

**PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEOPLE'S SAARC  
Dhaka, 5-6 February 2005**

**South Asian People's Agenda  
February 5-6, 2005  
Draft Report**

**Organized by  
South Asia Partnership  
&  
South Asia Partnership for Poverty Eradication**

**PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEOPLE'S SAARC  
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**PRESS BRIEFING:**

**People's Summit for People's SAARC  
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South Asia forms a single, uninterrupted mass of land area of nearly 4.5 million sq. km which is home to a quarter of the world's population. The region faces many problems such as illiteracy, a low status of women, child malnutrition, low wages, poor health services, heavy external debt, unfinished agrarian reforms, high military spending and involuntary displacement.

Regional cooperation is becoming decisive in many respects. The key to successful regional cooperation is the opening of communication channels between the peoples of member countries, preventing and screening negative feedback to the people.

The establishment of SAARC has not been able to satisfy the expectations of one and a half billion people. There has been much disappointment because the regional cooperation to facilitate exchange and mobility among the people has yet to be a mainstream activity in the official agenda of SAARC.

Focus has to be shifted from rigid state-centric ideas to more people-centric thoughts. There is much talk of trans-border issues but there is no guarantee of democracy through which people can exercise their own rights.

We are for enhancing people-to-people interaction to achieve greater accountability, and peace in the region. On behalf of the people we demand that the SAARC governments take necessary initiatives to ensure the following:

- Allow all people to move freely and not only the privileged and the elite like the Supreme Court Judges, MPs and Chamber leaders only.
- It is a sin to buy arms and indulge in war, when millions of children go to bed with empty stomachs. All people must commit themselves to promote peace and stop the senseless arms race.
- Don't ridicule the region in the international arena by a gross violation of human rights. Stop discrimination in terms of gender, religion and ethnicity. Formulate a uniform charter for human rights for the region.
- Shun theocracy, promote democracy. People want to live in peace. Don't exploit peoples' religious sentiments for narrow political gains. Let us have unity in diversity.

- We are in Dhaka to reiterate our commitment to lasting peace and the shared prosperity of our people. Our governments need to shun all divisive policies and actions to give peace a chance.

## **PRESS CONFERENCE**

### **PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEOPLE'S SAARC Dhaka, 4 February 2005**

#### **Conference Lounge, National Press Club Dhaka, Bangladesh**

The people's summit held a press conference which was attended by

Mr. Syed Nurul Alam (Bangladesh), Executive Director, Sap- Bangladesh  
Ms. Bushra Gohar (Pakistan), Chairperson, SAP- International  
Dr. Padma Ratnayake (Sri Lanka), SAP- Sri Lanka  
Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali (Nepal), Executive Director, SAP- International.  
Dr. Madan Pariyar (Nepal), SAP International  
Dr. Ranjith Cabral (Sri Lanka), SAP International  
Mr. T P Gyawali (Nepal), SAP Nepal  
Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed (Bangladesh), SAPPE  
Mr. Sohrab Hossain (Bangladesh), SAPPE  
Mr. Syed Tamjid ur Rahman (Bangladesh), ChangeMaker

The press conference started with an opening speech by Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed who shed light on the current South East Asian problems such as those related to visa, food security, human trafficking, etc and SAARC's inability to resolve them. He said, "SAARC should not become a '*Crore Taka picnic*' for the heads of states. The SAARC representatives should discuss issues relevant to the common people of the SAARC countries. We always hear about SAARC consciousness but in reality there is a serious absence of this."

Ms Bushra Gohar, Chairperson, SAP- International, outlined the People's Summit for People's SAARC program and its objective. She said, "Whenever there was a SAARC summit, the people of SAARC met at the summit place. We will continue to arrange the people's summit till the people are aware of their issues such as poverty, peace, social justice, over militarization, human trafficking." She then added, "This is the second time we are meeting while governments refrain from meeting with each other. This proves that we, the people, want to meet and exchange views when governments don't."

In the Q&A session, following questions were raised by the press:

1. Who are participating?
2. How many participants will be present?
3. Which subjects will be highlighted in the program?
4. How many issues will be discussed?
5. To whom will the session outcomes be placed?
6. Are the foreign delegates happy with the security in Bangladesh?

7. What makes organizers confident that the issues will be given importance in the main summit?
8. Have the previous findings or discussions been implemented by SAARC?
9. What will be done if the SAARC committee does nothing with your issues?

