



SAAPE

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF SOUTH ASIA ALLIANCE FOR POVERTY ERADICATION

From SAAPE Secretariat

Welcome to the 3rd SAAPE newsletter. The first General Assembly of SAAPE met in Colombo from 14-16 June, 2003. SAAPE also organised a conference with the theme: "Power, Politics and Poverty in South Asia", as part of its first General Assembly. Representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka focal organisations, independent social movement activists, mass organisations, academics, non-government organisations and members from civil society organisations in Europe were present. The purpose of the General Assembly was to analyse poverty, politics, power and the politics of development in South Asia, to formalise the SAAPE alliance and to strategise about how SAAPE can better facilitate the work of its member organisations in eradicating poverty in the region.

In this issue we have tried to summarise the papers presented to the General Assembly by the SAAPE focal organisations from Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives. The full proceedings of the Assembly will be published this month, and will also be available on the SAAPE website (www.saape.org.np).

This newsletter also includes an article on the WTO by Mr. Ajit Muricken – a Road Map for Just Trade or an Enforcement System of Illegitimate Unfair Trade Rules? - written before the WTO Cancun Ministerial. Also an article by Ms. Rossella Bottone – "The EU Programme and its Relevance for Local Actors". Ms. Bottone is currently based at SAAPE Secretariat researching on civil society participation in the preparation of the EU's country strategy paper.

We hope you'll enjoy reading this issue.

SAAPE's Regional Secretariat

SAAPE's Regional Secretariat is based at Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN) in Kathmandu, Nepal. The role of the Regional Secretariat is to facilitate and co-ordinate country initiatives from the regional perspective, provide support to country initiatives as and when necessary, disseminate information at the international level and liaise with different stakeholders for the cause of eradicating poverty and reinstating human rights and social justice in the region.

Advisor

Dr. Arjun Karki

Editorial Team

Ruth Segal

Ruchi Lohani

Prem Kala Nembang

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World Trade Organisation A Road Map for Just Trade or an Enforcement System of Illegitimate unfair trade rules ?

Ajit Muricken
India

The World Trade Organisation, the multilateral trade regime established in 1994 has become the defining process in the expansion of corporate-led economic globalism on a world scale. For this Global '*laissez-faire*', structural adjustment model and internationally structured and legally binding trade rules are the facilitating instruments for global free trade.

The formation of WTO now with 146 countries, was the outcome of the Uruguay Round of negotiations that sought to put in place a multilateral enforceable rules-based trading system that regulates principally all world trade and to an extent all international economic relations. This implies that all national economic policies are to be in conformity with the rules of this multilateral trade system; which resulted in several new legally binding agreements that require them to make changes to their domestic economic policies in such diverse areas as trade in services, agriculture, intellectual property, investment measures and government procurement.

History teaches us that the ruling class has always enacted laws to suit and protect their class interest. Capitalism in the advanced countries having faced the crisis of "accumulation" is facing one crisis after another. This has been reflected in unemployment, recession and stagflation and now capitalism needs to move into other parts of the world for new markets and investment destinations.

The conversion of the GATT into WTO, ostensibly designed to create a uniform global investment and economic climate within the new international economic order, faces a serious crisis of legitimacy and credibility. This crisis was manifested in the collapse of the third Ministerial meeting at Seattle in the face of unprecedented protests from people and governments around the world. Since then millions of people have joined the fight for a just and sustainable development against corporate globalisation. The crisis of legitimacy is rooted in the structure and functioning of WTO, which was increasingly being perceived as an instrument to conquer

the market of the weak. The built-in reviews of the WTO agreements on agriculture, services and trade related intellectual property rights have been steered away from review and instead there is pressure to launch a new round and to expand the WTO by bringing in new issues such as investments, competition, government procurement, biotechnology by accelerated tariff liberalisation.

Despite the promises to improve the trade system, made at the end of the Seattle Ministerial meeting, aimed at its image building to overcome its illegitimacy, not much improvement has taken place after the meeting at Doha. The fourth Ministerial meeting, ironically code named as "The Development Round", the high scale manoeuvring and manipulation by the Quad countries (USA, EU, Canada and Japan) and the bitter contestation between the developed and the developing countries reveal the covert nature, behind the agenda for the new round. At a deeper level this is in fact to expand the scope of corporate access under the WTO regime to investments, government procurement, trade competition policy, industrial tariff, etc. Advancing or integrating these topics into the WTO system could result in re-colonisation of the developing countries and unprecedented powers to global corporations at the expense of sovereignty and peoples' rights and needs to define their future.

The "instruments of power politics" used by industrialized nations in the form of threats like stopping "Development Aid" was useful in breaking the resistance to the North's Agenda. This was manifested in the manipulated Draft Documents and the Doha Final Declaration which the developing countries did not veto as they were subjected to various forms of threats. What was lacking in Doha was the Spirit of Seattle to defy the unjust policies of WTO, and all that was left for the poor at Doha was a promise for a future round of talks.

The Experience of India: We the Losers

The WTO with super sovereign judicial power has been a decisive step in the globalisation of the Indian economy. The experience of the Indian people as regards WTO over the past nine years has been an unpleasant one.

WTO had promised to raise standards of living and ensure full employment, steady growth in real income and effective demand; optimal utilisation of world resources; guarantee of a share for the developing and the least developed countries in international trade. None of these

promises have so far been fulfilled. Nor are there any indications that any progress has been made towards these goals. On the contrary the trend has been thwarted by the discriminatory policies followed by several developed countries to block exports from the developing countries through anti-dumping and other related measures. Liberalisation and privatisation of natural resources such as water in the guise of eliminating barriers to environmental goods and services threatens people's right to water and other natural resources.

In developing countries like India, the agricultural sector is perhaps the worst sufferer. Agricultural production is critical as key sources of employment and food security. Because there are no guaranteed alternative sources of employment for such a large number, large-scale food imports for many of our countries are synonymous with importing unemployment and food insecurity.

The link with the global market has, in fact, introduced an unprecedented vulnerability into Indian agriculture. Farmers chasing the mirage of cash crops and (direct or indirect) exports have faced ruination; a number of them committed suicide. The component of imports has increased and with it, dependence on multinational corporations. The genetically modified 'terminator' seeds and other similar products have pushed the farmers into servitude of the large corporations.

The Trap for India

- The people of India are particularly worried about reckless liberalisation of imports that affect indigenous survival, sustenance and employment generating sectors especially with the removal of quantitative restrictions on imports. . These are also likely to have an adverse impact on the small-scale sector that not only generates employment in large numbers but also accounts for a fair amount of India's exports.
- The Intellectual Property Rights and the patents issue are crucial for the people in many ways. The new patent regime will increase prices of many crucial commodities, particularly drugs and pharmaceuticals, and create untold hardships for the people.
- The patenting of life forms is particularly dangerous. The Multi-national corporations through these measures infringe upon the knowledge and rights of traditional communities as well as upon their

accumulated knowledge and achievements.

