



# SAAPE Newsletter

Volume-2, Issue-1, January-June, 2005

## EDITORIAL NOTES

Dear Readers,

**M**uch has happened since the publication of the last SAAPE Newsletter - most notably the horrific tsunami in December 2004 that devastated many countries in South Asia, and across the world. Many of the SAAPE members have friends, relatives and colleagues who were injured, displaced or lost their lives in the catastrophe. We would like to use this opportunity to express our wholehearted support and solidarity to all those who suffered, and are still suffering, and applaud the valiant efforts of so many to rebuild lives and livelihoods in the wake of the disaster.

The tsunami is a stark reminder that despite the many differences in cultures, languages, religions and political systems across the world there are many common factors and shared concerns that affect us all. South Asia is one of the most densely populated regions and home to the world's largest number of poor people. Many of the countries in the region are plagued by poverty, discrimination, the erosion of democracy, food insecurity, environmental degradation, increasing state coercion and an appalling - and growing - gap between rich and poor. Millions of the region's countrymen and women are malnourished and are denied access to the most basic of services - health care, water, sanitation and education. The fundamental human rights of the people have always been, and remain, neglected and violated. And it is in the context of this rising poverty that our countries suffer still further - as a result of horrific natural disasters.

Against this background of poverty and discrimination, the South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), was formed back in 2001. As many of you will know, SAAPE is a network of like-minded NGOs, mass-based organisations, academics, trade unions, and community based organisations from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, working together towards the eradication of poverty, the protection of human rights and social justice in the region. As all SAAPE members will agree: many hands joined together are more powerful than one acting alone. Through combined regional efforts and actions, the Alliance aims to act as a pressure group on governments, SAARC, the European Union, and multilateral bodies active in the region, in order to make the voices of the poor heard and to develop and promote pro-poor policies and strategies at the national, regional and international levels.

This, the fourth SAAPE Newsletter, hits the press as we are busy preparing for the third Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the SAAPE network, being held in Sri Lanka on 26-28 June. The AGM is an opportunity to strengthen the Alliance still further - bringing SAAPE members, donors and other organisations together to discuss issues of common concern, agree strategies for future cooperation and share ideas and learning across the region. We hope that this AGM, like the others preceding it, will make SAAPE an even more powerful force for change.

The Newsletter contains a variety of interesting articles about SAAPE activities and issues of concern to all SAAPE members. The first is by Mukunda Kattel, from the SAAPE Secretariat, who highlights the alarming human rights violations taking place in Nepal, particularly following the royal coup on 1 February this year. There are also articles on some of the many SAAPE activities, such as those related to post-tsunami rebuilding, the recent India/Pakistan peace march, water rights and trade and people's action in Sri Lanka. There is also a useful introduction to one of SAAPE's members, and the Country Focal Organisation for Sri Lanka, the Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR).

We would like to thank all the contributors and the editorial team, for their help in bringing this fourth SAAPE Newsletter to you. We very much welcome and appreciate your innovative ideas and suggestions and would like to urge you all to come up with interesting articles, pictures or stories to make the next Newsletter, and subsequent publications, even bigger and better than this one. Happy reading and please do keep in touch!

Thank you.

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# Post 1st February Trend in Human Rights Violations in Nepal

Mukunda Kattel

SAAPE Secretariat, Rural Reconstruction Nepal

"All organs of the state must remain alert in honouring and protecting human rights", reads a hoarding board erected at the entrance to the Royal Palace. "We have no interest other than meaningful exercise of democracy", says another. Both quotes are taken from the King's 1 February address which suspended democracy and human rights in order to "defend multiparty democracy."<sup>1</sup>

However, in the streets below the hoarding boards, the violation of human rights is the only reality. Lawyers are manhandled for calling for the return to democracy and the rule of law, journalists are beaten because they take to the streets protesting against the gagging of the press, the displaced conflict victims are mercilessly beaten (causing the death of some) and their makeshift camps are destroyed despite pleas to the government for protection.<sup>2</sup> And, on top of this, the state is failing to provide for the fundamental rights of its citizens - in water, sanitation, education, health care, shelter and others - the list of human rights violations in Nepal is endless, and spiralling.