It was pointed out that each year the people of the SAARC countries met in the city where the SAARC summit was held and the concerns of the SAARC people discussed, reviewed and placed before the SAARC secretariat for action. Some of the issues, recommendations, suggestions were taken into consideration by the SAARC committee. For example, the social charter issue discussed in SAARC was a direct contribution of this people's summit. Besides, another important objective of the people's summit is to create awareness amongst the SAARC people and policy makers. The organizers are considering the option of establishing an office in Nepal from where they intend to lobby strongly on various urgent issues. The organizers feel that it is necessary for them to act as spokespersons of the people to notify the SAARC committee. They can also work as a pressure group and continue to work with the SAARC governments to address common concerns of the SAARC people.

## INAUGURATION

### PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEOPLE'S SAARC

Dhaka, 5 February 2005

**BRAC Center INN, Mohakhali,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

The inauguration of the 5<sup>th</sup> People's Summit for People's SAARC was initiated with a song of joyful solidarity composed by Rabindranath Tagore and rendered by a local cultural group, Udichee.

About 200 representatives of the civil society, NGOs, social and human rights activists of South Asia were gathered at the summit to reiterate their commitments for lasting peace, harmony and prosperity of the people of the SAARC region.

Bushra Gohar, Chairperson, SAP-International chaired the inaugural session. Representing the joint organizers of the summit, Ms. Rokeya Kabir, Focal Person, SAAPE and Mr. Syed Nurul Alam, Executive Director, SAP-Bangladesh, delivered their welcome addresses. Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali, Executive Director, SAP-International, explained the concepts and objectives of the People's Summit for People's SAARC. Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed represented Dr. Arjun Karki, Regional Coordinator, SAAPE, who could not be present.

**Bushra Gohar** noted that the postponement of the 13<sup>th</sup> SAARC Summit was a failure of the SAARC governments and unfortunate for the people of SAARC. She claimed that the governments used security only as an excuse and were not concerned about the security of the general people. In spite of the failure of various governments, the people of this region wanted to meet and discuss the human agenda. She said, "There is Tsunami in Sri Lanka, in Nepal democracy is in trouble, there is a strike in Dhaka but still the people of this region have traveled so far to meet here while our Governments are avoiding the SAARC Summit. This proves that the people of this region are keen to meet and interact." She also thanked SAAPE and Sap-Bangladesh for successfully organizing the summit in a very adverse situation.

In her welcome address, **Ms Rokeya Kabir** commented, "We are here for unity. Our commitments to the people are from our heart". She said, "We have got together to reaffirm our commitment to the agenda irrespective of color, race, sex, ethnicity etc. Despite all troubles we still meet here, this proves that our commitment to it is really true. Government heads should show this kind of attitude."

The Executive-Director of SAP-Bangladesh, **Mr. Syed Nurul Alam** expressed condolence for all the tsunami victims. He commented that the summit had to be postponed to February

because of the tsunami. The people of South Asia had shown how much they wanted to meet and interact even though their governments had failed to hold the meeting. He said, “Real discussion does not exist in the official meeting but in the people’s mind.” He requested the participants to formulate a clear vision through thematic discussions. He concluded by thanking to CIDA, Oxfam-Bangladesh, BRAC, Action Aid-Bangladesh, Action Aid –India, Action Aid-Nepal and Oxfam-Nepal.

Likewise, the Executive Director of SAP-I, **Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali**, explained the concepts and objectives of the summit and stated optimistically, “South Asia has the potentiality to be a world leader with its biodiversity, human resources etc., but unfortunately today’s problem-plagued governments have made their nations followers instead of leaders.” He also put some critical questions: Why are we still poor? Why is illiteracy still present? Why is there more human trafficking in South Asia? Why is there traveling here so complex? Why is military expenditure increasing? He said that SAARC had been established to answer and resolve these questions, but it had failed terribly. As a result, the people of South Asia had come together to interact simultaneously with the governments in forming a collective forum like the People’s Summit for People’s SAARC. He said, “Unless we meet, interact and critique ourselves we will not be conscious about our issues. We need a forum to pressure governments and also create awareness among the people. We need to form a bond.” He also added, “We need to institutionalize the whole process. We should not wait for the government to eradicate poverty, we should stand together to do this ourselves.”

**Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed** raised some questions like: Does the civil society represent the masses or only the white collar people? How much money are we spending for the military? What would South Asia have been without SAARC? Criticizing SAARC he declared, “SAARC has failed miserably. It has made little difference and in some cases it has caused people’s conditions to deteriorate. It has done very little for poverty or peace. Now on their National days, Governments proudly display weapons of mass destruction. It’s a shame. We condemn this kind of practice. This is even worse for the poor and weak nations. With 10% reduction in militarization we could have solved the issue of poverty. SAARC meeting spends million of dollars and talks little about the common people. There were no improvements over the years. SAARC couldn’t ensure free movement of the people. All the wrong and powerful people get visas without hassle but the general people have to face different sorts of restrictions. There is so much military spending and no initiative to cut down poverty. First there needs to be human security. When there is poverty everywhere, there is no weapon to secure. The main threat to security is poverty. Leaders don’t address these issues”. He requested the participants to talk freely in the thematic sessions and outline comprehensive guidelines and recommendations. He hoped that the meeting would not only treat NGO interests but that the people from different sectors of this region would strongly express their problems.

## OPENING PRESENTATIONS

PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEOPLE'S SAARC  
Dhaka, 5 February 2005

BRAC Center INN, Mohakhali,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

In this session there were nine brief presentations on nine thematic issues:

1. Natural Disasters: Issues and Concerns in South Asia
2. Poverty, Livelihoods and Social Justice in South Asia: Imperatives for the New Millennium
3. Trafficking and Human Security
4. Trafficking in Women and Children and Human Security
5. South Asian Labor and Development
6. Gender Rights
7. Governance
8. Peace and Militarization
9. Bhutan Issue

The presentations were based on key demanding issues of the summit's agenda. Experts from this region made this session lively as well as informative. A brief of these presentations is offered below.

### Natural Disasters: Issues and Concerns in South Asia

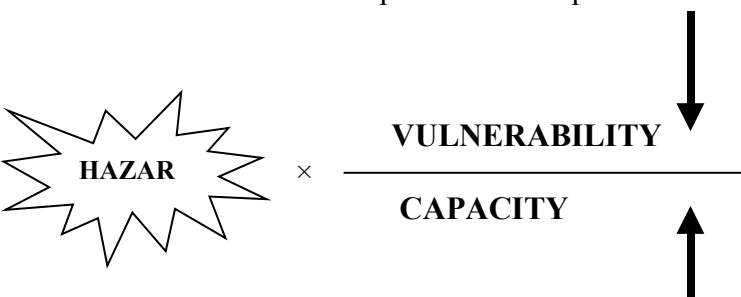
Mr. Saidur Rahman, Ex-Executive Director, Oxfam Bangladesh

Mr. Saidur Rahman in his presentation tried to demonstrate two basic facts regarding the risks of a natural disaster:

**Fact 1:** The extent of disaster risk not only depends on the natural forces but also on socio-economic conditions.

**Fact 2:** The disaster risk reduction programs do not work because of corruption or negligence.

**Fact 1:** To communicate this fact he presented an equation:

$$\text{Risk} = \text{HAZAR} \times \frac{\text{VULNERABILITY}}{\text{CAPACITY}}$$


It is very clear that the extent of vulnerable people increases the possibility of risks and efficient capacity can decrease it. He tried to prove this equation with a practical comparison:

### Comparison of Damage

Country	Year	Disaster	Intensity	People Died
Bangladesh	1991	Cyclone	225km	138,000
USA	1992	Cyclone	222km	18

A cyclone of similar intensity killed 130,000 people in Bangladesh but only 18 in the USA because of efficient capacity – evacuation, message dissemination, knowledge, education, etc.

### Fact 2:

Most of the people of this region are poor. And these poor victims are living in a vicious cycle of disaster and poverty:

Then he pointed out some **disaster risk reduction programs**:

1. Massive public awareness
2. Relief and rehabilitation fund
3. Medical assistance
4. Development of household business plan
5. Preparation of household risk management plan
6. Provision of cash credit and grant
7. Facilitation of income generation activities (Cattle, Poultry, Pisciculture)
8. Link with support services (Health, Education & Other development areas).

At the end he identified some **challenges**:

1. Changing the mindset of the major stakeholders
2. Linking sustainable livelihood with risk reduction
3. Empowerment of the poor
4. Mainstreaming risk reduction into development planning and institutions
5. Sustainable political commitment

### Poverty, Livelihoods and Social Justice in South Asia: Imperatives for the New Millennium

Dr. Atiur Rahman, Mr. Mahfuz Kabir, Bangladesh  
Presented by Mr. Mahfuz Kabir, Research Officer, BISS, Dhaka

Poverty is a multidimensional process and not easy to quantify. It is about income deprivation and shortfalls in consumption. Livelihoods refer to those things that allow a person to live well

and include anything that contributes to the quality of life. Social justice includes social, political educational, legal, economic and other human rights of the people.