- TRIPS has been a controversial measure, particularly as far as the patenting of life forms (including plants), is concerned. It seriously violates the traditional rights of communities and peoples. It also attacks sustenance and subsistence agriculture and related livelihood practices.
- MAI seeks to remove all restrictions from the entry and operation of foreign capital. It seeks to make it impossible for developing countries to protect their own commodities and production, to reserve any spheres for domestic operation, to impose any restrictions on inflow and outflow and speculative capital, restrict foreign ownership of land and real estate.
- The item on competition policy similarly seeks to remove all preference to local enterprise, including government agencies and undertakings.
- The social clause issue sounds lofty but has proved to be a tool in the hands of the developed countries to deny entry to commodities from developing countries.
- The item on government procurement seeks to bring government expenditure, so far outside the scope of WTO, into its ambit and to open it up for multinational corporations. It should be clear to everyone that this measure has far more than economic implications. It has strategic and national security manifestations.

Perspective for an Alternative Agenda for the 5th Ministerial Meet

The current trade system dominated by a few companies and countries makes it hard for the poorest to participate in a way that is positive for their development. Therefore, it is imperative to develop a trade system based on the principles of democracy, sustainability and transparency with equity and justice as the guiding force. This calls for the paradigm shift from a "trade-creates-wealth" paradigm based on neo-liberalism to one that stresses a broad based sustainable development which is necessary if trade is to improve the living standards of the world's poor and to ensure the long term sustainability of natural resources.

1. For the liberalisation of trade to have a poverty reduction impact, it is vitally important that it should be embedded in a comprehensive national development and poverty reduction strategy. This means domestic markets rather than global markets should be the main stimulus for growth.
2. Countries must be free to choose the types of investments to safeguard against de-industrialisation, closure of local firms, job losses as well as destruction of natural resources. A socially just international trade system must honour all the rights and welfare of the workers and farmers who produce and provide goods and services and not lead to their impoverishment.
3. Granting the poor countries duty and quota free access to the markets of the Developed Countries, along with significant reduction in trade-distorting farm subsidies by EU and United States.
4. Develop an efficient and equitable global system for patent rights.
5. Trade sanctions for environmental violations are a far more reliable source of pressure against the industry than merely citizen's pressure, to ensure that environmental costs cease being externalities for our economic growth.
6. A mechanism must be developed that allows representatives of organised civil society sectors to participate in the WTO rule-making process including intervening in their dispute settlements.
7. The dispute settlement system must consider the development needs of the countries especially the most vulnerable and not whether free-trade rules are being violated.
8. Seeds, plants and drugs should be exempted from TRIPS so as to preserve basic health care and agricultural systems in developing countries. Currently TRIPS even contradicts the principles of the Convention on Biodiversity.

It is time to stop corporate globalisation and to fight for another world, which we know is possible.



Power, Politics and Poverty in Sri Lanka

Sarath Fernando

Introduction

An examination of the history of economic policies in Sri Lanka since the 1930s, particularly since 1931 when Sri Lanka obtained universal adult franchise, clearly illustrates that reduced poverty, low income disparities and commendable achievements in social development have been possible when people had better opportunities to mediate in and influence economic policy decisions. Formation of Workers' Trade Unions and the creation of political awareness and organised action led mostly by the Left (Marxist) political parties since 1930s contributed towards compelling elected Governments to adopt certain policies that kept poverty low, and looked into social welfare and social justice, at least to some degree. These policies that kept poverty and income disparities low included not only government subsidised education, health and social welfare, but also policies that supported small farmer based domestic food producing agriculture.

Sri Lanka also provides tremendous lessons in recent history to show that keeping the poor, the less powerful ethnic communities and social groups out of the centres of economic policy decision-making lead not only to increased poverty and inequality but also to political unrest, instability and violence that in turn become a serious obstacle to poverty eradication.

Sri Lanka Poverty Paper¹ and "Sri Lanka's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP): Compelling the poor to subsidise the rich"² makes detailed analysis of these experiences and also the serious consequences of the completely undemocratic and non-participatory processes adopted in poverty reduction strategy (PRSP) formulation that is being currently done between the WB / IMF and the Government of Sri Lanka. The submissions made by the Alliance for Protection of National Resources and Human Rights (ANRHR) which is a network of nearly 125 organisations including major trade unions and other people's organisations, a group of over hundred women's organisations (the number of women's organisations that signed this submission has now reached over 200) and the submissions made by the Trade Unions have expressed their concern and criticism about the PRSP process and contents.

¹ Included in a forthcoming publication from SAAPE, the South Asia Poverty Report

² Available from MONLAR, SAAPE's focal organisation in Sri Lanka

WB and IMF in April 2003 endorsed the Sri Lanka PRSP with an estimated external assistance (loans) component of US \$ 6095 million and the Donor Meeting in Tokyo in June 2003 would approve a massive loan of over Rs. 3 billion for a process of economic reforms and acceleration of the economic development process, which is clearly a process of getting the people of Sri Lanka, particularly the poor, farmers, industrial workers, plantation workers, the fish workers, the ethnic communities, women, children and youth to pay the heavy price of providing the facilities and requirements of big businesses to exploit the people and the natural resources. In addition these proposals include reforms in labour legislation and structural reforms in the rural agricultural sector that envisage a process that would compel workers to provide cheaper labour and worsened working conditions including less employment security.

It has been shown in these analyses and by the protest movements launched by the people affected, that these PRSP proposals would not reduce but would tremendously increase poverty, disparities and social unrest. However, the power relationships, and the political processes, as they are today, permit those controlling economic policy decisions and financial arrangements to go through with their processes disregarding such criticism and opposition. Thus, poverty today and the strategies needed to overcome poverty are directly related to issues of power and politics.

The worst victims of poverty in Sri Lanka today are the plantation workers, the rural poor farmers, and the people in the North and East who have been subjected to over 20 years of destructive war, and women who are being exploited as cheap labour. They are victims of economic poverty as well as poverty in terms of lack of opportunity in political decision-making. They are also the groups of society who have the least opportunities to express themselves in economic decisions. Youth in the North and East as well as youth in the rest of the country who have fought against discrimination have been subject to massive repression and war. Many of them have been killed and their voices have been suppressed and disregarded.

The economic policy changes since 1977, which resulted in worsening of poverty and disparities, accompanied a political process that completely eliminated opportunities for the poor to participate in the process of economic decision-making. The history of introduction of the policies of WB /IMF recommended economic reforms, such as the Structural Adjustments Programme (SAPs) is also a history of suppression of democratic rights,

direct suppression of the organised trade unions, farmers resistances and struggles and even the opportunities for people to have “free and fair” elections. The right of people to express their views on economic policies has been denied during this entire period by both the major political parties, by avoiding honest declaration of their economic policies in their political manifestos and in the political debates in the country during elections and during their periods in power.

