

Shadow Report

Response by the National Alliance of Taiwan Women's Associations
to the Second National Report on CEDAW
Concerning Article 14 on the Present Condition of Rural Women

by

National Alliance of Taiwan Women's Associations (NATWA)

Address: No. 165 7th Floor Xinhai Road Section 2, Taipei, Taiwan

Tel : (886-2) 2733-4668 E-mail: natwa@natwa.org.tw Website: <http://www.natwa.org.tw/>

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Preface

Taiwan is a densely-populated but mountainous island. Even though all of its administrative districts reach the UN definition of “urban”, i.e. population over 50,000, there are still vast differences of accessibility. Transportation, postal services, electricity, and piped water are universal, but because of historical development and geographical limitations, economic development has always been concentrated on the wide plain on the western side of the mountains; so some counties and towns have had long-term gaps in transportation, medical services, and communications, as well as inequality in wealth and other disadvantageous conditions. Aside from gaps in regional development, there are urban/rural and income gaps. Especially since the redrawing of administrative boundaries in 2011, utilization of national resources has tended even more towards concentration in five main cities, resulting even in marginalization for some areas that are not far from an urban metropolis.

The rural women that are referred to in this shadow report are those that live in the long-neglected areas that are mountainous, economically remote, relatively inaccessible, or marginalized. These non-urban areas generally face population outflow, labor shortage, aging, grandchildren left behind with grandparents, relative lack of resources, frequent natural disasters, and other thorny problems. And women living in these areas are subject to lingering traditions of gender inequality, and so bear a greater burden in household maintenance, unremunerated care services for old and young, agricultural work, etc. Compared to urban women, rural women are

more in need of concern under government policy on basic life conditions, whether in health, education, medical treatment, information services, or transportation. Therefore, the government should accord them more support and protection of rights in order to implement Article 14 of CEDAW and to assist rural women in maintaining a basic standard of living and human dignity.

The National Alliance of Taiwan Women's Associations (NATWA), non-profit and non-governmental, is the only umbrella group for organizations promoting women's interests across the island of Taiwan. Founded in 2001, it is a union of over sixty women's organizations across the nation. In the following report, we respond to the relevant content (a total of 45 items) in the governmental Second National Report on CEDAW and present eight major recommendations, as below.

1. Response to Items 14.9-14.12

Women are an important labor force in Taiwan's rural sector, but in terms of sharing power in decision-making, they have always been on the disadvantaged margins. It is suggested that the government:

- (a) Abide by CEDAW Article 4, and clearly propose special measures for ad hoc implementation, such as adopting measures to reward women for participation, requiring protected quotas for women, etc., in order to accelerate opportunities and capacity for policy participation by rural women. This will further serve to direct village development towards meeting the needs of women.
- (b) Review the relevant organizational regulations of farmers', fishermen's, and irrigation associations, etc., including how personnel such as directors, core staff, representatives, and committee members, etc., are appointed or constituted, and strike out obstacles to women's participation. Moreover, follow the lead of the central government in setting a protected participation quota of one-third for either sex.

2. Response to Items 14.1-14.3, 14.8, and 14.13

In evaluating the development of gender equality in Taiwan's villages, there have been two main indicators: rural women's public participation and the sharing household work with men in the village setting. Unfortunately at present both indicators show signs of lagging behind. Home economics is of course not the exclusive domain of women, but in the multitude of villages the participants in the home economics program classes long provided by the government have been all women, virtually without exception. Because of this we must suspect both the appropriateness of the home economics program in its current form, and whether it actually reinforces the gender division of labor with women inside the household and men outside. Has the home economics program actually substituted for women's public participation, and in effect been an obstacle in the development of gender equality?

We believe there has been a mutually-reinforcing relationship between the two. The government agencies should reconsider these from the angle of the mainstreaming of gender issues, and

review what these home economics programs mean in influencing the development of the two sexes in the rural sector; and furthermore actively formulate means for improvement.

3. Response to Items 14.14.1 and 14.14.2

Although the law clearly protects women's inheritance of property, still in this society that values males and denigrates females, and under the pressure of the traditional family and clan, there are only a small number of women who are brave enough to stand up for their rights. At present in Taiwan, among landowners the proportion of women is only 34.6%, and in rural villages the proportion is no doubt even lower. We strongly recommend that the government inject the concepts of women's property inheritance and economic autonomy into citizens' basic education. And advocacy to the rural public on these issues should be reinforced by the authorities in farm associations, Hakka ethnic area associations, indigenous peoples' associations, etc., as well as by the local governments of counties and towns, so that gradually the social pressure against women inheriting property can be alleviated.

4. Response to Items 14.32-14.32.1

The central government sometimes lacks flexibility; when village community development organizations receive funding from the government, they often can only do environmental beautification and greening work. But villages have changed along with the times; there are a multitude of problems in family relations, such as children dropping out of school, grandparents raising children, family restructuring, elders living alone (especially women of advanced age), etc., for which resources for intervention and assistance are lacking.

The government should review whether the agencies and resources can be utilized with flexibility, to adjust the content and direction of rural community development, and add concern for the issues of real people and families, in order to respond to current needs.

5. Response to Items 14.33-14.33.2

Although average income and expenditures seem to be equivalent in rural areas, such that apparently there is a balance between them, actually this neglects the hidden problem of medical risk. Because in rural areas information and education is insufficient, travel is inconvenient, and access to medical resources is difficult, etc., when problems do occur treatment is often delayed, and rural residents then pay a higher price in medical treatment. Many rural women because of this are obligated to serve as the labor force in non-professional long-term care, in effect making up for the insufficiency of medical resources.

The government should review equitability in the national health insurance system, and propose a design to rectify regional differences in utilization of medical treatment. This should provide rural women with more education in medical treatment, plus training in long-term care; and it should also provide auxiliary care and respite for the caretakers in long-term home care.

6. Response to Items 14.34.1-14.34.6

The birth rate of rural women is higher than that of women in general in Taiwan. So their needs for care in pregnancy and parturition are higher as well, but actually because rural transportation is less convenient and with the rural/urban gap in accessibility of medical treatment facilities, rural women cannot easily obtain the support for reproductive functions that they need.

In order to recognize the reproductive risk to rural women, but also preclude it, the government could provide transportation and medical treatment to assist women in remote areas and guarantee their safety in childbirth; and other public service measures such as increasing the manpower in care services during pregnancy, setting up a mechanism for compensation to cover the medical risk inherent in childbirth, providing free reproductive counseling in the home, and subsidizing midwives that go to the home, etc.

