



*Fighting unitedly against poverty, hunger and injustice in South Asia*

# SAAPE Bulletin

Half-yearly publication of SAAPE (No. 26, August 2022)

## Decent Work Deficit in South Asia: Make the System Work for the Poor!

Produces from primary producers change hands multiple times and reach different intermediaries with each intermediary adding value in the process before the final output takes its form. However, there is a disproportionate distribution of return among the value chain partners with the producers at the bottom end receiving minimal share of return. Inequality in value chains is caused by concentration of profit among the company owners or shareholders, weak bargaining power among partners at the lower end, institutional barriers such as high transaction cost, information asymmetry, weak regulations, and poor access to land, water, inputs, finance and technology among the small-scale producers.<sup>1</sup> In addition, growing integration of the global economy has further provided opportunities for businesses to outsource components of value chain into different countries, with the lower value chain components in general transferred to developing or least developed countries leading to much higher profit transfer to countries in the Global North. Small-scale producers in the Global South are scattered, less organized and hence, yield less bargaining power against the large corporates who are the price-setters. The situation is lately exacerbated by the increased concentration of the corporates through merger and acquisition agreements resulting in monopsony or oligopsony. As a result, countries specialising in primary

commodities (minerals and agriculture) have seen their terms of trade decline against manufacturers.<sup>3</sup>

Peasants, small-scale producers, and workers in South Asia are at the lowest receiving end in value chain. For example, sugarcane farmers in Nepal are forced to stage protest to get their pending payment from the sugar mill owners and still, the commitments of payment remain largely unfulfilled. Meanwhile, there are instances when farmers in the region have been forced to dump their agricultural products on to streets to protest against low market price offered to their products. Disproportionate distribution of income among the value chain members has prevented low-income people from escaping poverty. For instance, a cursory look into the poverty profile of Nepal shows that the households headed by agricultural wage laborers are the poorest followed by the households headed by self-employed in agriculture, together sharing 65.2 percent of the total incidence of poverty.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, corporatization of agricultural input/output market and other primary production sectors on which the livelihoods of large number of small-scale producers depends is also a growing concern. The issue of decent work, including guarantee of sustainable wage and safeguarding of labour rights, is also undermined for the purpose of positioning a product as cost-effective. In

<sup>1</sup> Rob Kuijpers, Anne Rappoldt, Stefan Petrutu, Andre Vos, Froukje Kruijsen, RogierVerschoor and Alex Maitland. Value Chain Approaches for Social Change. KIT Working Paper 2021-1. Oxfam Novid: 2021.

<sup>2</sup> For example, the merger of Bayer and Monsanto has resulted in a global giant in the agricultural input market. See <https://www.croplife.com/crop-inputs/bayer-monsanto-merger-creates-new-global-ag-giant/>

<sup>3</sup> LDC Watch. 2017. Commodity Dependence in Least Developed Countries. Available at <https://ldcwatch.org/index.php/resources/publications/ldc-watch-position-papers>

<sup>4</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics. 2011. Poverty in Nepal (A brief report based on Nepal Living Standard Survey III 2010/2011). Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

Bangladesh, the competitiveness of the RMG sector, hailed as a top exporting sector gearing the strong economic growth of the country, lies on low wages provided to workers. The monthly minimum wage for unskilled garment workers in Bangladesh is still rock bottom, one of the lowest in the world - it was USD 68 compared with Vietnam's USD 85 to USD 128 and China's USD 156 to USD 266.<sup>5</sup>

Fishery is an important produce and source of livelihood in South Asia. Capture fisheries and aquaculture constitute an important economic activity contributing to economies at national and local level, to export earnings, and to food supplies and employment.<sup>6</sup> The product category 'fish and fish products' is one of the major exports from South Asian countries as it ranks at least among the top 15 export products for each country.<sup>7</sup> It is exported to as far as the United States, European countries (Germany, United Kingdom, and France), South East Asian countries (Vietnam, Japan, and Thailand) and China. Fish and fish products account for approximately 17% of India's aquaculture exports. Latest data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), as of May 2022, shows that export of selected frozen seafood increased considerably to USD 390.05 million in the first eleven months of Fiscal Year 2021-2022. In Sri Lanka, fisheries and seafood products are one of the chief exports from (after readymade garments and textiles, tea and coffee, mineral fuels and machinery products) and ranks eighth among the export products.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Bangladesh is one of the top five fish-producing countries,<sup>9</sup> with production increasing by 53% since 2009.<sup>10</sup> Bangladesh earns more than USD 500 million per year from the export of aquaculture products, which is the country's second largest source of foreign exchange after textiles.