The policy of considering the “private sector as engine of growth and development” adopted by all governments since 1977 and policy of complete and unquestioned adoption of WB and IMF guidance in economic policy planning have led to a situation where the entire process of economic policy and strategy decisions have been dominated and monopolised by the “unholy” alliance between the WB / IMF, the big business community and a few top level leaders of the Governments.

New structures formed with the initiative of the WB and IMF and new decision-making processes that have been created for the purposes of economic policy planning and decisions leave very little opportunity and very little necessity to have people’s participation in economic decisions. As seen in the case of the present PRSP process in Sri Lanka and probably in most other poor countries, it is no longer necessary that even the elected Members of Parliament and some of the Cabinet Ministers become part of the decision making process. The essential decisions are made not even at the level of Parliament. WB and IMF make their recommendations, whether they are said to be for Macro Economic Stabilization (since 1977 to 1980s), or for “Structural Adjustments Programmes” (in 1990s) or for Poverty Reduction Strategy Formulation (PRSP) (since 1999). Decisions regarding economic aid and loans are made on the basis of agreements reached between the lending institutions (IFIs) and top-level Government officials and a few Ministers, who do not feel the necessity to have proper consultation with their own government. The crucial decisions are made at the Aid Group Meetings or “the Development Forum” meetings (as they are now called), between the Government representatives and the IFIs. The final decisions regarding these plans and loans are made in Washington, at the WB and IMF Executive Directors’ Meetings and at meetings of Donors such as the meeting held in Tokyo in June 2003. The conditionalities for implementation of such decisions are made tighter and tighter by deciding to grant such loans in “instalments” on the basis of assessments regarding the performance in relation to the time targets set.

The rich elite in the country supports these mechanisms,

since the interests of Global capital carried out through these arrangements do not contradict with their interests. In fact an extremely rich minority has been created during the last 25 years. These have provided the rich in Sri Lanka the possibility to reverse the political and economic processes that were growing in the country for greater equality and economic justice. This process of reversal, however, has been achieved with tremendous political suppression of the resistance of the people, of trade unions, youth, farmers and other sectors of society.

In understanding these changes in power and politics in relation to regaining people's right to plan and strategize for poverty eradication, it is also necessary to understand the impact of the global level changes in the economic and political power relationships. These reversals are strongly supported and pushed by the forces of economic globalisation. Thus, the situation and the challenges are global and the struggle to overcome this situation should also be global in scale.

Key issues of Power and Politics in decisions related to poverty eradication strategies

Poverty reductions strategies designed by the World Bank and IMF, during their entire period of existence, now reaching 60 years, have not succeeded. The assumption that accelerated economic growth led by the private sector and "trickle down" is the only effective way of reducing poverty has been proved to be incorrect. Sri Lanka has had 25 years of such experience of failure.

In spite of the obvious failure in developing effective strategies the newly designed PRSP and the "Future, Regaining Sri Lanka" is entirely based on the same approach. People are being compelled to bear heavier debt burdens, loss of access to natural resources and loss of rights in order to accelerate the process of growth. The power to carry out such a strategy is not derived from an approval or a mandate given by the people. It is clearly derived from the fact that the WB and IMF are willing to grant massive loans for such a strategy, they are willing to accept extremely doubtful evidence provided by the country governments that people have been consulted in the formulation of this strategy. The WB and IMF and the forces of globalisation are fast losing their credibility as institutions and agencies concerned about poverty reduction.

PRSP is a new device formulated by the WB and IMF, particularly after massive loss of credibility following the East Asian financial crisis and similar failures in Latin America and the Eastern European countries to hold

individual country governments responsible for such failures. However, the great tragedy of this situation is that it is neither the elite who control governments nor the big businesses that benefit from these plans that pay the price of these failures. It is the poorest people who face the bitter consequences.

Tasks

Therefore, the political task for people's organisations and the movements of the poor is to win over the right to design and implement their own strategies for poverty eradication. This involves the following:

1. Establishing that the World Bank, IMF and other IFIs do not have a legitimate right to be the planners and decision makers in poverty reduction. In the PRSP process it is now recognised that the formulation of Poverty Reduction Strategies is a task of the respective Governments and it should be done with sufficient consultation with the stakeholders and there should be country ownership.

2. Sri Lanka is a clear case where both the government as well as the WB knowingly violated this important principle. It is obvious that the consultation process that has been described in the PRSP and the Future Regaining Sri Lanka is totally inadequate and the civil society organisations and forces that disagreed with these proposals are much bigger and are more representative of the poor. Therefore, it is necessary to establish that the PRSP that has been endorsed by the WB and IMF has no legitimacy. Thus, the people of Sri Lanka should not be held responsible for paying back these loans. In order to do this it is necessary get more and more People's movements and organisations to voice themselves and to communicate their views to the higher level of decision-making in the Government and the IFIs.

3. A necessary part of this process is to prove that the poor can prepare a better agenda and better strategies for poverty eradication. In Sri Lanka and in most other South Asian countries there is a tremendous potential in sustainable agriculture and rural development to reduce hunger, malnutrition and poverty. Such approaches presently applied by isolated groups in a scattered manner should be brought together to be applied at regional and national scale.

4. The political process of de-legitimising globalisation and the WB / IMF globally and the struggle for global justice is an essential process to re-establish the right of the poor to decide for themselves.

5. Formation of a regional strategy that brings together the grassroots people's initiatives that are emerging for survival within a very unfriendly political and ideological environment to national and regional level, establishing mechanisms for collaboration, mutual learning and sharing of experiences would be a meaningful starting point.

Areas of special importance

In Sri Lanka there are areas of specific importance that need special attention in a process of regaining the right of the poor to plan strategies for poverty eradication.

1. Northern and Eastern Provinces have been destroyed by the 20-year war. In addition to destruction of life and families, the economy, industry, agriculture, fishing etc have been destroyed. The development in the region has been pushed back by 30 years. Therefore, for a balanced process of development it is extremely important to give the highest priority to the rebuilding of the North / East. In planning of this and the implementation it is absolutely necessary that the people of the region should "own" this process. The demand made for an interim administration in the North and East is based on this concern.

2. The peace process should be a process that would not lead to the homelands of the people in the North and East being lost completely. The heavy intervention of the USA and other forces of big businesses should not be allowed to lead to such a situation. There should be solidarity and understanding between the people of the North and East with the struggling poor in the rest of the country. It should be the responsibility of the organisations of the poor who are struggling against the current PRSP proposals, to establish this solidarity and understanding.