"I do not believe in democracy, the King does", claimed Dr. Tulsi Giri, the first Vice Chairman of the Council of Ministers, who is believed to be the key political architect of the 1 February coup and subsequent state actions.<sup>3</sup> "It is not an appropriate time for Nepali people to enjoy democracy and human rights", argues the Attorney General, Pawan Kumar Ojha, they should "wear a coat of their size."<sup>4</sup> From these quotes we get a much clearer picture of what the King's intentions are regarding democracy and human rights.

While the security forces reign within the Kathmandu Valley, outside the Valley the Maoist guerrillas continue to fight their nearly a decade long 'People's' War "to crush feudal autocracy". They do not "rule out mistakes" since they are "at war" and "try to correct them".<sup>5</sup> But in the Maoist modus operandi, 'mistakes' seem to be an everyday occurrence, and 'correction' an exception.

Last month, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists issued a joint letter to the Maoist leader, Prachanda, calling on him to respect human rights. Yet two weeks later, on 6 June, the Maoists detonated a bomb under a public bus in Chitwan, in southern Nepal - killing 38 civilians and injuring 72. The 'utterly reprehensible tactics', to use the words of the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, marks the worst case of what has been termed a 'crime against humanity'.<sup>6</sup> Even Prachanda expressed alarm at the carnage. "This incident has happened against party policy", he admits, "we firmly commit ourselves not to repeating such events in the future".<sup>7</sup> His words were hollow - the Maoists repeated the devastation just a week later, in Kailali. "Everyone was stabbed, all had bruises and scars all over their bodies, and all had their limbs tied and throats slit"<sup>8</sup>, writes a Nepali journalist of the barbaric killing by Maoists of six family members of armed police personnel. One of the victims was just one year old.

Since 1 February, the human rights crisis in Nepal has grown far deeper and has indeed reached a catastrophic level. Yet the response remains sorely inadequate, both by the Nepali state and by the international community.

1. The 'Full Text of King's Address to the Nation' is available online at <http://www.kantipuronline.com/>
2. Gana Bahadur Gharti, a Maoist victim, died of injuries he sustained when police intervened in the 29 May demonstration. On 5 June, the police destroyed makeshift camps of the victims, 'looted all the properties' and arrested some 200 victims. (Kathmandu Post, 7 June 2005)
3. Kantipur Daily, 8 April 2005, p.7
4. Annapurna Post, 4 June 2005
5. See Prachanda's interview with Time Magazine, available online at [www.time.com/time/asia/2005/nepal/ext\\_int\\_ganendra.html](http://www.time.com/time/asia/2005/nepal/ext_int_ganendra.html)
6. The joint letter is available online at [hrw.org/english/docs/2005/05/20/nepal10990\\_txt.htm](http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/05/20/nepal10990_txt.htm)
7. See the press release by Prachanda dated June 7, available online at <http://insn.org/?p=1267>
8. See, 'krur hatyaka drishyale sabai awak' (all stand wordless at the sight of murder), Nepal Samacharpatra, 16 June 2005.

## Media cover-up

Following 1 February, a new and worrying trend has emerged in the human rights abuse: conscious cover-up and denial of violations. The cover-up intensified with the imposition of the state of emergency and the resultant criminalisation of the spread of any news deemed to be disparaging to the state. Even after the (alleged) end of the state of emergency, the cover-up continues unabated. Journalists face harassment, human rights defenders are under surveillance and the gagging of the press continues. Recently the government ordered the closure of Communication Corner, which provides programming to 14 of the 50 private radio stations, claiming that the radio programme production centre was acting illegally.<sup>9</sup> Informal reports also suggest that the government is in the process of amending the Press Act - giving the state unbridled powers to deal with editors and newsmen if they do not comply with state orders.<sup>10</sup>

In the state-controlled media, Nepalis are bombarded with reports regarding Maoist violations whilst the press remains tight lipped about state culpability. By projecting the Maoists as terrorists and the only source of violations and crime, the regime is effectively absolving itself of any human rights violations.