Meanwhile, millions of people in South Asian countries rely on fisheries (both marine and freshwater) for food and livelihood. The sector gives livelihoods to almost 16 million fishers and fish farmers in India at the primary level and about twice the number along the value chain. Pakistan's seafood sector, which is primarily derived from its marine resources, supports more than a million people along a 700mile/1,126 km coastline. However, the average income of fishermen households is significantly lower than that of non-fishermen households. There is a ban on fishing during the period April-May and October-November and these months can be termed as lean period. The traditional fishermen struggle to meet the needs of their family during the lean seasons. Compelled by such circumstances they seek money from informal credit agents/commission agents to meet their urgent needs. Agents advance all the money required on condition that the catch is sold to them. The fishermen practically lose his liberty to sell his fish to anyone else. These commission agents play a major role in the economic life of an overwhelming proportion of the traditional fishermen. The commission agents do not charge any interest on the money advanced to the fishermen or on items supplied on credit but elicit much more than the interest rate on the credit advanced in a number of ways. The indebted fishermen are compelled to sell all their catch to the commission agents only and that too at a price usually much below the market price prevailing in the local market.<sup>11</sup>

The fisheries production has also been heavily affected by overfishing, gradual shrinking of open water bodies, fast urbanisation, anthropogenic induced climate change and associated natural disasters. In addition, this sector is suffering by destruction of fish habitat, pollution, siltation,

<sup>5</sup> International Labour Organisation. 2015. Minimum wages in the global garment: Update for 2015. Available at [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_436867.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_436867.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/i3432e/i3432e.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> International Trade Centre, 2020

<sup>8</sup> Sri Lanka Export Development Board, Ministry of Trade, Government of Sri Lanka, <https://www.srilankabusiness.com/sea-food/seafood-export-performance.html>

<sup>9</sup> Lauria, V.; Das, I.; Hazra, S.; Cazcarro, I.; Arto, I.; Kay, S.; Ofori-Danson, P.; Ahmed, M.; Hossain, M.A.R.; Barange, M.; et al. Importance of fisheries for food security across three climate change vulnerable deltas. *Sci. Total Environ.* 2018, 640–641, 1566–1577 [CrossRef]

<sup>10</sup> FAO The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018—Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. Available online: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3720e/index.html> (accessed on 15 April 2015)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.yourarticlibrary.com/agriculture/9-major-fish-production-centers-in-india/42314>

logging and mining that are posing threat to the fisheries and aqua life across the region. Further, lack of community-based management, technical supports, and trade unions with greater legitimacy and ownership are the key challenges faced by the fisheries sector.

Likewise, four countries from South Asia – India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh – are among the top 20 tea producers in the world.<sup>12</sup> Tea from South Asia is being sold to domestic consumers as well as exported to as far as North America, Europe and the Middle East.<sup>13</sup> Demand for made tea has also been increasing with the annual increase in consumption that stood at 5.5 million tonnes as in 2016.<sup>14</sup> With branding and marketing, the value of the end product, especially, in the foreign market, is high and has been rising.