3. Plantation workers and their organisations must begin a process of educating themselves to intervene in policy decisions. In order to overcome the disadvantages they have had as suppressed labour and as an ethnic group that has suffered long years of discrimination, it is very necessary for other sectors of the poor to build solidarity with plantation workers. A new vision of development that would enable the plantation workers community to become dignified citizens of Sri Lanka, freeing themselves from the present state of semi slavery is necessary.

4. The rural poor and women are likely to be among the worst affected groups under the present PRSP plans since their livelihoods and land is to be taken over for promotion of export oriented agribusinesses and they are destined to be pushed out into the cities as "cheaper labour" for attracting investments. □

Political Power, Poverty and Poverty Alleviation in the Context of Nepal

Bidhya Bhandari

At present the resources and power of the world have been shifting from the villages to the cities, from cities to capitals, from the least developed countries (LDCs) and developing countries to developed and industrial countries. Finally power has been shifting from states to a few institutions and selected countries. If we see the distribution of wealth worldwide, the richest 14 percent possess 85 percent of wealth whereas 86 percent of people are hardly able to eke out their living with the remaining 15 percent. Now people's forces have been rendered weak and the multi-national companies have become strong. The representative of international financial and monetary institutions such as the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other institutions are more powerful than the local ministers. The diplomats of powerful countries are more powerful than the Prime Minister or president of these countries. How is it so? It is because an unspecified country, institution and company have a decisive role in the handling of state of affairs of the third world countries. These very forces are responsible for the making or dismantling of the governments of these countries. In some countries, they have formed a puppet government and are exploiting resources. These countries are also putting pressure on third world countries to embrace globalisation, liberalisation, open market economic policy and privatisation and to make laws and acts that are conducive to them.

This paper presents a short review of the present political economic situation of Nepal and proposes measures to alleviate poverty and remove other inequalities.

Historical and Political Background

A politician, who believes that all power is vested in them, can surmount any kind of challenge. The rulers who go with the people are successful. But those who wish to rule over the people are doomed to fail. All the people who go to power perceive themselves to be powerful. They are hungry for power. Irrespective of whether they are autocratic or democratic, their common desire is to remain in power.

The thirty year long Panchayat rule suppressed the

democratic forces of the country. But with the suppression, political parties became stronger and were able to establish the parliamentary system by sidelining absolute monarchy in 1990. In this historical period various democratic and leftist political forces played a significant role and became powerful forces in the country. The parliamentary system of government vested the sovereignty in the people by taking steps to meet the aspirations of the people. On June 1, 2001, when the parliamentary system was taking root, the infamous palace massacre took place in which many members of the royal family were exterminated. On October 4, 2002, King Gyanendra assumed the executive authority of the state through a proclamation.

Since 1996, the Communist Party of Nepal CPN (Maoist) has been waging a “Peoples’ War” in most rural and remote areas of Nepal. This has affected not only the lives of ordinary people but also the implementation of government programmes and policies. The most poor, oppressed and exploited masses were forced to revolt against the State. Speaking from the peoples’ perspective, the support the Maoists were able to muster is not necessarily ideological and philosophical but is because of their frustrated experiences. In other words, it is because of the systematic exclusion of poor, oppressed and exploited people from the benefits of development taking place in the country.

The economic situation of the country under the prevailing circumstances:

Nepal’s Economic Situation

The per-capita income of Nepal is said to be \$240. Poverty is rampant. The factors exacerbating poverty are unemployment, sluggishness in economic growth, unequal distribution of wealth, and an agricultural sector based on traditional skills and technology. The direct effect of the Maoist insurgency on the tourism industry is another problem. Contrary to government statistics, experts say the percentage of the people under the poverty line may be up to 70 percent. Half of the total income of the country is in the hands of 10 percent of the people. About 60 percent of people are illiterate. More than 90 percent of the population lives in the rural areas and about 76 percent are dependent on agriculture.

Nepal’s poverty can be viewed from two angles. 1. Rural poverty and 2. urban poverty. Forty-four percent of the rural households and 23 percent of the urban households are below the poverty line. This shows that rural poverty is twice as serious as the poverty of the urban areas. Of

the rural poor, the majority lives in the hills, with a smaller proportion living in the plain areas. During the last two decades, poverty has been seen to have increased by 3 percent annually. Poverty is found to be rampant among women and marginalised communities. The role of education in alleviating poverty cannot be underestimated but many people do not have access to good quality education, and this lack of access exacerbates poverty.

Poverty : Major Causes

Poverty is a complex problem and it is not influenced by any single factor. For its alleviation there should be political, economic and social infrastructures. The following are the major causes of poverty in Nepal.

1. Unequal Distribution of Resources: The major cause of increasing poverty is the unequal distribution of resources consisting of national income and land. Only 17 percent of the total land of Nepal is cultivable. In view of the 2 percent increase rate of population, the per-capita land share is only 0.14 hectare. There is regional disparity in the cultivable land. The Terai occupies 17 percent of the landmass, of which 49 percent is cultivable. The hill area occupies 85 percent of the landmass, of which 51 percent is cultivable.

In Nepal, the land reform programme has not been so successful. Dual ownership has been made illegal, but it still exists in practice. There is very insignificant investment in the sector of agricultural technology. There is less than 3 percent investment in land development. Apart from this, the division of family encourages the fragmentation of land. Farmers owning small plots of land are being marginalised, adding to the number of the unemployed in the village. The income of the rich people living in Kathmandu is double that of the rich living in other cities and four times more than those living in the rural areas. If the income of 40 percent of low class people is 11 percent, the income of 10 percent of the higher-class people is 52 percent.

2. Ethnic and Gender Discrimination: Ethnic and gender inequalities have been a major reason for poverty. Nepal is a multi-ethnic country. But the marginalised and oppressed classes are deprived of social and economic rights. They work as masons, tenants and other labourers. Most of the fertile lands belong to political elites and affluent people. Considerable efforts were made to remove these anomalies following the political change of 1990. Despite this, no perceivable change has occurred in the social, economic and political

status of marginalised groups and women.

Similarly, various attempts were made to remove gender inequality. Political forces even prepared a common agenda for the empowerment of women. In spite of this, women still remain exploited, oppressed and persecuted. The participation of women in administrative and judicial sectors is still very low.

3. Weak Government Policy: Nepal's development planning has incorporated the agenda of poverty alleviation for a long time. The main objectives of the eighth, ninth and tenth five year plans were poverty alleviation. But because of distortion, corruption, lack of transparency and mis-governance, citizens feel that no government exists. This has prevented the programme of poverty alleviation from being effective.