7. Response to Items 14.37 -14.39.2

Taiwan's population is rapidly aging, and in the rural areas there are greater numbers of elderly women than elderly men, and they also on average have a longer life expectancy. As is known from the national report, all the relevant agencies in rural areas, such as the farmers' associations, indigenous peoples' associations, Hakka ethnic group associations, etc., have loose measures for dealing with aging in progress. But because they are not in charge of long-term care services, the benefits of their scattered efforts are limited.

We recommend that the government make a concerted effort to coordinate all of these agencies and integrate them into the overall national system for promoting long-term care. We suggest the concept of designing a network to assist village residents for "in situ" nursing care and aging "in place" (especially for aged women living alone), while avoiding an urban/rural gap in utilization of government resources and also the waste of redundancy.

8. Response to Item 14.42.4

At present there is a huge gap in computer literacy and utilization for women in remote rural areas. Aside from lack of funds to buy complete hardware, the two main obstacles to computer use are daily maintenance and ability to operate. In non-rural areas, similar situations can be overcome by market service mechanisms or by assistance from the youth who are all around; but this is not generally available in the rural areas.

It is recommended that the government might take as a concept model the service centers for the handicapped, and set up "service centers for digital applications" in remote rural areas, to provide the relevant maintenance for hardware plus assistance for computer operations, in order to secure women's willingness to learn and to spread computer access.

Alternative Report

Response by the National Alliance of Taiwan Women's Associations to the Second National Report on CEDAW Concerning Article 14 on the Present Condition of Rural Women

The Cooperative Economy of Rural Taiwanese Women

National Alliance of Taiwan Women's Associations (NATWA)

Address: No. 165 7th Floor Xinhai Road Section 2, Taipei, Taiwan

Tel : (886-2) 2733-4668 Website: <http://www.natwa.org.tw/>

Author & Editor: Sophie L.C. Liang, Ph.D. Economics

sophieliang58@gmail.com

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Preface

In the past, Taiwan's women's organizations rarely made a concerted effort concerning women's economic problems. However, in the last two years our National Alliance has delved deeply into the issues of concern to CEDAW Article 14 on rural women, and this has led us to hope to introduce new perspectives for improving women's economic prospects. Also in this process we have discovered the mechanism of "women's cooperative economy" that has long since been successfully promoted internationally, but which has not been given sufficient attention by our government. The relevant policies and regulations are scattered among various agencies, but there is a lack of high-level capacity or a dedicated and consistent promotion of cooperatives.

Although at present in Taiwan's society there are some successful examples of women's cooperatives for consumers, labor, caretakers, etc., upon closer look it can be seen that they have mostly depended on their own spontaneous efforts, gathering together cooperative members to join the mission, before they could stand up publicly in Taiwan's alternative "micro-economy". The government very rarely provided any concern or assistance, as it did previously for small and medium business enterprises in Taiwan.

Taking as an illustration Taiwan's well-known Taiwan Homemaker Consumers' Cooperative (THCC), it started twenty years ago when a group of housewives banded together in their mission for family health, food safety, and environmental sustainability, and launched joint purchasing on a very small scale. Now the number of members exceeds 50,000, and in 2013 the volume of business of the consumer cooperative members exceeded NT\$1.1 billion (US\$36.7 million). This cooperative not only assures the rights of the consumers and serves women's mission to protect their families; it also has saved farmers in remote areas from the usual exploitation by middlemen. Most importantly, through the democratic participation processes of the cooperative, the women who are in every phase of production, employment, service, and consumption of the product – and women are by far the majority of the participants – are the direct beneficiaries. They not only grow in professional knowledge and raise their own capacity for economic production; they also expand their gaze and concern from the nearby community to the level of the nation.

Can Taiwan's society nurture more cooperative enterprises like this, and let women bring forth a capacity for more economic autonomy? The answer is of course affirmative! Not surprisingly, in our current capitalist society which is tilted towards reaping profits for commercial conglomerates, there is an urgent need for the government to take a more active and effective role to stimulate women's learning and joint participation in the economy. We deeply believe that the special values of cooperative enterprises, "self-help, mutual help, public help", can create a multitude of welfare effects for the common people through "self-benefit, mutual benefit, public benefit", that are appropriate for the women of Taiwan and their special characteristics of autonomy, cooperation, resilience, and tolerance. Under the present conditions of Taiwan's society, it may not be possible for most women to create great enterprises as individuals; but on a small scale and with the model of cooperative enterprises that create a whole from apparently nothing, women assisting the community can together build a future: a future that can be realized while living in their own place, with autonomous choices, caring both for family and the individual, with employment and enterprise advancing together in the environment of a participatory economy. There is no better choice, and it is a responsibility for the government to take up.

Holding this understanding, we have prepared this Alternative Report on women's cooperative economy. We hope to spur the government to review again the laws and regulations concerning the development of cooperatives, and to lay down effective policies and actions to bring to fruition the international and constitutional protections for cooperatives. This will create benefits for the development of a people's economy and promote women's rights to participate in the economy, as enshrined in CEDAW Article 14.

We present the following five concrete suggestions:

1. Actuate Article 145 of the Constitution of the Republic of China, respecting the seven cooperative principles of the ICA; the government should also adopt legislation facilitating the policy of Cooperative Economic Development for the country, to promote mechanisms of economic development and financing for the Third Sector, to overcome the deprivations and

defects caused by large commercial interests, and to ensure the citizens' stability of livelihood. Set up a development fund for cooperatives, a platform for initiation of cooperatives, and financial mechanisms for insuring their risks.

2. Coordinate the tasks of all government agencies concerning cooperatives; elevate the rank of the overseeing bodies in the central government; loosen current domestic restrictions and regulations relevant to cooperatives; create an environment that is conducive to the development of cooperatives, as designated by the United Nations (2001).

3. Set women's cooperative economy as an important link in stimulation of the national economy; formulate concrete policies and steps to assist women in forming cooperative organizations in all kinds of business. Follow ILO recommendation No. 193 on the promotion of cooperatives, which provides guidelines for legislation on cooperatives.

4. Reinforce education for a cooperative economy among all governmental agencies and citizens, especially for rural areas that have need for economic development, and even more for older women entering the work force for a second time who have urgent need for assistance from the government.

5. Convene a national/international forum on "Women and the Cooperative Economy"; share successful international experiences; demonstrate the government's attention to formulating policy; strengthen cooperative learning among the populace.