In South Asia 26 to 38 per cent of the population live below the poverty line and the unemployment rate has increased more in 1995 than 1990. The child mortality rate was 23 to 107 in the year 2000. 40 to 70 percent of the adult population is still illiterate except in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Natural disasters and human-made hazards have also exacerbated poverty.

Social justice in South Asia should deal with income inequality, gender disparity, gap in educational attainment, the unheard voices of poor women and marginalized groups and the absence of a comprehensive social security system.

Equitable distribution should be ensured by taxing the rich and adequate budgetary allocation for the poor and marginalized groups should be made to deal with poverty, livelihood and social justice. Poverty measures and policies must be “owned” by the poor themselves. Organizations for the poor especially for poor women are imperative for empowering them. A working environment for women should be created to increase the Female Economic Activity Rate. In order to make the formal market accessible to the poor, Grameen-type non-profit commercial ventures should be widely introduced. The diversified portfolios of investment by the Grameen Bank and BRAC have shown that the poor can be successfully linked with the rich, formal market.

### **Trafficking and Human Security**

Ms. Durga Ghimire, Nepal

As a researcher Ms Durga Ghimire has been working in the issue of trafficking and human security for two decades. The paper presented by her brought out some very interesting facts:

Human trafficking is not a phenomenon restricted only to our region; it has acquired global dimensions. It must be understood that human trafficking is a multifaceted phenomenon and that illegal trafficking and migration of women and children for commercially motivated sexual exploitation is no more just a national problem.

According to a report published by UNICEF and SAARC an average of 4,500 women and children of Bangladesh are trafficked to Pakistan annually. An estimated 200,000 women have been trafficked to Pakistan from Bangladesh in the last ten years. In Pakistan, there are many reported cases of trafficking of little boys for prostitution as well as for work as camel jockeys. According to a UNIFEM report on the status and Dimension of Trafficking within the Nepalese context, the number of those trafficked varies from 5,000-7,000.

Globalization has created a lot of opportunities but it has also made women and children more vulnerable. Many women and children who have been trafficked have not only been sexually exploited but they have also been exposed to other hazardous work in the countries of destination where they endure long working hours, lack of food and medical facilities and low wages. Trafficked women and children are often subjected to starvation and torture such as confinement in dark rooms, cigarette burns, severe beatings and rape.

Hundreds of kids from South Asia including Pakistan have been smuggled to the Gulf countries to work as camel jockeys. Children below the age of 7 weighing between 15 - 17 kg are preferred as jockeys. Most of the recommendations presented in the paper were later adopted in the main thematic sessions.

### **Trafficking in Women and Children and Human Security**

Ms. Sheen Farrukh, Pakistan

Trafficking is a transnational organized crime. Trafficking in persons means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefit to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

With the emergence of new trends in trafficking there is unprecedented growth in the sex business, such as brothels and streetwalkers. The ICT has given a boost to Internet pornography, indicating that sexual consumerism has increased immensely.

From 1995 to 2000, trafficking worldwide has increased by nearly 50%. Annual profits have been estimated at US \$5 to US \$7 billion. Between 2000 and 2003, 700,000 to 800,000 people were trafficked across the borders every year. One estimate shows that 45,000 to 50,000 women and children are smuggled every year to the United States from various parts of the world. Over the last 30 years trafficking for sexual exploitation has victimized some 30 million women and children of South Asia.

Trafficking flourishes in armed as well as protracted social conflict. Poverty is the leading cause of trafficking of women and children and it has to be seen within the larger context of globalization. Trafficking strips the victims of their right to liberty, dignity and security. Trafficking is fuelled by other criminal activities such as document fraud, money laundering and migrant smuggling

In 2004, when only 11 persons were arrested for trafficking 416 trafficking cases were investigated under the new legislation, 350 arrests were made, 60 cases went to trial and 6 convictions were handed down. States must be held responsible for the trafficking in women and for their failure to implement policies to improve women's quality of life. Appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that women have viable economic opportunities to support their families in their home countries. The international protocol on trafficking should make mandatory the protection of human rights of the victims of trafficking.