4. Absence of Physical and Social Infrastructure:

Though there was some development in the field of physical and social infrastructure in the past decade, we are still far away from the Asian and international standard. There are still too few roads, and too little access to education, drinking water and telephone facilities. Ten districts out of 75 remain still untouched by roads. Only about 18 percent of the people are using electricity. There is only one telephone for every 100 people. Though all the village development committees have health posts and schools, there are no health workers in health posts and no qualified teachers in schools.

Poverty : Symptoms

1. Sluggish Economy: Nepal's economy has not been moving in a positive direction. Even after 1990 the annual economic growth rate did not match with the population growth rate. The growth rate of the decade of 1980-90 was 4.8 percent. It was 5 percent in 1990s. It brought 1.4 percent decline in the per-capita income. Despite a huge investment in agriculture, the gross domestic product declined in comparison to 1990. As a result Nepal changed from a food grain exporting country to an importing country. In contrast to the gross agricultural product, the gross industrial product has registered an increase of 5.5 percent in the 1990's. This has been due to the increase in the production of vegetable ghee, food items, biscuits, sugar, tea, paper, soap, iron rod, battery etc. Regrettably, this sector was not able to develop owing to political insecurity and the obstacles seen in the Nepal-India trade treaty. The industrial production dropped to 5.9 percent in the

fiscal year 2001-2002. Though the production of electricity, water and gas has increased, their contribution to the gross domestic product is less than 1 percent. The tourism industry had registered an impressive growth since 1990. In comparison to the years before 1990, the contribution to the gross national product from these areas was 6.1 percent. Unfortunately, however, the internal civil war, the September 11 incident and the tension between India and Pakistan affected Nepal's trade especially in the tourism areas.

2. Unemployment: The number of economically active people above 10 years was 7.3 million in 1990. In 1999, the number of economically active people above 15 years reached 9.6 million. The number of economically active women was nearly double. Its reason is the entry of Nepalese women into the labour market and the new opportunities for employment. In Nepal, agriculture still forms the major area of employment. In addition to this, 85 percent of women workers are engaged in the agricultural sector, which is 27 percent more than men. The unemployment rate was 4.5 in 1996 and it was 5.2 in 1999. The unemployment rate for women is 6.3, whereas it is 4.1 percent for men. Unemployment is more rampant in urban areas than in the rural areas. Educated unemployment is also growing. The percentage of unemployed people passing S. L. C. is 6.8. At the present rate of unemployment, 15,000 job slots have to be created annually.

3. Foreign Assistance: There has been a flow of foreign assistance to Nepal for the last 5 decades. It has become a major component of Nepal's economy. This has helped in the development of the physical and social infrastructure of Nepal, but it has not provided any help in poverty alleviation. There are various reasons for this. One main reason is the city-oriented investment policy for the development of physical infrastructure. Apart from the investment made in the field of irrigation, a large chunk of development investment has been made in the cities where only 10 percent of the population lives. As a result, foreign investment has further widened regional disparity. Poverty alleviation has been a secondary priority, because of the lack of commitment of the Nepalese governments to development, and the existence of a separate agenda of the donors.

Measures for Poverty Alleviation

The efforts for poverty alleviation were started with the formulation of five-year plans. It has been given a top priority since the sixth five-year plan. With the restoration

of the multi-party system in 1990, a market-oriented economy was started. The eighth five-year plan proposed to bring poverty down to 42 percent from 49 percent. Since 1992, economic programmes were introduced to alleviate poverty through economic liberalisation. Widespread structural changes were also introduced in the field of trade, industry, external investment and economic policy. Many industries were forced to close down owing to high customs duty and the inability of the Nepalese goods to compete in foreign markets. The withdrawal of subsidy in fertilizer brought about a decline in agricultural production. On the other hand, foreign products occupied Nepalese agricultural markets. Similarly, privatisation of industry was also unsuccessful.

The Agricultural plan was formulated in 1995 with a view to alleviate poverty by developing the agricultural sector. Programmes were introduced to make the land reform programme more effective. Foreign investment was invited to expedite industrialisation. As a result indigenous industries could not compete with foreign industries.

In spite of the above, preferential programmes, integrated rural development programmes, food programmes, loan to the *dalits* (oppressed) programmes, employment oriented programmes, skill oriented programmes etc. were introduced as part of the efforts for poverty alleviation. In the field of social service, the government also introduced allowances for the elderly. But none of the above programmes were able to bring about any meaningful change in the situation of poverty.

Globalisation and Poverty Alleviation

In a democracy, the economic agenda is often a political agenda. What is left with democracy and the democratic system after big financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organisation decide and control the economic agenda of small developing countries? Only the mind remains with the politics, which is divided into religion and ethnicity. In such a situation, globalisation may in itself become a problem for poor and least developed countries. The capital sustains and promotes markets. Organised trade, however, hinders sustainable development by taking control of biological and other resources that have been protected by the people for thousands of years, instead of facilitating poverty alleviation. For instance, the drinking water from Melamchi is being privatised in Nepal with the assistance of the World Bank. It is likely to increase the price of drinking water to nine times what the people of Kathmandu are paying today.

How Can Poverty be Alleviated ?

Poverty alleviation is a difficult proposition in Nepal. For poverty alleviation it is necessary to have a clear policy and programme for creating an equitable society, political commitment, stability, good governance and transparency, effective implementation of decentralisation and the empowerment of people in all respects. When the above issues are brought to their right place in accordance with the concept of welfare states, other steps such as land reform and agricultural development, right to property, introduction of programmes designed to create jobs, regulating immigration, formulation of specific poverty alleviation programmes may help mitigate poverty.

Role of Civil Society and NGOs for Poverty Alleviation

A weak government is essentially the reflection of a weak civic society. The role of civil society becomes paramount when the rulers are not pursuing a popular policy. As long as all the organs of the civil society are not activated, there is a risk of the state degenerating into an arbitrary power. In Nepal the main section of the civil society appears still weak in various ways. A large section of the people is still illiterate, deprived of resources and is not aware of its rights. But various mass and community organisations are actively working to bring about change in this situation. People have enthusiasm, energy and vigour but they are deprived of resources. If the local resources can be handed over to the local people they can be empowered in the real sense of the term.

One section of the Nepalese civil society is itself dependent on donors for poverty alleviation and other issues. Only a few of them may have addressed the need of the people, the majority of them, however, have made their organisations a begging bowl for their own enrichment. They have further exploited the people in their name. Some of them have even defamed the society in the name of civil society. Some of such organisations opened in the name of civil society are being run as family businesses and their agenda of poverty alleviation is no more than a ploy to attract funds. A few of them have, in fact, sincerely tried to implement poverty alleviation programmes. In some cases, they have succeeded in accomplishing tasks that had remained unaccomplished by the government. Therefore, organisations such as these should act as the 'watch dog' and see to it that the government adopts pro-people policies and implements poverty alleviation programmes. □

Maldives Country Paper on Power, Politics and Poverty

Mohamed Zuhair

Maldives has experienced dramatic changes in its socio-economic profile during the past few decades. Positive outcomes of this progress are quite significant considering the unique geography of the country that falls into the category of Small Island State (SIS). The total landmass of the 1190 small islands of the country is less than one percent of its national territory that expands over 90,000 sq. km. Most inhabited islands have a land area of less than one square mile. Populations of the 200 inhabited islands are grouped into 20 administrative regions or Atolls. On average an inhabited island supports a population of 800 people, and about a quarter of them records a population of less than 500 people. Only five islands have a population exceeding 5,000 inhabitants, including the capital Male' that supports about 70,000 people.