Part 1. A Review of the Realization of CEDAW

As shown in Figure 1, poverty can be characterized as absolute poverty and relative poverty. (Absolute poverty was defined by the World Bank in 2005 as income under US\$1.25 per day.) No matter whether we are observing "old poverty" or "new poverty", the social phenomena are lack of earnings, unemployment, and income too low to afford subsistence. Even more insidious is the loss of ownership of the tools of production and increase in the numbers of the proletariat; the effects are wide-ranging, including increase in the rates of disease and mortality and decrease in productivity. This further constitutes a threat to social order, farm security, and food supply self-sufficiency. The attendant lack of savings and investment leads to insufficient investment in productive facilities, and thence avoidance of investment by outsiders, as well as loss of opportunities for international trade. The final outcome may be a drop in national GNP, increase in unemployment, etc., which throws the society into the trap of a vicious cycle of poverty.

The international cooperative movement has been developing for a long time; in the process of showing its concern for Humanity, Environment, and Planet, and with its members engaged in "self-help, mutual-help, help for humanity", it has through consumer, farm, financial and other cooperatives constructed healthy communities and mutual-cooperation networks, resolved problems of unemployment, stimulated innovation in enterprises, and raised opportunities for productive economies. It has achieved accumulation of social capital, improved care for citizens' lives, broken the vicious cycle of poverty through shared work, and moreover created a "virtuous cycle". This kind of "mechanism of cooperative enterprise ending poverty" further provides the people with cooperative education, to learn self-governance and independence. It not only moves towards the OECD's index for a satisfying life, it is also in concordance with the long-term development goals of the United Nations.

As shown in Figure 2, Liang (2013) has constructed a conceptual map for how, internationally, a legal framework for the protection of cooperatives should be set into national constitutions. In the case of the Republic of China, the ideals of the Father of the Nation Sun Yat-sen, that the one who plows the fields should own the land, guided the enshrining of the 1947 Constitution; it includes a general mandate for cooperative economy, but this has never been implemented through supporting legislation.

In its long process of historical development, the system of cooperative economy has functioned to care for the disadvantaged, to alleviate the condition of poverty, and to strive for the benefit of community and public good. It grants to the people the ability to express and nurture their social rights, labor rights, and economic rights; it has a double character, starting from a philosophy of social concern and developing a special body of economic enterprises, one that gives fair economic opportunities to the weak, while also protecting consumers, and one that provides a structure for labor to participate in the economy with mutual assistance and also with benefit to others. The cooperative economy is an economy of peoples' mutual assistance: an organization with fair economy, participatory economy, and beneficial economy.

After World War II, cooperative economy was recognized by the United Nations as an important means for regional economic development, and now even more in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, it is the international policy for eradication of poverty. Starting from the relationship between their constitutions and cooperative institutions, each country can in its constitution and in basic national policies stipulate rules that protect the development of cooperative enterprise. Although some countries forbid monopolies, they can at the same time choose to protect and assist cooperative development, and assure that the laws do not conflict with their constitutions. If there are laws that exclude them, priority can still be given to cooperatives. Because of this, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) has urged Asian countries to simply go in the direction of removing restrictions on the development of cooperatives; in fact in the last decade various countries have one after another set up platforms for guiding the initiation of cooperative enterprises, as well as development funds and mechanisms for insuring risks in cooperative enterprises. In expanding the range of enterprise activities, a model for multi-purpose cooperatives is introduced, one that meets the needs for caring for cooperative members, for community development, and for social and even international charity assistance – to create a “connection for good” that can alleviate the international dimensions of poverty.

In the years 1998-2012, the International Labour Organization three times provided guidelines for legislation on cooperatives, to assist nations through guidance and recommendations for creating a legal framework for cooperatives. The first edition, 1998, was directed towards providing the relevant information as to how countries could set laws and policies on cooperatives. The second edition (Guide to International Credit Union Legislation, 2005), aside from being based on the Guidelines adopted by the United Nations, aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives, and also incorporated ILO Recommendation 193 on the Promotion of Cooperatives, adopted 2002. In addition to cooperation in this field and provision of information services by experts of the ILO, assistance was provided through “Coopreform: Structural Reforms through Improved Cooperative Development Policies and Laws”, which addressed inter-regional cooperative development policy and provided support and services for cooperative legislation. This document emphasized that it was necessary to create a favorable legal, organizational, and administrative environment for the development of cooperatives. Its effect was shown in that sixteen countries promulgated legislation on cooperatives and nine countries formally adopted modern cooperative development policies. The third edition was published with influence from the

UN's 2012 International Year of Cooperatives, and its main content included a trend towards a unified legal system for diverse industries, which directly affected international regulations for industry, with new legislation for regional cooperatives as well as a legal framework for them. New generations of cooperative industries are in formation in Norway, the UK, Austria, and Germany; and Australia and Korea have already passed comprehensive and unified national legislation for development of cooperative industry.

The whole model takes the development of citizens' economy as its heart, and in accordance with the seven cooperative principles of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), it intends to create an economic mechanism in a "virtuous cycle" with the four elements of peoples' lives, ways of life, production, and ecology – all four in unison. This thinking is to be implemented in financial accumulation, social welfare, employment for women and youth, and industrial innovation, to improve incomes. International organizations, based on the two international conventions, including CEDAW, have further actively nurtured capacities and urged governments to repeatedly update cooperative law: that is, revision with the principle of concern for community and in realization of the principle of cooperation among cooperatives, as well as promotion of the real meaning of social responsibility. Cooperatives can care for people for their whole lives, and they have multiple directions for development; they can stimulate the flourishing of social, economic, cultural, and educational capacities. Because of this, they have been highly praised by international organizations and have long been accorded importance by many governments.

Part 2. The Dilemma and the Suggested Model of Cooperative Enterprise in Taiwan

In the case of Taiwan, there are 4,785 primary cooperatives with 65 federations in 2012, having business activities ranging from the agriculture (918 cooperatives and 228 cooperative farms; the proportion of women member is under 19%), commerce, finance and credit (337 credit unions; the proportion of women members is over 50%, one-third are rural), production and service industries. Total members are more than 3.39 million, including students, women, farmers, aboriginals, soldiers, officers, consumers, and laborers. The total capital is more than US\$1.33 billion (NT\$ 40 billion). Cooperatives operate based on the principle of concern for people; composed, owned, and managed by members; it is a unique type of small and medium enterprise with "one man one vote", not only social but also economic.

Cooperative enterprises impinge on at least fourteen governmental departments, but Taiwan lacks a dedicated agency with real power and coordination of functions; the administrating agency is the Ministry of the Interior, Center for Cooperatives, which is down on the third level of administration. The business administering departments are scattered among different parts of government, as shown in Figure 3, and moreover those various parts do not care much about the development of cooperatives. Because of this, cooperative educational activities have not been promoted. Rural women live in villages, and so their issues belong to the Council of Agriculture (COA) under the Executive Yuan. But the COA only pays attention to the agricultural system, and ignores the development of cooperative development. All of Taiwan's cooperatives are only depending on the Center for Cooperatives, which is limited in administrative status, personnel, and budget. Therefore its effect is not evident, and it falls far short in realizing Article 14 of CEDAW in the development of cooperatives for rural women. (See Appendix A.)