There is a need to integrate the issue of trafficking into the women's agenda at the national and international levels, ensuring that the approaches are gender responsive. It is necessary to understand and address the demand side of trafficking. There is a need for gender rights training for law enforcement and the judiciary.

### **South Asian Labor and Development**

Mr. Tazeen Javed, Pakistan

If we agree that human rights are to be achieved for all, then international solidarity amongst the labour force is now more critical than ever before.

Religious fundamentalisms and accompanying militarization make the poor a growing instrument and target of social violence. The reckless decision of India and Pakistan to go nuclear has magnified current mass deprivation and the threat of impending disaster for people of the entire region. The adoption of neo-liberal agendas of global economic growth continues to systematically exclude hundreds of millions from basic rights in life and livelihoods – a cruel parody is exemplified by accumulating stocks of grains by the state even as millions go hungry.

Since the state privileges capital and market, a countervailing collective power of workers is necessary to ensure opportunities for decent livelihoods. In the increasingly privatized economies of the region, citizens need the power of collective bargaining even more. Militarization of the market is apparent in the expanding direct role of the armed forces in the administration of public infrastructure and services. More insidious is the offer to protect privatized public organizations. Through foundations and banks, the armed forces have directly become major investors in a range of seemingly private enterprises. It is an irony that Pakistan has further diluted the already weak framework of mobilization and organization in the new Industrial Relations Ordinance (of 2002).

The establishment of a single European Union, the creation of ASEAN in South East Asia, the establishment of SAARC in South Asia and, more recently, of NAFTA in North America and APEC in the Pacific region are instances in point. The creation of regions for economic cooperation has definitely provided opportunities to the hitherto warring societies to enter into a mutually beneficial relationship for the first time in the post-Second World War period. The ethnic divides invariably led to conflicts which often tended to spill over into neighboring countries. The four major countries of the South Asian region, i.e., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have all been embroiled in civil wars. Today, the countries of the South Asian region incur the highest expenditure on military and armament among the developing countries in Asia, with India spending 3.3 per cent of its GDP on defense in 1990. According to the SIPRI Report, 1993, the expenditure for Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka was 6.6 per cent, 1.6 per cent and 4.8 per cent respectively. During the five-year period between 1987 and 1991, India spent US \$17,562 million and Pakistan US \$2,299 million on import of conventional weapons.

The cost of this continuing conflict and militarization has been staggering not only in economic terms but also in social and political spheres. The ruling elites have further used this situation to whip up communal and sectarian sentiments in order to keep the working people divided and curtail and usurp trade unions, human and democratic rights. Thus, the Industrial Relations Ordinance 1969 in Pakistan did not apply to the personnel of defense forces as well as to any establishment even indirectly related to defense.

Given that the people of South Asia shared a common history, culture, legal and institutional framework, there was vast scope for cooperation in every sphere of life. It was hoped that closer interaction between the peoples of the region would help overcome the bitterness of the recent past, reverse the process of militarization and conflict and usher in a new era of peace, progress and prosperity. To make matters worse, the ruling elites continue to feed the ordinary

people with crass disinformation and even plain lies with regard to vital issues. It is not surprising that the past few years have witnessed a steady curtailment of workers' rights through legislation or other means throughout the region and real wages have declined considerably. However, despite the predominance of negative trends, some direct contacts have been established amongst women's groups, trade unions, human rights groups, cultural groups, academics and environmental groups. For example, women's groups have organized joint workshops to exchange experiences and skills on organizational strategies, income generation projects and struggles against patriarchal domination and fundamentalists. Environmental groups have entered into regular interaction and exchanged concrete information, skills, innovations and perspectives. The experience of controlling pollution in the tanneries of Kanpur has been successfully brought to the tannery industry of Pakistan through workshops organized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Almost all South Asian societies are multi-ethnic in character. This has led to segmentation of the labor market along ethnic lines. Furthermore, the South Asian labor markets are essentially of a dual character. In the vast rural sectors, labor is highly segmented and dispersed. The urban economy is also divided into small, formal or organized sectors and a very large informal or unorganized sector. The unorganized sector is characterized by the predominance of the most vulnerable sections, namely, migrant workers, women, child and bonded labor and various categories of unprotected labor. These factors have resulted in the creation of a very weak, fragmented and divided labor movement. The trade unions have not been able to organize more than 5 to 10 per cent of the labor force in South Asia. However, the trade unions themselves are further divided into national and regional trade union federations dominating the macro scene, and the enterprise level unions operating at the grass-roots. The trade union federations are sharply divided along political, ideological and even personal lines. Most of these unions are affiliated to either of the two major international confederations, i.e., the ICFTU and the WFTU. These two confederations usually have more than one affiliate in each country of South Asia.