The socio-political system in the Maldives is closely associated with the country's geo-physical setting and Islamic values. The current republican form of government was established in 1968 and is headed by a president elected every five years. The Citizen's Majlis or the Parliament consists of two members from the capital Male' and from each of the 20 Atolls, and eight nominees of the President.

Economic Development Trends

Maldives has maintained a relatively high growth rate for three decades. During the 1980s the growth rate averaged around 10 percent. It slightly declined during the 1990s although the rate for 1997 reached 10.2 percent. During the last five years the growth rate fluctuated between 4 to 7 percent. Though Maldives is an LDC, the GDP per capita is relatively high. GDP per capita increased from US\$ 1589 in 1996 to US\$ 1965 in 2000. However, the economic vitality of the country is mainly centred in the capital city, Male, and the surrounding islands. Tourism being the leading industry contributes around one third of the GDP and currently accommodates 86 resorts. Fisheries, the second main industry of the economy, employs one fourth of the labour force. The modern industrial sector is formed by fish canning, fibreglass boat building, manufacturing of garments etc, and contributes to about 6 percent of the GDP.

The sixth National Development Plan (NDP) covering the period 2002-2005 focuses on diversifying the economy and emphasises regional development, human resource development and reform of the financial sector. It aims to establish a regional planning group of government policy makers and regional officers in each region.

Role of Stakeholders

1. The Government: Traditionally the government played the dominant role in providing basic services and facilitating opportunities. This commitment however could not materialise any significant change in the lives of the people till the island communities became more accessible via the telecommunication media in the 1960s. The established telecommunication network through radio-telephone gradually progressed to accommodate telephones, mobile phones and the internet within four decades. In the meantime, the mechanization process of fishing boats and transport vessels in early 1970s strengthened the surface link between the socio-political hub, Male' and other communities. Improvements in access to services, however, curbed the community synergy that had been the hallmark of the rural life for centuries.

During the last two decades government has invested heavily in the infrastructure and social development of the Atoll-region or the rural sector. In addition it had conducted many projects and programmes to raise the awareness of the community about social and environmental issues. The result is the emergence of rural communities empowered by high literacy, better health, broader knowledge about their rights and concerns, and improved access to education facilities, health posts and hospitals, transport and communication facilities including the internet.

2. Private Sector: The subsistence level of livelihood the Maldivian communities adopted failed to mould a strong private sector until recent decades. The traditional fishing and agriculture sector developed an ad hoc and loose process in terms of labour market guarantees and job securities. In contrast the trade sector, largely confined to the domestic market, evolved on firmer grounds but was monopolised by foreign merchants for about a century from the middle of the nineteenth century to mid twentieth century. With the introduction of tourism in Maldives the private sector expanded dramatically, complemented by a booming merchandise trade, increasing domestic travel and a lucrative urban construction industry. The private sector also ventured into live fish exports, shipping, garment manufacturing, domestic air transport among many others.

The private sector is taking a more formal shape with the establishment of representative institutions like the Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI), Maldives Chamber of Commerce and Maldives Association of Construction Industry (MACI). Further, more private enterprises are being invited by the government to form joint venture companies targeting manufacturing and services.

3. Transnational Corporations (TNCs): Maldives remained unaffected by the influences of trans-national corporations till the introduction of tourism in 1972. Since then more and more companies have invested in this sector. In addition, TNCs are becoming increasingly involved in other sectors and areas like telecommunications. TNC trademarks that currently contribute direct financial investments include Cable and Wireless, Coca Cola Company, Hummingbird, Hilton and Four Seasons among others.

Issues of Poverty

The Human Development Index for Maldives is 0.739, ranking it 77th out of 162 countries. In the Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment Survey of 1998, per capita income for Atoll population is equivalent to US\$ 647. Forty two percent of Maldivians live on less than Rf 15 (US\$ 1.17) per day, which is barely above the poverty line measurement of less than US\$ 1 per day. 22 percent of the population lives on Rf 10 (US\$0.83) per day. Disparity in development is very high between the Atoll-region and Male'. Income disparity between Male' and other islands have been found to be 2:1 with this ratio at 3:1 when the lowest average per capita incomes were considered. Access to social and physical infrastructure and services averaged at 4:1 between Male' and the Atolls. Presently policy initiatives are being taken to develop selected islands as regional growth centres in five regions to minimize this disparity.

1. Women's Status in the Society: In Maldives sex preference, if any, is masked by positive aspects. There is no visible discrimination during infancy and early childhood in health care, nutrition and education, though multiple marriages and divorce causes hardships for women. To prevent these problems and protect women's rights, in 2000 a new Family Law was enacted, which determined the marriageable age as 18 and enacted policies to minimize divorce rates and strengthen the alimony and child support.

In the Gender Development Index Maldives is ranked 80 among 130 nations. However, the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for women in Maldives is below the South Asian average. Women's participation in the economy declined from 62.3 percent in the 70s to 28 percent in 1995. In the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Maldives is ranked highest in South Asia. However, women are underrepresented in high skilled and high-paid posts because of their lack of qualification and skills. A considerable gap exists between men and women who hold degree level qualifications. Though there is no gender-based discrimination in admitting students to schools, the proportion of girls in school gradually declines at higher levels of education. Due to the geographical setting of the

country, higher secondary education is available only in a few islands. The lack of secondary education facilities in the islands results in the girls leaving school after seventh grade. When students are required to move to islands that offer secondary education, cultural norms restrict the mobility of girls. Women's representation in the parliament more than doubled from 4.17 percent in 1990 to 10 percent in 2000. Traditionally only men were appointed for Atoll and Island Chiefs. The Government appointed a woman to the post of Island Chief for the first time in 2000, followed by the appointment in 2001 of one woman to the position of Atoll Chief.

2. Health Situation: Improvement in health care facilities is reflected in increasing life expectancy and declines in other mortality indicators. The life expectancy improved by six years during the 1990s and reached 71 by 2000. During the same period, the infant mortality rate declined from 34 per thousand in 1990 to 21 in 2000. Access to healthcare has increased throughout the country. At central level in Male', currently there are two hospitals, one under the government and the other owned by a private party. There are five regional hospitals in strategically selected locations on the basis that a regional hospital is reachable within four hours of travel (50km) from any island. In each Atoll there is a Health Centre staffed by a doctor and Community Health Workers (CHWs). General consultative services and some specialised services in gynaecology and surgery are provided. At the island level, the basic health facilities are available from Family Health Workers and birth attendants.