The Maoists on the other hand, do not cover-up but justify the abuse under the cover of the 'just war', which they say they "are fighting for the liberation of the masses". Prachanda has categorically said that their violations "cannot be compared" with those of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA), which is "fighting against the masses".<sup>11</sup>

Using hate propaganda against the 'other', hiding from their responsibilities and holding the other responsible for violations, both the forces are utilising the old Goebbelian *technique of argumentum ad nauseam*. In a regime of denial, violations take place purposely but insidiously, away from the public eye and under the placatory banner of human rights protection and commitment to the 'rule of law'. This is an everyday occurrence here in Nepal.

## Militarization

The King's February address to the nation was about doing 'politics by other means'. In the monarch's eyes, "...political parties were unable to display responsible

behaviour in augmenting the patriotic fervour of dutiful security personnel... active round the clock in ensuring security of the nation and people". However, despite the lofty rhetoric regarding the destruction of terrorism, the only visible trend is towards autocracy and militarization.

The physical presence of the military is everywhere: footpaths, government offices, schools, shopping malls and market places. So is their psychological presence. Their 'bold deeds', particularly the 'killing of terrorists', are spread through state radio and television; their bravery is praised and martyrdom honoured. Even the opinion pages in the state-owned papers - Rising Nepal and Gorkhapatra - carry militaristic opinions lambasting political parties, flaying democratic norms and praising a militarised system.<sup>12</sup>

Ambassadorial posts are being filled by retired military personnel. Former Chief of Army Staff, Prajwal Shamsher Rana, has been appointed as the Ambassador to France, former General Tara Bahadur Thapa for Thailand and former General Krishna Narayan Sing Thapa for the UN Mission in New York.<sup>13</sup> As one diplomat reportedly said, "The appointment of army personnel in diplomatic missions communicates the message of militarization".<sup>14</sup>

Increased military expenditure is a further indication of the burgeoning militarization of the state. "Ministry of Defence (MoD) seeks Rs 18 Billion" reads the headline in the Himalayan Times, on 6 June, and it continues "If cleared, the defence budget for the next fiscal year will be almost double that of this year". There is little doubt that this increase will be agreed.

In the Maoist realm too, where 'power comes through the barrel of the gun', military might is the principal source of power. Their human, economic and political capital rests on the use of force - from extorting money from innocent civilians, to destroying schools and health posts and as punishment to the 'informers'. Militarization is at the heart of their 'Peoples War'.

Human rights and militarization are inimical. The first refers to a culture of tolerance and peace, the latter a culture of aggression. As militarization becomes entrenched and normalised, the ideals and principles of human rights become the first victim. We are a living example of this casualty.

9. Kathmandu Post, May 28, 2005

10. See, Pres ainma sanshodhan prati apatti (objection to the amendment in the press act), Samacharpatra, 22 May 2005

11. See, Prachanda's interview with Time Magazine

12. See, 'Political Parties Speak the Master's Voice', by Ajay P Nath, The Rising Nepal, 7 June 2005.

13. See, France rajdootma Rana (Rana in French Embassy), Kantipur, 30 May

14. See, Rajdootma purba sainik adhariko ko bahulyata (former army officials in ambassadorship), Kantipur 6 May 2005

### Rule by Decree

The current regime operates through the rule of decree, through ordinances and mighty orders 'from above'. The recent amendment to the Human Rights Commission Act 1997, which covers the functioning of the Nepal Human Rights Commission, marks an extreme example. Prominent human rights organisations have publicly declared that they will not collaborate with the newly formed Commission which has been formed 'unconstitutionally' and 'against the Paris Principles of autonomy, independence, impartiality, efficiency and professionalism'.