Tea sector provides direct and indirect employment to millions of workers and farmers in the region of South Asia. However, compensation to workers and farmers, who lie at the bottom of the value chain, has been meagre. The minimum daily wage of tea plantation workers in India is as low as USD 1.77 in Tripura; USD 1.87 in Bangladesh, USD 2.78 in Sri Lanka, and USD 3.5 in Nepal, and the increment, that often takes biannually, is too minimal to compensate for even the inflation in the economy. Such minimum wage is inadequate to provide for nutrition, clothing, health and education of the family of workers. Also, the social security provisions of provident fund and gratuity cover only the permanent workers, while the share of permanent workers is rapidly declining with the increasing informalisation of work in the sector. Women workers occupy at least half of the tea plantation workforce in South Asia but the plantation fields, where most women work, are not women-friendly. Female workers struggle with hygiene-related issues during menstruation, maternity and child care. Nutrition during pregnancy and post-maternity is inadequate due to which the children

borne suffer from malnutrition and stunting. Women are bound to carry heavy loads of tea leaves even during pregnancy and post-maternity.

Smallholder farmers in plantation sector have an essential contribution to the production of green tea leaves. In Sri Lanka, smallholdings, consisting of up to 10 acres of family-owned estates, account for over 75% of the country's tea production<sup>15</sup>. Similarly, out of 9,235 farmers/enterprises involved in commercial tea plantations in Nepal, 9,127 (98.8%) are smallholder farmers, while 108 (1.2%) are large tea estates<sup>16</sup>. However, smallholder tea farmers are not paid fair price for green leaves. The price they receive is inadequate, especially with rising input costs, and they find it challenging to sustain tea farming.

The cases of fisherfolks in fisheries sector and smallholders and workers in tea sector illustrate the use of the logic of global value chain by the economically powerful brands to push the costs of production to disproportionately low level. Both sectors are part of national and global value chains, where significantly larger proportion of profit is made at the retail end. Meanwhile, manufacturers in the Global South are then bound to enter less favourable price terms, which are observed in forms of low wage and adverse working condition. Huge wage differential and unfavourable working condition are the fundamental drivers of the global supply chain. These factors drive the cost of production in the Global South to low level for which companies compete against each other to push the wage level down and dilute regulation of working conditions.

In this way, the proclivity toward maximizing profits dominates the product value chain in South Asia as it does around the world, especially in an export-based scenario. Big corporates and multinational companies have immensely been profiting largely by undervaluing natural resources and labour from low-

<sup>12</sup> FAO (2009) The state of food and agriculture, FAOSTAT statistical database, available at [faostat.fao.org](http://faostat.fao.org)

<sup>13</sup> Trade Map, International Trade Centre (2022), [www.trademap.org](http://www.trademap.org) (accessed on 20 December 2022)

<sup>14</sup> FAO Intergovernmental Group on Tea (2018). Current Market Situation and Medium-Term Outlook, <https://www.fao.org/3/BU642en/bu642en.pdf> (accessed on 15 May 2022)

<sup>15</sup> United Nations (2021) Improving livelihoods of women tea smallholders through suitable land management practices. <https://sri Lanka.un.org/en/127297-improving-livelihoods-women-tea-smallholders-through-sustainable-land-management-practices> (accessed on 15 May 2022)

<sup>16</sup> Nepal Commercial Tea Survey Report. 2018. Central Bureau of Statistics and National Tea and Coffee Development Board, Government of Nepal

income countries. While existing value chains are plagued with issues of human rights, indebtedness and inequality, including gender discrimination, Global Value Chains (GVCs) are fostering systems that perpetuate human suffering. In this context, the issue of pro-poor value chain is of utmost importance to safeguard the livelihoods and rights of the small-scale producers. A pro-poor value chain programme aims to develop sustainable production systems and to influence policies and practices of institutions and companies towards sustainable, gender sensitive and inclusive value chains<sup>17</sup>. The livelihoods of fisherfolks, plantation workers and smallholders increasingly depend on value chain approaches that contribute to social equality and it is high time we broadened the focus and scope of the value chain by incorporating other human values instead of mere financial gains. National policymakers, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), business enterprises and multilateral agencies need to work further to make the seafood value chain more equitable and fairer by combining business principles with social aspirations of those

who are seemingly stuck at the bottom of the value chain, i.e., the small-scale fishermen, plantation workers and smallholders.

