471	62	1,389

Table 2: Cooperative statistics received from CCS (2017)

III. Graphs

i. Number of cooperatives per sector

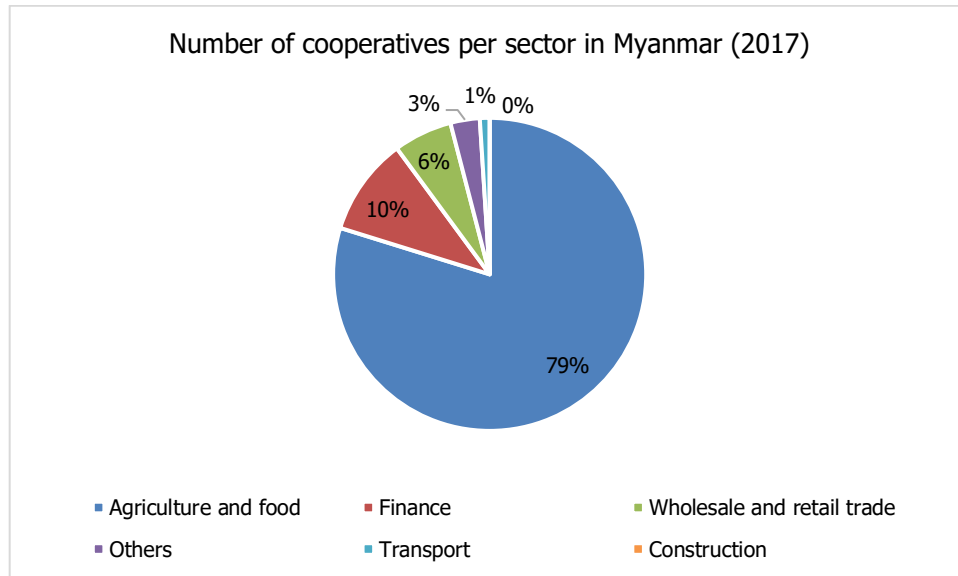


Figure 1: Number of cooperatives per sector in Myanmar (2017)

IV. Annexes

Sources and contacts are listed below.

Sources

1. The public national statistics for Myanmar were provided by CCS referring to these unpublished sources: Cooperative Department, Nay Pyi Taw in Nay Pyi Taw Council.
2. ICA-AP (2019). [Myanmar country snapshot](#).

Contacts

Further details on the Mapping research and other country reports are available on www.coops4dev.coop

The production of this report was overseen by staff from ICA-AP Office. For any further information or clarification, please contact mappingresearch@ica.coop

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