As the regime operates by royal decrees, constitutional organs and courts have become helpless. The Royal Corruption Control Commission (RCCC), formed by decree, oversteps the scope of the constitutional Commission for the Investigation of the Abuse of Authority (CIAA). It is clear that the RCCC has been constituted to silence political opposition to the authoritarian rule by implicating political leaders on corruption charges. And it is succeeding in doing so. A former prime minister and a minister have already been remanded in custody on corruption charges, which the ministers say are politically motivated. Human rights are protected by the rule of law, not by the rule of decree. And we do not have the first one.

### Administration by vigilante groups

1 February has institutionalised a new form of administration - the vigilante administration - which imparts vigilante justice at the grassroots. Like the state-armed 'Janjaweed' militias in the Darfur region of Sudan, these vigilante groups loot, torture and terrorise people into conforming to their orders and even kill at the instigation of the state.<sup>15</sup> Emerging from the shadows of the state of emergency with intent to fighting the Maoists, the vigilante terror forms part of Nepali life in most villages of Nepal's terai region. In late February and early March, as many as 30 people were killed by a vigilante mob in Kapilvastu and almost all houses were burned down in the village of Hallanagar, which the vigilantes had identified as a 'Maoist village'.<sup>16</sup> A village in Nawalparasi district, in western Nepal, is now surrounded by some '1500 booby traps (land-mines) planted to catch the Maoist rebels', concedes the Nawalparasi District Chairman of the vigilante group.<sup>17</sup> The whole village is in terror. In Kathmandu, the government Communication and Information Minister proudly announced: "In such areas where the people have taken actions by themselves, the government will introduce integrated development programmes". The fate of human rights can easily be gauged under such circumstances. As many as 70 people have already lost their lives to the vigilante violence.

### Conclusion

Human rights in Nepal are at an all time low. They have been suppressed and neglected, mocked and flayed, and are being used as a political weapon by both the state and the Maoists. Yet the movement for achieving them has not stopped. It is becoming stronger and more decisive. The lawyers are fighting for it; journalists are fighting for it; human rights defenders are fighting for it; political parties are fighting for it, and all are fighting non-violently.

However the global response has not yet been effective. Human rights and democracy are universal values and ideals. Universal as they are, their violation anywhere should amount to their violation everywhere. But it is sad to see that the global community is yet to awaken to this fundamental reality. Or else, they would have already felt the violation of their human rights when Nepali people are completely deprived of theirs.

15.. See AI report 'Nepal Human rights abuses escalate under the state of emergency' available online at <http://web.amnesty.org>

16. 'RIGHTS-NEPAL: Vigilante Justice Goes Astray', Akhilesh Upadhyay, available online <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=27950>

17. Kathmandu Post, May 31 2005

## Nothing left for me

*Mohiuddin Ahmad, CDL, Bangladesh*

*I was born in the wrong time  
When I came by that point  
All the villages were occupied  
Even all the rivers and all orchards  
The sky has also been sold  
No seed will breed anymore  
They've all been patented  
All birds have stopped singing  
Because of copyright Act  
And the most beautiful woman  
The jingle of whose footsteps  
Clogs song of the bird  
Blocks sprouting of the bud  
Now she belongs to the King  
There is nothing left for me*

### A People's Process for Post-tsunami Rebuilding

SAAPE and the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) organised a meeting - "A People's Process for Post-tsunami Rebuilding" - from 24-26 April 2005 in Sri Lanka. The meeting was hosted by the Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR), the Country Focal Organisation for SAAPE in Sri Lanka. At this meeting, people's organisations and their supporters from Sri Lanka, India, Maldives, Indonesia, Thailand and Somalia gathered and discussed the post-tsunami rebuilding processes in the six affected countries. Other SAAPE members, and representatives from the UN, government and the EU also attended the meeting.

The aim was to encourage greater dialogue between people of contributing and receiving countries, in order to increase the appreciation of grassroots realities. It was recognised that while there are many differences between participating countries in terms of post-tsunami rehabilitation, there are also commonalities, such as: a lack of coordination in aid delivery, inappropriateness and inequity in aid disbursement, top-down and inappropriate policies for relief and rehabilitation, lack of financial and policy transparency and a lack of community participation.