A pro-poor value chain programme is imperative to safeguard the livelihoods and rights of the small-scale producers and workers at a time when globalisation has integrated the production and distribution networks. Governments lack strong regulatory mechanisms to protect people's rights from MNCs' and private sectors' exploitative practices. For this purpose, an evidence-backed advocacy for equitable value chain would yield better impact by providing knowledge to civil society organisations on where specifically to target their intervention programmes. SAAPE and its members, who have been working unitedly against the structural causes of poverty, inequality and social injustices in South Asia, are actively involved in organising public campaigns, capacity-building activities, commissioning research, and producing fact sheets for the fair value chain on tea and seafood sectors in South Asia.

## Farmers' Dialogue on Fair Wages for Tea Workers in South Asia

A meeting with the workers of the tea sector was held at Nagrakata, District Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, India on 02 March 2022 to discuss the issue of value chain and minimum wage of tea workers in the tea industry. The meeting called by SAAPE minimum

wage campaign member - Progressive Plantation Workers Union (PPWU) was attended by 50 trade unionists from different tea plantations in North Bengal, India.



<sup>17</sup> Oxfam Novib. n.d. Food, land and water: Pro-poor value chains.



The meeting discussed on the deep deprivation and the inequalities existing in the tea plantations and further highlighted how plantation owners deprived the workers of fair wages and other employment benefits. The issue of minimum wages has been pending since 2014 with the government failing to declare minimum wages after so long. PPWU resolved to launch struggles on this issue in future.



Despite living in the tea estates for generations, the plantation workers do not have legal rights over their houses and cultivable land. A training workshop was earlier held on legal procedures to apply for land titles. PPWU would take the initiative to encourage and help workers file the land title claims with the district authorities.

In India, The Tea Act 1953 is being amended in such a way that provisions related to powers of Tea Board that could be used to intervene for the interests of the workers are done away with. PPWU committed to send a demand letter to the Additional Labour Commission of West Bengal, India highlighting the tea plantations workers' issues.

## Multi-stakeholder Meeting and Roundtable Dialogue, Nepal

South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) organised a multi-stakeholder roundtable dialogue entitled "The Value Chain of Tea sector in Nepal: The Problems Faced by Smallholder Producers and

Workers" on 27 March 2022 in Birtamod, Jhapa, Nepal. The multi-stakeholder dialogue was organised to discuss the problems faced by the producers – smallholder farmers and workers – in the beginning



stage of the value chain of tea. The meeting also aimed at getting perspectives from different stakeholders – the government, trade unions and cooperatives – on the possible solutions to the problems of workers and smallholder farmers.

In addition to the participation from tea peasants (or smallholders) and workers, the multi-stakeholder dialogue was attended by representatives from the Government of Nepal, workers' unions, tea cooperative federation, and civil society organisations. Specifically, some key speakers/participants in the event include Acting Regional Director of Nepal Tea and Coffee Development Board, Regional Vice-President of General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (Province 1), Chairperson of Nepal Tea Estate Workers' Association, President of Central Tea Cooperative Federation (CTCF), Chairperson of Nepal Trade Union Congress – Jhapa, and Co-coordinator of Sambad Samuha.

The multi-stakeholder dialogue identified the following major issues to be addressed for bringing fairness in the value chain of tea:

1. Transparency in value chain – Workers are unaware of how much profit or loss large tea estates are making due to which workers do not know on what basis to bargain for their wages and benefits
2. Minimum wage – Minimum wage set by the government is very low and needs to be revised, not arbitrarily, but on a scientific basis.
3. Social protection – Social security, including medical insurance and accidental insurance, is not available to workers in the tea sector.
4. Union building – Unionisation of seasonal workers in the tea sector is yet to begin which has weakened the strength of workers' unions.
5. Agricultural inputs – Provision of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers at subsidised rate is not guaranteed for tea peasants. Cost of other inputs such as irrigation and power are also charged at industrial rate.
6. Price of green leaves – The state has not arranged for minimum support pricing system for green tea leaves except for Suryodaya Municipality. Low price provided to farmers for green leaves has resulted in a situation where tea farming is not sustainable with the rise in input cost.