Liang (2011) proposed a “third sector mechanism for economy and financing”, as shown in Figure 4. This emphasizes the role of cooperatives and non-profit organizations in assisting the functions of social and economic activities. It encompasses “next” (future), “nature” (natural environment), and “network” (mechanism of communications) in the “3N” plan design. From the double operation of guidance and finances – fostering women, increasing the social value of youth, recognition of peoples’ financing – the disadvantaged are assisted in creating enterprises and employment, the financial cycle of social economic enterprise development is stimulated, and at the same time the green economy of cooperative society and social networks is developed. This works to resolve the problem of social inequality in the capitalist society.

1. Guidance: Create a Platform and Support System for the Initiation of Cooperatives

Learning from the experiences of Sweden, the European Union countries, and Japan, with values based on four elements (peoples’ lives, ways of life, production, and ecology) as the core, utilize all agencies of government (medium and small business section, youth job creation, Ministry of Labor education programs for micro-enterprise initiation, etc.) for training and systems; introduce public venture capital in accompaniment; build up guidance mechanisms for cooperatives in beginning, middle, and mature stages; provide free sharing of counseling, information systems, consultants, and guidance. The targets of this training are to be:

- a. Women’s, youth, and indigenous peoples’ micro-enterprises;
- b. Cooperatives in initiation, in transition, or joint projects with communities;
- c. Social enterprises.

2. Finance: Create a Cooperative Development Fund and a Fund for Guaranteeing Cooperative Credit Risk

Central and local governments should together set up cooperative development funds to support the platform for initiation of cooperatives. At the same time they should set up a fund for guaranteeing cooperative credit risk. Saving and mutual assistance societies should be emphasized, or credit cooperatives with capacities for local financial cooperation and safety functions. The scale of the funds and their operation can follow the same as used in the past for governmental support for medium and small enterprise, with comparable scale of credit guarantee funds. This is intended to achieve what international organizations have proposed, that all governments deal with cooperatives with treatment comparable to that for domestic medium and small industries. Concerning those which are disadvantaged and have financial needs, under the recommendation of non-profit organizations and after evaluation of the individual, social group, or family, they may be given appropriate financial education gradually and in order, in order to develop the habit of saving, and afterwards cooperatives may issue appropriate amounts of funds or loans assisting their employment, initiation of enterprise, or stability of living. Within these mechanisms must be built “self-help, independent employment, accumulation/ education/ investment of spiritual and real social capital” in a virtuous cycle, in order to achieve the policy goals of improvement in income, employment, and environment.

Part 3. Civil Society Response and Policy Suggestions:

The Cooperative Economic Sector

In response to Items 14.4-27, 14.32, and 14.35-45, we present the following six policy suggestions:

1. Respecting the seven cooperative principles defined by the ICA, the government should carry out Article 145 of the Constitution of the Republic of China, which is a directive to assist and encourage the development of cooperative businesses. This would approximate the current international cooperative legislation that is close to the thinking and intentions in the original framing of the Constitution. The government should also adopt legislation facilitating the policy of Cooperative Economic Development for the country, to overcome the deprivations and defects caused by large commercial interests and to ensure the citizens' stability of livelihood (refer to Figure 2, Table 1-1).

2. Coordinate the tasks of all government agencies concerning cooperatives; elevate the rank of the overseeing bodies in the central government. The National Development Council (NDC) should recruit experts in cooperative economics to assist in formulating a policy of cooperative economic development, and the Gender Equality Committee (GEC) should also recruit experts to promote mechanisms of economic development and financing for the Third Sector—Self-Mutual-Public Help between the coops and NPOs to eliminate poverty (refer to Figure 4). The intention is that we can create “a virtuous cycle” (refer to Figure 1) in the economy to encompass the principles of the United Nations’ “Guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives (Guidelines 2001)” and to implement CEDAW pragmatically (refer to Figures 3 and 4)

3. Set women’s cooperative economy as an important link in stimulation of the national economy; formulate concrete policies and steps to assist women in forming cooperative organizations in all kinds of business.

3-1. Convene a national/international forum on “Women and the Cooperative Economy”; share successful international experiences; demonstrate the government’s attention to formulating policy; strengthen cooperative learning among the populace.

3-2. In order to encourage the formation of cooperatives for care workers and relieve the homecare pressure on rural women, it is necessary to adjust the long-term care system as well as to amend its regulations to allow the institutional care system to expand into homecare, with the model of multi-functional care but in small size units, for a care system that will be more humanistic and flexible. This should be embedded within a network for integrated community development and meet the national need for aging-in-place. This policy follows ILO recommendation No.193 on the promotion of cooperatives.

4. Reinforce education for a cooperative economy among all governmental agencies and citizens, especially for rural areas that have need for economic development, and even more for older women entering the work force for a second time who have urgent need for assistance from the government.

4-1. Establish a platform for initiating cooperatives, to formulate friendly policies in central and local governments. Cooperative education needs to be brought into the formal education system in order to take effect. There are two stages in providing cooperative education to the country: the first stage is to imbue people with the fundamental concepts of solidarity, caring,

and mutual help; while the advanced stage is to establish a mechanism for nurturing, initiating, and managing cooperatives, especially for women. Based on this system of cooperative education, rural residents can be offered the opportunity to initiate cooperative enterprises, which is helpful not only for moderating the pressure of unemployment but also for progress in rural and remote area community economic development (refer to Figures 3 and 4).

4-2. Provide a dynamic or mobile learning environment with formal and informal education opportunities for the foreign women who have been married into Taiwan families and live in the countryside.