At the meeting organisations working with affected people, particularly poor fish worker and farmer communities, jointly reviewed the policies adopted by national governments and other actors, prepared a framework for a new people's process for post-tsunami rebuilding and adopted a declaration. This called for a collaborative people's process of rehabilitation, which puts the disaster affected communities at the heart of the process. In particular, it recommended the setting up of reserve funds, to ensure all resources pledged in the name of affected people genuinely belong to them. It also called for the establishment of systems for representation of affected people's organisations in planning, monitoring and decision-making bodies.

*The full statement is available on the SAAPE website - [www.saaape.org.np](http://www.saaape.org.np)*

### 'Water: Right or Trade': People come together in Bangladesh

A seminar on 'Water: Right or Trade (Pani: Odhikar na Banijya)' was organised by CDL (Community



Development Library) - the Country Focal Organisation for SAAPE in Bangladesh - in Dhaka on 7 May this year. Hamidul Huq of the Institute of Livelihood Studies gave the opening presentation, after which the floor was opened for interactive discussion - moderated by Mohiuddin Ahmad, Chairperson of CDL. Participants reviewed the situation in Bangladesh under the WTO regime and emphasised the need for a concerted national campaign against the commodification of water. A concrete proposal was made for a series of country-wide interactive discussions on the issue and participants highlighted the need for increased awareness about the pro-privatisation lobby, which also includes some big NGOs.

Access to water is a fundamental human right, and concerted action to address the lack of this basic service is crucial if overall goals of poverty eradication are to be achieved. This is important, not only at the local and national level, but also at the regional level - given the Trans boundary nature of this vital resource. Water use and policy in one country clearly impacts upon activities in others. Alliances such as SAAPE are important vehicles for helping to reach a common understanding on such issues and help to ensure that policies and planning meets the needs of the poorest in all our countries.

A total of 45 people attended the meeting, including academics, students, government officials, NGO representatives and others from around Bangladesh.

*Sent by: Mohiuddin Ahmad, CDL, Bangladesh*

### Marching for Peace: SAAPE members lead the way

In a world mired in conflict, people's efforts to promote lasting peace and combat the growing spread of militarisation have assumed increased importance. To drive forward regional action on this issue, SAAPE chose peace and demilitarisation as key area of its work - and

SAAPE members are actively pushing the agenda in their own countries and across the region. Here is one example.

In Multan, the oldest living city on earth, located in Pakistan's Punjab province, thousands of citizens welcomed a small delegation of peace marchers from either side of the Pakistan/India border on 10 May this year. To some people it may seem like a simple event but it took about two years for a small group of committed activists on both sides of the border to make the unique idea a reality.

Dr. Sandeep Pandey, a renowned Indian peace activist, intellectual and active SAAPE member, first floated the idea of a peace march in 2003. Putting the idea into practice was not without problems, which ranged from obtaining visas to the security of the peace marchers, who were to walk for almost two months through the two "enemy countries". However, for the two main organisers - Sandeep Pandey and Karamat Ali, Executive Director of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER) and another active member of SAAPE - it was very much possible. Despite all the difficulties, the peace march started on 23 March, from the Dargah (shrine) of Nizamuddin Aulia in Delhi. It culminated at the shrine of Ghaus Bahauddin Zakarya in Multan on 10 May.

"Despite the obstacles, the march was successful as we were able to bring out the issues," said Karamat Ali. The idea was to help promote interaction among the people from both sides of the border, so that they talk to each other about different issues. In India, the peace marchers met between 500 and 600 people each day.

The marchers, many of them peace activists, discussed issues such as nuclear disarmament and options for a peaceful solution to the fighting in Kashmir. They were able to obtain thousands of signatures on a petition, which demanded a peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue and a no-war pact between the two neighbours.