Another important factor to note is that there has been no intra-regional interaction even between the affiliates of the same confederation. As mentioned earlier, the trade union movement in South Asia remains divided, weak and fragmented and they concentrate almost exclusively on organizing permanent workers in the large-scale industrial and services sectors. They are usually male dominated, top-down structures, unaccountable to the rank and file members. Many of the federation leaders have close links with the ruling elite. They have therefore been slow to initiate any worthwhile involvement of organized labor in the much needed regional cooperation.

Despite this bleak situation, some sections of the larger labor movement have, whenever possible, evinced a keen interest in promoting close cooperation among the working people of South Asia and developing SAARC as a genuine association for regional cooperation. International trade union confederations and their affiliate International trade secretariats:

- Women's groups
- Independent trade unions and labor support centers.
- People's movements and cultural groups
- Human rights and environmental groups

All South Asian countries have experienced large-scale emigration and in-migration. The South Asian labor movement has a common cause to defend the rights of these emigrants. India and Pakistan have especially experienced major in-migrations from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, etc. Clearly, there is an urgent need to defend the rights of this highly vulnerable section of the labor force.

Second, the need for the democratization of the trade union movement hardly needs emphasis in the process of people to people cooperation. Democratic networks of the affiliates of the ITSs and of the trade unions in the common multinational enterprises across the countries of the region are already developing.

Last, it may be useful to reiterate the necessity for the labor movement to cooperate against militarization and perpetual conflict in the region. The most important prerequisites for such developments are an unhindered flow of information and freedom of movement of people as is already practiced in the ASEAN region. The SAARC secretariat also should be convinced to allow pluralistic representation of the labor movement in the SAARC structure.

Within their own countries, labor is certainly engaging in substantive alliances with other groups striving for human rights. Such alliances need to be similarly strengthened across the region. This solidarity of labor will obviously strengthen peace efforts in the region.

All of us are committed to a genuinely democratic society in both means and ends. This has never been possible in isolation, and is the more evident now in the face of a resurgent imperialism. Hence now is the time to consolidate and invigorate alliances in every possible way both within countries and across the region. New initiatives are needed, which should include consideration of regional assemblies for dialogue between and among community level activists from labor – e.g. labor councilors in Pakistan – and other human rights activists. SALF should be seen as a possible platform for these purposes.

### **Gender Rights**

Ms. Rokeya Kabir, Bangladesh, Focal Person – SAAPE

South Asia has a large population. A large number of its people are poor and women are the poorest of the poor. We look upon women as victims. They are not taken as responsible or change agents of major issues like – poverty, violence, child marriage, dowry, inheritance rights, decision making etc. Women bear the major share of violence, militarization, displacement trafficking.

In this situation the question is what can we do?

We have to take responsibility. We want to go forward.

We need to do something to minimize gender disparity, education, poverty eradication, parliament participation, equal share, heritage rights, and livelihood measures.

We need to create some pressure on the governments for taking affirmative measures to reduce the gap between men and women. We need to make some strategies to fill up the gaps.

There is a lack of democracy. We are nurturing a culture of discrimination. We start it from the home and carry it wherever we go. We need to address the gender issue. It is a cradle of all discrimination. We do not take the issue as a central point. Change of mindset is needed.

The core value of the education system should be increased.

We do not need so much training. In parliament, bureaucracy and the NGO all the key players are educated people but still they are not gender sensitive.

We need to look at the education system. If we can make the education system gender sensitive we can change the mindset of the people.

### **Governance**

Dr. Padma Ratnayake, Sri Lanka, Executive Director – SAP Sri Lanka

Governance is about the government's behavior and performance. The prospect of people is a crucial element in enhancing governance which is a proactive process.

Democracy exists when there are political parties, elected parliaments, legislatures, independent judiciary. But beyond these institutions democracy also requires a just, open and honest government, rule of law, human rights, and rights for women, children and minorities. There is a demand for furtherance of democratic structured values and sense of deepening of democracy. This means valuing the opinions and experiences of citizens and acknowledging the talent, wisdom, capacity and commitment of people.