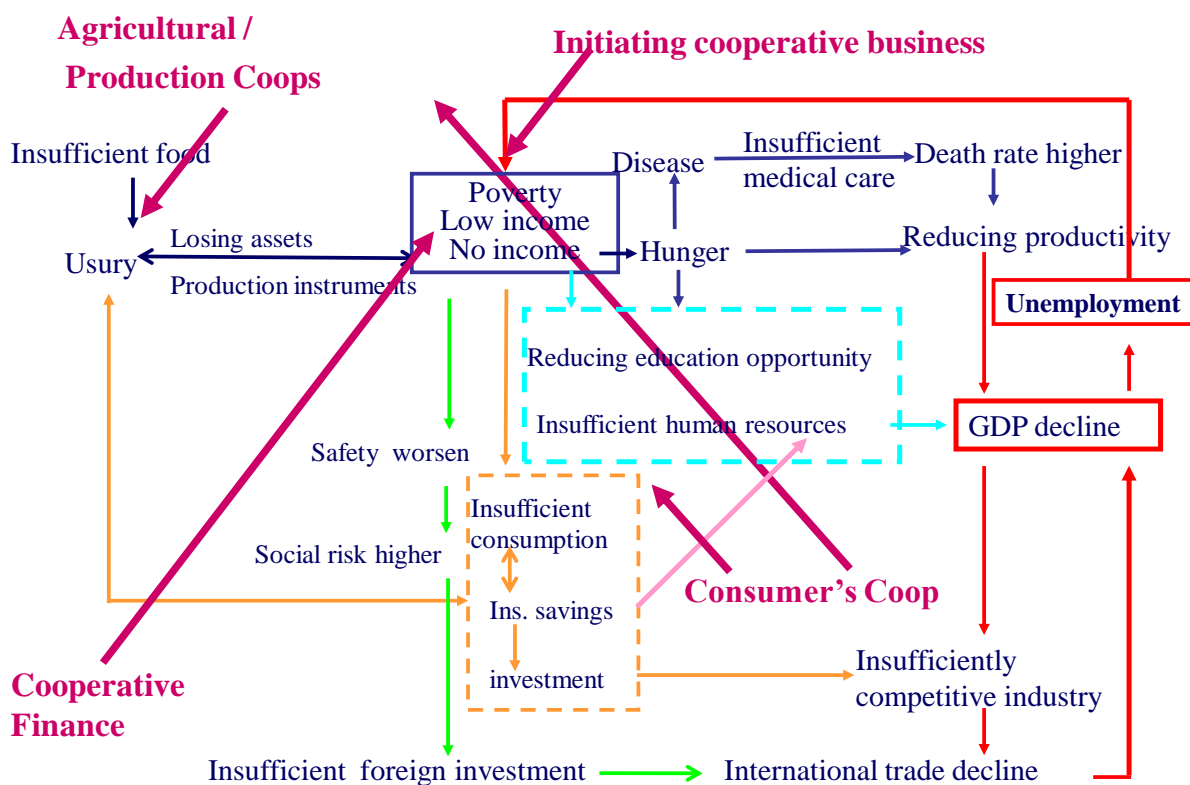
4-3. Investigation by the relevant departments and integration of the research is a critical way to help cooperative development. The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) should establish a research and planning division to regularly undertake the study of international and domestic cooperative regulations. The Council of Agriculture (COA) should periodically survey agricultural cooperatives and rural family livelihood to build up a data bank relevant to gender equality, to assist in formulating the policies for cooperative economic development and to ensure that women's participation in the cooperative movement progresses smoothly.

4-4. For the purpose of improving computer abilities and thus to close the traditional agriculture cooperative digital gap, a digital learning project should be initiated and sustained to achieve the best effect. To this end, an appropriate budget and technical personnel in information technology are all required.

5. Utilize the model of cooperative enterprises to create a national economy with mutual assistance and solidarity; provide to rural women the opportunity to obtain land easily with priority under special measures; protect their economic rights and access to finance (refer to Figures 1, 2, and 4).

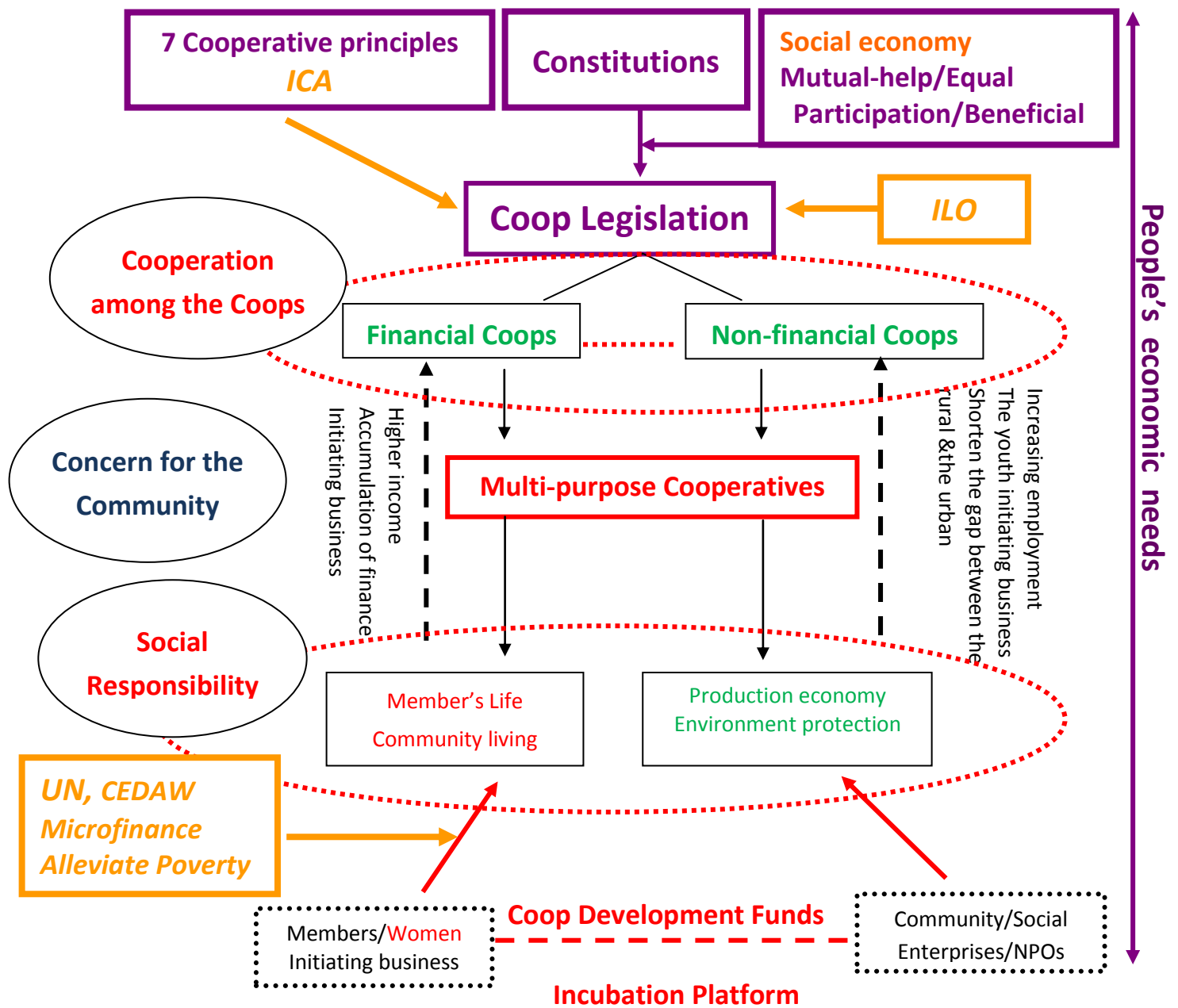
6. Loosen current domestic restrictions and regulations relevant to cooperatives, augment the articles to amend the Cooperative Act which is currently being sent to the Legislative Yuan for review and passage; clearly stipulate and enjoin that the Executive Yuan should set up the Cooperative Development Fund; and create a mechanism to guarantee funds for cooperative credit risk insurance. This is designed to provide credit to all kinds of cooperative businesses and to stabilize the cooperative finance system. In reinforcing the solidarity of the cooperative system, this also responds to ICA (2012), the United Nations' appeal to governments in its Guidelines (2001) to create an environment that is conducive to the development of cooperatives, to set up public funds for developing cooperative enterprises.