The multi-stakeholder dialogue concluded with the common understanding that workers and farmers must come together to press large tea estates in providing fair value for their labour and green leaves. Large tea estates and the government must work together to develop Nepal's own brand and market Nepal's tea in third countries rather than being concentrated only in India. The participants called for the profit made through export of tea to be fairly shared among workers and smallholder farmers without which the value chain of tea is not sustainable in the long run. It was also decided in the dialogue that the campaign on fair value chain of tea would continue and in the next stage of the campaign, a multi-stakeholder dialogue will be conducted with Province 1 government alongside smallholder farmers, workers, large tea estate owners and traders. The roundtable dialogue concluded with the decision to take demand to the authority of Province 1 government.

## Deputation, Press Meet and Tea Plantation Workers' Dialogue, India

SAAPE and its campaign member - Progressive Plantation Workers' Union (PPWU) jointly organised a two-day event titled 'Fair Value, Fair Wage' comprising

of workers' dialogue, deputation and press meet in Siliguri, India to demand fairness in tea value chain and raise the concerns of tea plantation sectors'

workers. The two-day event (26 April 2022 – 27 April 2022) was participated by tea sector workers from West Bengal and Assam and union leaders from Uttar Bangla Chaye Sangathan, Uttar Bangla Bikaas Parishad, All Student Adivasi Union of Assam and Dooars Terai Adivasi Women Welfare Society, among other organisations. The interaction programme highlighted the issues of minimum wage and decent living conditions of tea sector workers in West Bengal and Assam.

The participants shared that the biggest issue among Assamese workers in tea sector is wage followed by land rights, education and health. The requirements for dignified life, including health and education, come from the market and hence, a reasonable living wage is required to meet those requirements. Similarly, there was a discussion on women workers in tea estates. The proportion of women workforce in tea sector is increasing but there are no proper maternity care facilities and childcare facilities in tea estates. In addition, there were discussion on issues of non-implementation of the provisions of the Gratuity Act 1972, Bonus Act 1965, Maternity Act 1961 and Plantation Labour Act 1957. Workers are not provided with land rights even after more than three generations of works worked in the same tea estate.

The workers' dialogue was followed by a discussion on the draft petition to be submitted to Additional

Labour Commissioner of the Government of West Bengal, India. The petition was submitted, through a deputation of workers, to the Additional Labour Commissioner of the Government of West Bengal in the evening of the same day (26 April 2022).

The second day of the programme on 27 April 2022 started with an interaction programme with the participants discussing on the issues and strategies for 'fair value, fair wage' campaign. The participants from West Bengal and Assam echoed a common concern that unions are in collusion with industrialists for keeping the wages low. They shared that although workers have genuine concerns and would demand for their rights, they do not get a proper leadership since unions are themselves divided and are tacitly conspiring against the workers' issues by colluding with industrialists.

A press event was organised in the second day event. Journalists from various regional print media and televisions in West Bengal were invited to take up the issues of the concerns of the tea sector workers among the general public. The representatives from SAAPE, PPWU, All Student Adivasi Union of Assam, and Dooars Terai Adivasi Women Welfare Society shared with the press the issues of minimum wage, land rights and social security of tea workers in the region<sup>18</sup>.

## **South Asia Report on “The Plights of Workers, Smallholder Farmers and Fisherfolks in South Asia 2022” Launched**

Under SAAPE's 'Fair for All' campaign, the regional report titled 'The Plight of Workers, Smallholder Farmers and Fisherfolks in South Asia' was prepared to point out the systemic inequality and injustice in the food supply chain of South Asia. The regional report analysed the value chain system of two major labour-intensive food commodities - tea and fish. This study finds that while sales and exports of these commodities fetch a considerably high price, little is being paid to workers and small-scale fishermen who

are the most important contributors in the production process.

The report launching programme took place during the Strategy, Review and Reflection meeting of SAAPE held on 27 May 2022 in Kathmandu Nepal. Simultaneously, the regional report was handed over to Prem Prasad Dangal, the Chairperson of National Farmers' Commission and Secretary General of All Nepal Peasants' Federation, by Kiran Kumar Kalindi, President of Progressive Plantation Workers' Union.