"It was not an easy job to talk to ordinary people on such sensitive issues. However, we really got a very positive response, as there was no hostility. You could not imagine these things a few years back," says Monica Wahi, an Indian peace marcher who works for the rehabilitation of the victims of the Gujrat communal violence.

Initially no Pakistani marchers were issued visas: "It was ironic that the peace marchers were not issued visas since it was promised by the top leadership in the two countries" condemns Karamat Ali. While the Indian marchers started the walk, Pakistani marchers eagerly waited for visas. "We wanted to join them but it was beyond us. We stayed in Lahore hoping to cross the border every day", says Ms Lali, a freed bonded labourer and one of the Pakistani

marchers. Finally, nine Pakistani marchers were issued visas and were able to join their Indian friends. "We walked with them for five days only as they had already covered a long way", added Lali.

Interestingly, when the march reached the Wagah border on 18 April, the Pakistan government resorted to the same delaying tactics in issuing visas, which compelled the organisers to halt the march. After the concerted efforts of a number of peace activists in Pakistan, 12 Indian marchers were issued conditional visas, which demanded that they travelled in vehicles to Multan. They were greeted by thousands of Pakistanis upon arrival in Multan.

Many people wondered why the shrines of saints were selected as the start and end points of the peace march. Was it to promote religion? "The reason to link the march with the shrines of two saints was to highlight the Sufic aspect of religion. Sufic fought against extremism and tyranny so we wanted to make this march symbolic", explains Karamat. The other reason was to involve the current spiritual heirs of these shrines in the peace process.

The march ended with a Peace Conference and Peace Rally in Multan, attended by thousands of people, which demanded that the two countries reduce their defence budgets and spend more on the welfare of their citizens.

The march also made the link between peace, demilitarisation and poverty eradication. "The arms race and the huge spending on defence are major reasons for poverty in the region" said Dr. Nayer, head of the Pakistan Peace Coalition (PPC) while addressing the peace conference. He stressed that the elimination of poverty is linked to peace. "You can not prosper until you give up the craze for arms." A demand was made to the government of Pakistan to stop buying F-16 fighters. Figures presented at the conferences suggest that the government could build 2400 new schools from US \$ 40 million: the cost of a single F-16.

"It is a shame that governments are spending huge sums on arms when people are dying of hunger, diseases and children are left illiterate. We want immediate peace," read one of the resolutions passed at the conference.

The organisers of the peace march and conference stressed the importance of people-to-people contact in overcoming problems in the region. "Participation of ordinary people in the peace march shows the demand for peace among ordinary citizens. It is time the governments recognise this need and also move quickly towards peace," Karamat demanded.

*Sent by: Zulfiqar Shah, PILER, Pakistan (PILER is the Country Focal Organisation for Pakistan)*

# People's Protest against the Sri Lanka Development Forum

A peaceful people's protest took place in Kandy, Sri Lanka, on 16 May 2005 - the inaugural day of the Sri Lanka Development Forum 2005. It was jointly organised by the Alliance for the Protection of National Resources and Human Rights (ANRHR), the Trade Union Centre for Building the Country and the Free Media Movement, with the participation of other civil society organisations of various sectors.

Protesters were demanding that the grants and loans for post-tsunami rebuilding, due to be agreed at the Development Forum, be directly invested in meeting the needs of those affected by the tsunami. In particular, protesters insisted that the government and donors give up what is seen as the 'hidden agenda' to push through the 'Regaining Sri Lanka' PRSP plan that was rejected by the people at the last election. This PRSP comprises the construction of superhighways, airports and ports, the privatisation of water and power and the selling off of land and national resources, such as the Eppawela phosphate deposit.

To that end, protesters pushed for the disbanding of the big business task force TAFREN (Task Force for Rebuilding the Nation), and called for it to be replaced by a people's planning commission with representatives of all affected communities and their organisations, and with appropriate experts with experience of social, psychological and



environmental as well as physical rehabilitation. They also insisted that the establishment of the Joint Mechanism between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was crucial in the processes of post-tsunami rebuilding.