6-1. Augment the articles to amend the Cooperative Act which is currently being sent to the Legislative Yuan for review and passage; clearly stipulate and enjoin that the Executive Yuan should set up the Cooperative Development Fund; and create a mechanism to guarantee funds for cooperative credit risk insurance. This is designed to provide credit to all kinds of cooperative businesses and to stabilize the cooperative finance system. In reinforcing the solidarity of the cooperative system, this also responds to the United Nations' appeal to governments in its Guidelines (2001) to set up public funds for developing cooperative enterprises.



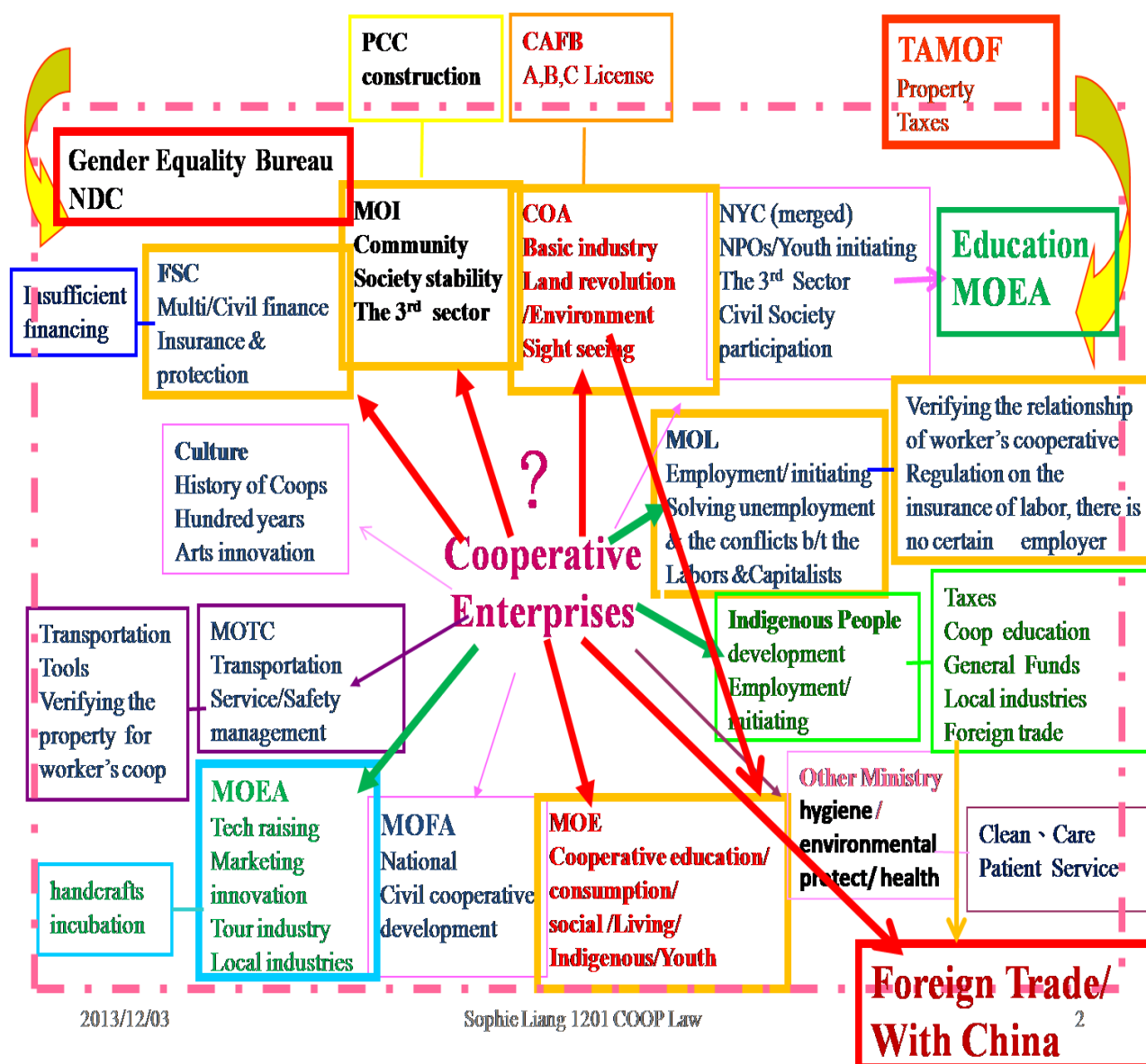
Data sources: Sophie L.C. Liang (2013/3).

Figure 1. Initiating cooperatives to terminate the vicious cycle of poverty



Data sources: Sophie L.C. Liang (June 2013).