<sup>18</sup> Here is the link to one of the media footages: [https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=WA-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN\\_GK0T-GK1C&v=1016189645670573](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?extid=WA-UNK-UNK-UNK-AN_GK0T-GK1C&v=1016189645670573)



Netra Prasad Timsina, on behalf of SAAPE, shared his expectation that the Government of Nepal would take initiative to take the report to other South Asian governments to discuss necessary strategies to resolve the issues of plantation workers. He further added that a statement has been issued by SAAPE to the United Nations (UN), on the occasion of International Tea Day on 21 May in relation to the report calling for fair compensation, social security arrangement and land rights for tea plantation workers and minimum support pricing and availability of subsidised chemical fertilizers for smallholder farmers.



T-shirts with the slogan “I pay for my cup of tea. Are the workers receiving their fair share?” written on them were distributed to the participants of the programme. The participants took their photographs with t-shirts and uploaded them to social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter). Hashtags #FairValue and #FairWage were used for the online campaign.



## Public Mobilisation Demanding Fair Wage and its Accountability in Nepal

Small farmers and tea workers are completely neglected in the value-sharing process. They contribute significantly, but do not get fair value for

their productions. In the context of Nepal, smallholder farmers have to sell tea leaves at a very low price as there is no minimum support pricing



system implemented by the Tea and Coffee Development Board. But after the establishment of factories at the local level with the financial and technical assistance of government and development partners, they started to get a better prices in some instances. Similarly, after the establishment of the tea cooperative, farmer-turned-factory owners are able to sell made tea of orthodox variety from the factory. However, there are still issues of market access for their production as farmers have to sell their products through brokers to wholesalers and have to export under different brand name (as the cooperatives are not leagly allowed to sell under their brand name).

Based on the findings and recommendations in the regional value chain report 2022, SAAPE organised the public mobilisation campaign in the eastern part of Nepal from 28-29 May 2022. Tea workers, small farmers from Giribandhu Tea State (private tea state), Jhapa; Barne Tea Garden (government-run-tea state, now privatised), and Kanyam Tea Production Cooperative Ltd. participated in the two days' campaign. The main objective of the campaign was to strengthen small farmers' bargaining power in setting the price of tea leaves in the eastern part of Nepal as well as raised the evidence-based voice on social security benefits like accidental and medical insurance for tea workers, free education for workers'

children, and accommodation facilities, and land rights, among others.

Further, the t-shirt campaign with the slogan "I pay for my cup of tea, are workers receiving their fair share?" became an effective and powerful message to the public. The campaign also builds solidarity as well as respect for all the tea workers, small farmers, and cooperatives who are tirelessly engaging themselves in the process of tea production. The campaign supported tea workers to claim their rights and was also instrumental in making the public aware of the importance of tea workers while many people consume tea as relief drinks.

There was demand raised from tea workers, small farmers, and stakeholders on the issues of subsidies, gender-friendly policies in tea estates, transparent value chain, equal share of distribution of returns obtained from sales to workers and smallholder farmers, protection of the tea estate land against conversion into real estates.

Besides this, the voices of tea workers and small farmers have been collected during the campaign. The stories from their experiences explained how the campaigns are essential for fair value chain in tea sector for equal benefits and rights of tea workers and small farmers.



## Campaign on 'Plight of Fisherfolk and Workers in Seafood Sector in South Asia' Karachi, Pakistan

SAAPE, Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF), Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), Labour Education Foundation (LEF), and Pakistan Kisan Rabita Committee (PKRC) jointly organised an advocacy campaign demanding fair and equitable seafood value chain in South Asia. The campaign, held in Karachi, Pakistan on 29 June 2022, comprised of multi-stakeholder dialogue on fair value chain in seafood sector, launching of regional report on seafood value chain in South Asia, T-shirt campaign against exploitation of fisherfolk and workers in seafood sector, and Fisherfolks' dialogue on the conditions of fishers and workers.

impact of COVID-19 pandemic, at different points in the seafood value chain in Pakistan. Further, the event aimed at investigating the sector's value chain with the goal of critically analysing fisherfolks' and workers' issues (wage, working conditions, and social protection). The event was attended by 37 participants (18 male and 19 female) with notable participation from Sindh Fisheries Department, Sindh Trawlers Owners and Fishermen Association (STOFA), Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Pakistan, and National Trade Union Federation Pakistan.