Though the overall situation of health had improved, new problems are brought about by social changes that occur with economic development. Poor dietary habits and high incidence of drug abuse among adolescents are issues of concern. Further the geographical disparity and low income causes lack of nutritious foods in Atolls, leading to problems of malnutrition, particularly among young children and women.

3. Educational Concerns: The Net Enrolment rate for Grade 1-7 is now nearly universal. By January 2000, there were 24 schools in Atolls registered as GCE O' Level centres. Like most LDCs, Maldives faces the problem of lack of qualified personnel for skilled jobs. One of the efforts to provide educational opportunity is the consolidation of the secondary educational institutes in Maldives to form the Maldives College of Higher Education (MCHE). This action is expected to rationalise resources and maintain quality standards in education. To address the problem of discontinued education by girls when the standard reachable at the home island is completed, the government is considering developing well managed, supervised dormitories for females to overcome the problem of

resistance towards pursuing education outside the resident island.

4. Development Financing: The financial system governing the Maldivian economy is inadequate. Four commercial banks serve as deposit banks providing long and short term credit to private investors. There are no specialised financial institutions to meet the financial needs of the leading industries that require finance for expansion. Local entrepreneurs are unable to make large investments by themselves, hence seeking partnerships with foreign parties, often resulting in advantage to the foreign party. The government had formed plans to establish a leasing company to support local investors and feasibility study of establishing long term financial institutions is also underway. Plans for the establishment of a capital market to enable stock and bills to be exchanged have also been formed. The public sector investment in the health sector was 10.2 percent of public expenditure in the year 2000. Expenditure on education was at 14 percent. The combined expenditure of health and education is at 24 percent of public expenditure, which is above the 20 percent recommended in the World Summit on Social Development. Maldives has benefited immensely from the UN organisations, commencing with the involvement of WHO in the Malaria Control Programme during late 1950s. Since then most of the UN family organisations have contributed their share to the development process. In particular the role of UNICEF, UNDP, FAO, UNFPA, and UNESCO is noteworthy. Among the multi-lateral institutions, the role of the World Bank remains prominent in the area of industrial development and capacity building in human resources. Significant contributions were made by other organisations including IMF, IFAD, IFC, ADB, IDB, OPEC and Kuwait Fund.

5. Sustainable Development: The Maldives is highly vulnerable to environmental effects because of the unique geography of the nation. The Maldives had expended a considerable amount of resources for the preservation and protection of environmental resources. With the limited resource base of the country biodiversity conservation is essential. The issue of global warming threatens low-lying islands with the possibility of sea level rise. The coral reefs thrive only in a relatively narrow range of conditions. The temperature of the sea, direct sunlight and rainfall affects the coral growth. The reefs are the barriers that protect the island from direct surfs from the deep ocean. Damage and changes in reef cause coastal erosion in the islands, which is suffered by 90 percent of the islands in Maldives at varying degrees. Any damage to the coral reefs is a serious loss to the national asset as a recent international study has established the value of coral reefs at US\$ 47,000 per square foot.

Another problem faced in Maldives islands is the poor soil. The rainwater is infiltrated almost immediately and lies above the salt water tables that ebbs and rises with the tide. This water is highly susceptible to rapid depletion and contamination from agricultural inputs like pesticides. At present a quarter of the population in Maldives does not have access to safe drinking water and 20 percent are without adequate means of human waste disposal. As tourism is the major industry and is based on the natural beauty of Maldives, sustainable development in tourism is also targeted. In order to preserve agriculture, land resource preservation is also planned under sustainable development plans.

As for the limited land areas and increasing concentration of population in some of the islands, especially the capital Male', urbanisation management plans are underway to overcome the housing problems. The on-going project of creating an island three times the size of Male' by reclaiming a shallow lagoon close to the capital is an ambitious venture. Many Maldivians are looking forward to its benefits.

Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP)

Maldives has yet to develop a PRSP. However, considerable work has been undertaken to provide input for such a document. Out of them the most important is the Vulnerability and Poverty Assessment Survey conducted in 1998. The Government has recently reviewed the possibility of establishing a Vulnerability and Poverty Monitoring System (VPMS) that could cover components on data collection and interpretation of indicators. The proposal envisages the development of a National Information System (NIS) to cater for the needs of the VPMS. Eventually the VPMS itself would monitor the process through which the collection of information is translated into decision-making and capacity building.

Conclusion

From the forgoing, it is evident that the Maldives is on the right track towards the elimination of poverty. This achievement is independently confirmed by the firm commitment of development partners to graduate Maldives from LDC status – only the second country to do so since the conceptualisation of the scheme. Nonetheless, Maldives success cannot undermine its vulnerability arising from its unique features and narrow economic base. The country and its people also can never remain complacent about the potential threats of global warming and sea-level rise. Above all, the changing international security situation brings new risks of external shocks that could erase all the successes the country has achieved to date. □

The EU Programming and Its Relevance for Local Actors

Rossella Bottone
EUROSTEP

Eurostep, [a network of European NGOs, and SAAPE's partner] is carrying on a monitoring programme regarding civil society participation within EU programming. Through collaboration with SAAPE, Eurostep aims at raising awareness of the EU policy programming process and to increase the level of civil society involvement in it.

EC's policy programming is now centred on Country/Regional Strategy Papers (CSP) which set out a 'strategic framework' for the EC's cooperation priorities in a given country or region. In this way the Commission sets up a coherent framework for its relations with third countries covering both development assistance and other essential activities (the "policy mix") - even if leaving aside thematic budget lines. These new strategies have to be developed in collaboration with national governments, Member States (MS), other bilateral and multi-lateral donors and, wherever possible, with representatives of civil society.

The CSP states the chief objectives and the main areas for cooperation within the country, in order to reduce poverty and to integrate each country into the world's economy. A National Indicative Programme (NIP), generally drawn on a two to three years basis, completes each CSP. NIPs are the executive plans of action, with details regarding projects to be implemented and budgetary allocation per projects. To verify the adequacy of this kind of programming the Commission has foreseen the possibility of implementing Mid Term Reviews (MTR).

Mid term reviews are intended to assess ongoing results and performances as well as to improve the overall quality of the documents (including the improvement of participatory planning).

Why consultation is important

NIPs are at the core of the implementation mechanism. They should indicate all the activities in a sub-sectoral context to be carried out during the period covered. Projects in the NIPs are planned through a mission of identification launched by the Commission.