Protesters also pressed the government to take action to defend freedom of expression in the country, which they said was under serious threat, evidenced by the recent murder of top Tamil journalist and former editor of TamilNet.com, Dharmarathnam Sivaram.

The main concerns and demands of the people were highlighted in a statement submitted to the government and donors, which was signed by over 170 Sri Lankan organisations, with the support of nearly 50 organisations from abroad.

*Sent by: Shamila Indika Rathnasooriya, MONLAR, Sri Lanka*

## Introduction to a SAAPE Focal Organisation

### Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR)

The Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR) was established in 1990 to combat the serious socio-political and economic crisis in Sri Lanka generated by the political unrest and the economic globalisation process in the 1980s. It is currently the Country Focal Organisation for SAAPE in Sri Lanka and the Thematic Focal Point on Food Sovereignty.

After its establishment, MONLAR initiated an island-wide process of dialogue among the people, with the objective of developing a people's response and proposing an alternative sustainable development approach. It is now a national people's network of over 100 organisations, and

has made links with international movements and campaigns, in order to work towards this vision of sustainable development. Its members are small and landless farmers in agricultural districts, NGOs, intellectuals, youths, students, political parties/groups, religious leaders, trade unions and women.

MONLAR aims to overcome hunger, malnutrition and poverty. It envisions a world where there is equality and justice for everyone and believes that "building a better world is possible" in every aspect. It aims to be much more than a NGO by acting as a catalyst for the creation of a broad national pro-poor movement. It believes that the historical and present role of women in sustaining livelihoods and their capacity to develop such alternatives should be recognised and strengthened. It sees the importance of building a vision and broad alliances among

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people within the country and internationally, to pool their resources, knowledge, experiences and strength of organised action.

While MONLAR concentrates its efforts on people and issues related to land and agriculture, it works closely with networks in other sectors. Its key objectives are as follows:

- To build national awareness in collaboration with organisations working with all other sectors of society affected/victimised by the present model.
- To bring about policy changes at macro/national level, while developing people's own strength, awareness and capacity to protect their livelihoods, environment, food security and challenge poverty and disparities.
- To assist rural communities, as well as those in other sectors and at other levels of society, through information, education, analysis and organised action.

MONLAR plays a lead role in SAAPE as the Country Focal Organisation for Sri Lanka and the Thematic Focal Point on food sovereignty. As an organisation it is currently focusing on the following activities:

- i. Developing a strategy for making small farmer

agriculture economically viable, environmentally friendly, socially just and culturally acceptable.

- ii. Introducing sustainable agricultural practices, such as Integrated Pest Management, organic fertilisers and soil and water resource conservation methods, in the major paddy farming areas in Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Anuradhapura and Hambantota districts and other districts.
- iii. Making concrete efforts to involve associated NGOs, local government bodies and the government's Agricultural Department in the MONLAR network in order to achieve the people's aspirations.
- iv. Raising awareness about the priorities set at the "World Food Summit" in November 1996 and ensuring that these globally agreed priorities on food security are made a reality at the ground level.
- v. Undertaking studies, training, information dissemination and communication about sustainable agriculture promotion
- vi. Campaigning for policy changes at local, regional/provincial and national levels.

MONLAR contact information is given below:

### For more information:

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#### Country Focal Organisations and Contact Details

The SAAPE has Country Focal Organisations (CFOs) in each country of the region to co-ordinate and expedite the country-based processes. The CFOs are also responsible for providing the necessary inputs and feedback to the SAAPE Secretariat, based at Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN). They are chosen from among the member organisations of the respective countries.

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#### Regional Thematic Focal points

**Gender:** All Nepal Women's Association (ANWA), Nepal

**Labour:** Pakistan Institute of Labour, Education and Research (PILER), Pakistan  
**Governance, Accountability, Democracy and the Rule of Law:** Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, India

**Food Sovereignty:** Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR), Sri Lanka

**Peace and Demilitarisation:** Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), Kathmandu.

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