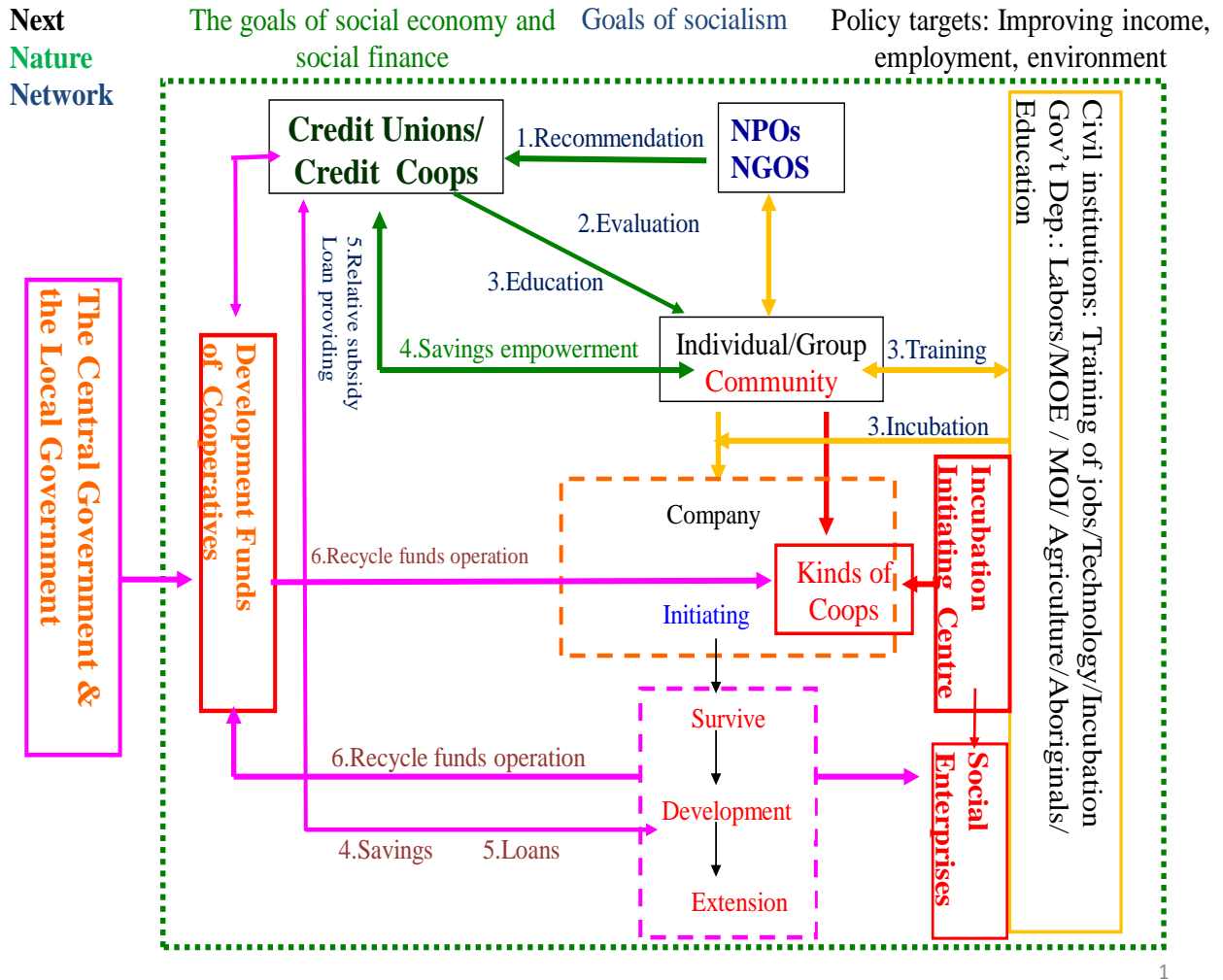
Figure 2. The framework for international constitutions to protect cooperative legislation -- Introducing “multi-purpose cooperatives”



Legend: Departments of the government for Taiwan (Republic of China)

- CAFB, Council of Agriculture, Forestry Bureau
- MOE, Ministry of Education
- MOEA, Ministry of Economic Affairs
- MOF, Ministry of Finance
- MOFA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- MOI, Ministry of the Interior
- MOL, Ministry of Labor
- MOTC, Ministry of Transportation, Communication
- NPA, National Property Administration
- NYC, National Youth Commission, part merged into MOE & part into MOEA
- PCC, Public Construction Commission
- TAMOF, Taxation Administration MOF

Figure 3. Cooperative enterprises and the overseeing departments of government in Taiwan (Republic of China)



Sophie Liang (2011)

Data sources: Sophie L.C. Liang (2011).

Figure 4. The mechanisms of economic development and financing of the Third Sector – Self-help, mutual help, public help between the coops and the NPOs to eliminate poverty.

**Table 1. Summary of How Cooperatives are Restricted with
Laws, Regulations and Disadvantageous Conditions**

1-1. Policy prospect and Framework of the Cooperative Act			
Classification	Title of Laws	Article	Disadvantageous conditions
Women's Policy under the Economic Policy Prospects	Constitution	Article 145	<p>1. The policy of our government has not in practical terms encouraged the development of cooperatives, such that over the long term their function in the social economy has been stunted. Furthermore, this has even resulted in cooperatives being discriminated against in national production policy and in dealings with government agencies. This is in contravention of the United Nations' Guidelines (2001) and "the principle of the minimum fair treatment" propounded by the International Labor Organization, and despite the fact that internationally many governments value the cooperative economy as "the Core of the Third Sector" and a useful means to benefit national economy.</p> <p>2. The provisions of articles 14, 15, 22, and 171 of the Constitution of the Republic of China grant to the people the right to organize cooperative enterprises, the right to obtain employment, and the right to economic activity. These provisions should be thoroughly implemented.</p>
	The Additional Articles of the Constitution (2005/6/20)	Article 10 Item -3 -6 -10	<p>1. Our government should allocate funds to effect encouragement of small enterprises, women's employment, and social welfare businesses, to thus improve the nation's welfare. But what happens now, to the contrary, is that our government stymies those people who spontaneously organize mutual help cooperatives.</p> <p>2. Both the central and the local governments have not fully realized the economic value of cooperatives, and administrative resources for them have long been insufficient. This has limited the development of education promoting cooperatives.</p> <p>3. The lack of the potential for improving the lives of rural women through cooperatives will weaken the implementation of CEDAW, and Taiwan will be left behind other states that have ratified the convention.</p>
Cooperative Industry	Cooperative Act		<p>1. When our government passes the revised integrated legislation of the Cooperative Act, it should consider incorporating the seven principles of the International Cooperative Alliance; and it should devote an exclusive chapter of the Act to defining each cooperative enterprise. So as to maintain dedicated administration responsibility and to diversify the development of cooperative enterprises, "cooperative industry" should be affirmed as a crucial part of national economic organs and policies.</p> <p>2. The goals for the social economy set by the United Nations should be pursued and duly adjusted to domestic economic policy. Concretely, these goals are alleviation</p>