When formal consultations with local actors are held, there is the possibility that a proposal coming from them is included in it. Otherwise projects are drawn by Commission's missions. (Nevertheless it is assumed that the mission's staff carries on informal consultations with key stakeholders).

It is therefore clear that unless civil society takes part in the programming process "CSPs/NIPs will be based on the Community's own analysis of the development needs of the country (in co-ordination with the views of MS and other donors)".

Consultation is also important in relation to the implementation of projects and consequently the allocation of funds. In some case the EU establishes a priori which actor (NGO or foundation or other) is going to implement the project. In some other cases the Commission commits to publishing a call for proposals. In both cases, if local actors want to be involved in the implementation of EU development policy they should better take part in the programming phase.

Finally, CSPs determine the focus on all EU policies, including trade, migration, and other areas. For non-state actors (NSA) who are interested in engaging in the policy debates of the EU policy within the region, the CSP provides an important entry point.

The South Asian region and the case of Nepal

As regards the South Asian region the EU has developed so far a CSP for five out of the seven countries (Maldives still does not have one, and Nepal's CSP has just been approved). These five countries are also provided with a within a review, such as:

1. Funds allocated are quite small
2. Access to funding for NSA is limited
3. Enhancing trade capacity, trade diversification and integration in the world economy is prioritized against social sector development and human development.

For this purpose, advocacy activity within these countries is necessary, with the aim of establishing a consultation mechanism between the Commission's representatives and the CSOs.

¹ Common framework for Country Strategy Papers- Commission Staff working paper (point C.1)

Field research in Nepal, carried out by SAAPE in collaboration with Eurostep, has shown that no formal consultation with civil society had taken place in the country while shaping the CSP. Major organisations were interviewed (in addition to SAAPE members) and the output of this research was that the level of information regarding the EU's plans in the country is very poor. Even NGOs which are in contact with the Delegation did not take part in the CSP process, apart from some informal consultations. The feeling of most organisations interviewed is that the EC could play a stronger role in the country, and it should involve local actors in policy programming and not only in project implementation. Moreover the EC should improve the level of information about its activities in the country.

The output of the research will be presented to the EC's delegation and to the Brussels-based desk of Nepal, to lobby for the constitution of a stronger consultation mechanism in the country. Hopefully this will contribute to establishing a stronger dialogue between CSOs and the EC.

SAAPE's members and focal points, as well as other organisations, are welcome to contact Eurostep for further information and to support the development of the same research in their country.
[rbottone@eurostep.org, admin@eurostep.org]

List of abbreviations:

CSP: Country strategy paper
NIP: National Indicative programme
PRSP: Poverty reduction strategy paper
NSA: Non-state actors
CSO: Civil society organization
MS: Member states
EC: European Commission
MTR: Mid Term review □

Introduction to SAAPE Focal Organisations (No. 2)

The Pakistan Institute for Labour and Research (PILER) was established in 1982 as a non-official and non-profit making body by a number of concerned individuals belonging to the trade union movement, academia and professionals from all walks of life. It has worked to create socio-political order in which the real potential of working people is fully realised and their efforts are rewarded justly. It was established with the following objectives:

- To function as an educational, cultural and literacy institution working for the uplift of working people;
- To organise and establish research groups to work on the different sociological, economic and political-legal problems of Pakistan and other developing countries
- To print and publish research and educational materials, periodicals and books
- To organise training courses in performing arts and undertake cultural activities

PILER functions through its units namely:

1. Workers Education Unit
2. Centre for Women Workers
3. Centre for Working Children
4. Research Unit
5. Advocacy and Networking Unit and
6. Publication and Communication Unit

The institute runs a highly successful educational programme for workers all over the country and has enlisted some of the best academics of the country in the faculty. It organises special education programmes for women workers. PILER has operated 16 working children's centres in Karachi. The WCCs provide basic education and recreational facilities to working children as well as conducting monthly health check-ups.

It has an extensive National, Regional and International network with the labour movements as well as development and peoples' organisations. Several International workers' organisations and educational bodies and non-governmental institutions have accepted PILER as their regular member and associated it with their projects or collaborated with it in its own programmes.

Specific to research, apart from an active interaction with National Research Institute, it interacts regionally with Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi; Centre for Education and Communication (CEC), New Delhi; Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APFWLD), Colombo; and Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), Kathmandu, among others. At the international level, PILER has regularly interacted with the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, Netherlands.

Research at PILER

PILER has conducted some important research studies over the years. In 1988-90, a survey on the Female Industrial Labour Force led to the formation of the Women Workers' Centre. In 1991, a study on child workers and family life in Karachi formed the basis of initiating the Centre for Working Children. In addition, studies on child labour, the impact of inflation on workers in Karachi, comparison of home-based and factory-based women workers and the prevalence of contract labour in the governments and textile sectors (for ILO), Child Labour in Hazardous Occupations are some of the important studies undertaken by PILER. For further information please visit the web www.piler.sdnpk.org

PILER contact information

B.M Kutty

Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research (PILER)

E-mail: b.m.kutty@cyber.net.pk

Tel: 92-21-6351145-46-47

Fax: 92-21-6350354

Regional Secretariat

Rural Reconstruction Nepal

PO Box: 8130, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 977- 1- 4415418 & 4422153

Fax: 977- 1- 4418296

E-mail: saape@rrn.org.np & rrn@rrn.org.np

Website: <http://www.saape.org.np>

Country Focal Organisations and Contact Persons

The SAAPE has country focal organisations in each country of the region to co-ordinate and expedite the country-based processes. The country focal organisations are also responsible for providing necessary inputs and feedback to the Regional Secretariat. They are chosen from among the member organisations of the respective countries. Individual country groups are comprised of NGOs, CBOs, People's Organisations and Trade Unions active at different levels.

India

Ginny Shrivastava

Astha Sanstha, Udaipur, Rajasthan

E-mail: astha3@vsnl.com

Tel: 91- 294- 451391

Fax: 91-294-45139

and

Babu Mathew

National Law School of India,, Bangalore

E-mail: bmathew@nls.ac.in

Tel: 91-294-2440130

Fax: 91-294-2440130

Bangladesh

Rokeya Kabir

Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha

E-mail: bnps@bangla.net

Tel - 880-2-9120633

Fax: 880-2-9120633

Maldives

Razeena Didi Tutu

Society for Health and Education (SHE)

E-mail: She8804@dhivehinet.net.mv,

Tel- 960 - 321655

Fax: 960-322221

Nepal

Bidhya Devi Bhandari

All Nepal Women's Association (ANWA)

E-mail: anwa@hons.com.np

Tel: 977-1-258234

Fax: 977-1-252140

Sri Lanka

Sarath Fernando

Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform

E- mail- monlar@sltnet.lk

Tel: 94-1- 888872

Fax: 94-1-407663