### Multistakeholder Dialogue on Fair Value Chain in Seafood Sector in Karachi, Pakistan

The major objective of the multistakeholder dialogue was to discuss on the unfair distribution of profit and existing practices of abuse of human rights, including the crosscutting issues of gender, climate change and

During the programme, the participants raised the issue of increasing fuel price which has made fishing occupation much less profitable for fishers. There was discussion on sustainability of fishing sector in Pakistan, the exploitation of fisherfolks by intermediaries – traders, brokers and mole-holders – who buy their catch at extremely low prices, low participation of women in fishing and the issues



related to the basic rights of fisherfolks.

The event concluded with the drafting of key asks/recommendations based on the seafood value chain report and the discussions held on the day. The key asks/recommendations were targeted at the government, private sector stakeholders, and international bodies. The key asks were also translated into Urdu for the understanding of the common fisherfolk and workers.

### Launching of Regional Report on Seafood Value Chain in South Asia and T-shirt Campaign in Karachi, Pakistan

The regional launching of the South Asia Value Chain Report 2022 titled “Plight of Fisherfolk and Workers in Seafood Sector in South Asia” took place on 29 May 2022 in Karachi, Pakistan. The regional report was



handed over to Asim Ali Khan, Director General Fisheries (Sindh Fisheries Department Headquarter) by Karamat Ali, the Executive Director of Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER). On receipt of the report, Asim Ali Khan thanked SAAPE secretariat for coming up with the knowledge document and organising the launching event.

The launching event was followed by t-shirt campaign in which t-shirts with the slogan “Protect Seafood Workers, Stop the Cycle of Abuse” (also translated in Urdu) written on them, were distributed





to the participants of the programme. The photos of the campaign were actively shared in social media.

## **Fisherfolks' dialogue on the conditions of fishers and workers in Karachi, Pakistan**

SAAPE held a fisherfolk dialogue with fishers in Ibrahim Haidri, Karachi on 30 June 2022 with the purpose of understanding the concerns of fisherfolks in the fishing village. Ibrahim Haidri is a fishing village with population of around 140,000 in the Korangi district of Karachi, Pakistan.

After the eighteenth amendment of the constitution, there is no requirement of any lot clearance from custom and marine mercantile department which has resulted in overfishing. During the dialogue, the villagers in Ibrahim Haidri demanded that the number of trawlers is to be reduced and there should be licensing requirement for new boats and trawlers.

Although the fishers in the village have been involved in the occupation for generations, they are stopped by marine security agency in pursuing their activity for lack of documents. The fishers complained of not being provided with any special right even after working for generations. They put a demand that the government should enlist the fishers, provide them with licenses, and accordingly create mechanisms to prevent overfishing. A sustainable fishing policy is needed.

The fishers in the village complained that Chinese and Filipino businesspersons have taken hold of sea under the legal guise of the namesake Pakistani owners. Such big companies have been doing overfishing which leaves little fish for the common fishers in the village. Common village fishers are not allowed to fish in those areas controlled by large business persons.



Climate change has largely affected their livelihood. Early, only June and July used to be the two months where the fishers had to stop their occupation due to high sea waves. Lately, due to climate change, weather and the resulting sea tides are very unpredictable due to which it is difficult for the fishers to carry out fishing even in other months. This has further aggravated the problem of indebtedness among fishers due to reduced earnings and high dependency on intermediaries to finance their fishing activity.

## **SAAPE Bulletin**

**(No. 26, August 2022)**

### **Contributions from:**

Praman Adhikari  
Reshma Shakya  
Sudhir Shrestha



## **Published by:**

South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE)  
P.O. Box: 8130, 288, Gairidhara Marg,  
Gairidhara, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: +977-1-4004985/ 4004976  
Fax: +977-1-400 4508  
Email: [saape.network@gmail.com](mailto:saape.network@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.saape.org](http://www.saape.org)