			<p>of poverty, women's and children's health, universal education, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and partnership relationships for development of the social economy.</p> <p>3. The provisions of Article 3 of the Cooperative Act define categories of cooperatives and limit their scope of business operations. This is an obstacle to the development of a caring social economy with mutual help functions. In the end, it goes against international trends towards "citizen participation, people's economy", which may balance the biases of capitalism.</p> <p>4. The provisions of the Cooperative Act should be revised and augmented, so as to set up "Cooperative Development Funds" and establish a "Platform for Initiating Cooperatives". Such policies have been implemented in north and south Europe, and Central and South America, and they serve in employment expansion for women and youth as well as in economic improvement for remote districts. The provisions should include various elements such as information technology, study of legal regulation, counseling in actual operations, education to promote cooperatives, and so on.</p>
Social Welfare	<p>Cooperative Act</p> <p>Credit Union Act</p> <p>Credit Cooperative Act</p>		<p>1. The provisions of the Cooperative Act and the Credit Cooperative Act should be revised and augmented, so that cooperative enterprises may invest in social welfare businesses. Such stipulations have been adopted by consumer cooperatives and agricultural cooperatives in the European Union, the United States, and Japan, to enhance the social functions of cooperatives and meet the needs of the generations aging with few offspring. These can increase members' earnings and improve employment opportunities in the locality.</p> <p>2. A fund for insuring cooperatives' credit risks should be established, to facilitate opportunities for financing cooperatives.</p>

Data sources: Sophie L.C. Liang (2013-14/2) .

Appendix A. Review of Implementation of the Convention

Provisions of CEDAW Article 14	Response
<i>Item 1. States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the present Convention to women in rural areas.</i>	<p>1. In accordance with their Constitutions, the States Parties shall protect the people's participation in the economy.</p> <p>2. Implementing Article 145 of the Constitution, the State should implement concurrent policies of implementing women's rights in the rural sector, and developing the economy based on cooperatives (refer to Figure 2).</p> <p>3. The National Development Council should incorporate "the Cooperative Economic Development Policy" into national planning (refer to Figure 4, Table 1-1).</p>
<i>Item 2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right: (see following section).</i>	<p>4. The government should ask the relevant departments to examine the Acts, Laws, Regulations, Administration Directions, etc., to revise those that are disadvantageous to developing cooperatives; this is also a response to the principles of the United Nations' "Guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives (Guidelines 2001)"</p> <p>5. The government should expeditiously raise the administrative standing of agencies overseeing cooperatives, in order to coordinate with the relevant business authorities for promoting cooperatives.</p>
<i>(a) To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;</i>	The non-agricultural human resources needed for development in the rural sector should be incubated by various training projects from different departments.
<i>(b) To have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counseling, and services in family planning;</i>	To achieve the effect of complementarity in providing community services, it would be better to build up the links between the social service centers and cooperatives, which is to be collaborated in and accomplished by all the relevant departments.
<i>(c) To benefit directly from social security programs;</i>	It is important to correct the cases in which some farmers' or fishermen's cooperatives are deprived of part of their expected subsidies due to administrative regulations, by which social economic projects are carried out by businesses or foundations that are not really farmers or fishermen.
<i>(d) To obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy, as well as, inter alia, the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;</i>	<p>1. Cooperative education is helpful to inculcate the disadvantaged such as women and the young in the need to participate in civic activities and the social economy, and also to enlighten them in "self-help, mutual-help, public help", the core of cooperative economic values. Unfortunately, these are disregarded at all levels of government.</p> <p>2. The Ministry of Education should put effort into researching the impact of cooperative development and cooperative education¹⁵; i.e. how they can transform human character to create social welfare and advance a cooperative and social</p>

	<p>economy, as seen in cases in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Japan, Norway, and the four countries of northern Europe, etc.</p> <p>3. All levels of government put considerable resources into the formal education system and technical training, but with only one economic model, i.e. market and private profit-seeking; cooperative education is neglected, which is in effect discrimination against cooperative economics. This is in contravention of the spirit of the United Nations and the International Labor Organization, which emphasize equal development of various forms of organization.</p> <p>4. Much construction has been built up and technological education brought into practice under the Indigenous People Council programs in tribal communities, but there is a need to augment the regulations and measures for cooperative education in addition to the formal ones, in order to help tribal people organize cooperatives with solidarity.</p>
<p><i>(e) To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;</i></p>	<p>1. In order to develop and promote cooperative businesses in practice, it is necessary to coordinate the relevant government departments to put resources and efforts into cooperative activities, such as the National Development Council, the Gender Equality Committee, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Labor Bureau, and Social Welfare (refer to Figure 3), agencies among which it is difficult to develop consensus. Such collaboration is necessary to solve the difficulties limiting cooperative business, and to try to help the building of cooperative systems, policy-making, tax-exemption, encouragement, education and incubation.</p> <p>2. Generally speaking, there is a lack of a mechanism for nurturing and for financing cooperatives, nor have they been explained to the public; and that is why cooperatives are not well developed in Taiwan and the functions of cooperatives are impeded. There is insufficient manpower, budgets, and resources put into the practice. Before July 2013, there were two agencies administering cooperatives, with less than ten officers governing and assisting about 5,000 cooperatives. We would hope the relevant ministries would offer cooperative education to the young, women, and aborigines to help them realize the meaning of cooperative economics, and to help them organize caring self-help cooperatives.</p>
<p><i>(f) To participate in all community activities;</i></p>	<p>There should be regular coordination among the Ministry of the Interior and the other ministries, such as Social Welfare, to assist the cooperatives and credit unions in building friendly developing community economies with finance and caring. The ideal is to make “the Economic Development and Financing Mechanism of the Third Sector” come true (refer to Figure 4).</p>

<p><i>(g) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes;</i></p>	<p>1. The governments of Asian countries have utilized agricultural cooperatives and agrarian reform cooperatives to help farm people and especially women in all aspects of rural community development, e.g. to market their agricultural goods, to obtain land under land reform, and to explore market opportunities. This illustrates the mission of government to assist the weak, and it is an example that could be emulated by the government of Taiwan.</p> <p>2. Although microfinance was initiated many years ago, the effect is still limited to the urban areas. For example, for some credits and subsidies from the Indigenous Peoples Council, it is a short-run measure providing living loans through the operation of credit unions serving the tribes. The government should set up a system to guarantee funds to cover cooperatives' credit risk insurance, for the sake of long term stabilization of cooperative finance. And let the people of the country have access to microfinance.</p>
<p><i>(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.</i></p>	<p>The government should encourage letting people become the owners, the operators, and the beneficiaries of a participant economy, whether in rural or in urban sectors. The government should study successful experiences in foreign countries, such as the village electricity cooperatives in Norway, the United States, and the Philippines; the agricultural, producers', and fishery cooperatives in South America; and the insurance, consumers', and producer's cooperatives and credit unions in Asia.</p>