The relationship between the state and the citizen is achieved through elected representatives. The connection between state and citizen must be based on participation and inclusion. By putting people at the center the state institution can promote responsive democratic governance of public affairs.

We are facing critical challenges of ensuring effective governance. Accountability suffers because the public officials do not care for its effectiveness. Public image of bureaucracy is inaccessibility, indifference, procedure-orientation, poor quality and non-accountability for results.

It is necessary that urgent steps should be taken to obtain people's confidence in the capacities and fairness of administration.

Good governance is the way society and the individuals regulate all the different aspects of their life. Good governance is honest, accountable and trustworthy. It is competent and effective with transparent institutions. It promotes and depends on democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and freedom of speech.

Governance is about developing partnerships with its people. It is important to strengthen the participation and capabilities of the various sectors that comprised societies.

### **Peace and Militarization**

Mr. Sharfarz Khan, Professor, Peshawar University, Pakistan

Mr. Sharfarz Khan gave an outline of some conflicting issues in South Asia:

1. Muslim Fundamentalism.
2. Hindu Fundamentalism.
3. Gas Pipelines/ Pipe dreams
4. Corridor problem.

5. The dam between Pakistan& India; India &BGD; and Afghanistan& Pakistan are major conflicting issues in their distribution of water.

Other important issues in his presentation were:

Pakistan expends 186 trillion Rupees Or 3 trillion **US Dollar 30 years**

A fraction of it could ensure pure drinking water for people in South Asia

There should be a concrete agenda.

Regional peace conference.

A technical Committee should be made for the water problem.

Importance of Denuclearization Agency.

Education system should be changed.

Change of curriculum means bringing the real meaning of honesty, ability, ethic etc.

General Agreement on Hydrocarbon for water.

### **Bhutan Issue**

Ms. Kalpana Dhakal Rizal

Program Coordinator, Bhutanese Women & Youth Empowerment Program

The current situation of Bhutan is very bad. There is an extreme restriction of the free press. In Bhutan Lothsampa people are discriminated in every phase of their lives.

But the main problem of Bhutan is the refugee problem. For a long time (14 years) many Bhutanese have been staying in Nepal. I with other young people have been greatly affected by this problem, because we do not enjoy a normal and friendly life. Life in a camp is very difficult and we hope for a better living.

About 15 rounds of talks have been organized but nothing has happened to us, we are still refugee. And it's a matter of great regret that India is so silent on this issue.

## **THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS**

### **PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEOPLE'S SAARC Dhaka, 5-6 February 2005**

**BRAC Center INN, Mohakhali,  
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#### **Reduction of Disaster in South Asian Nations and Communities**

Moderator: Mr. Deepak Paudel (Nepal)

With the memories of the recent tsunami disaster fresh in mind the People's Summit for People's SAARC this year for the first time added the Mitigation of Natural Catastrophe as one of its key agenda. That is why perhaps the participants of the main summit were not as inclined to participate as they were in the other agenda. Still it saw a debate by 15 very eager and also very significant participants.

There were two very interesting papers presented by Ms. Modhumita Roy from Action Aid - India and Mr. Monsoor Raza from ACT International- Pakistan. Ms. Roy presented a paper entitled "Disasters in the Indian State of Orissa." She brought attention to the vulnerability of the coastal districts of Orissa, which has a 480 km long coastline making 14 districts in its purview the main target of floods, droughts and the recent Tsunami disaster. From 1953 to 1993 it has seen 10 cyclones, which are always met by the Government by a state of unprepared-ness. The paper and also the speaker mainly emphasized the mental trauma faced by the victims after a disaster.

Mr. Monsoor Raza's presentation was titled "Regional Cooperation for Mitigation of Natural Hazards: Observations of an Activist". The paper is based on the premise that demography, development & environment changes and disasters have a strong relationship among themselves.

The discussion took off with a reference to the recent Tsunami disaster by Mr. Ranjith Cabral. He pointed out the inadequacy and the naiveté with which the Sri Lankan Government met the disaster. An advocate from Bangladesh pointed to the recent decision of the Indian Government on a river link project, which would jeopardize the ecological future of both Bangladesh and India. Mr. Khurshid Alam from Action-Aid-Bangladesh drew everyone's attention to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction recently held in Japan in January 2005. He recounted the treaties signed and pointed out that there are two kinds of hazards shared (e.g. river linking project) and common (e.g. earthquake). In case of shared hazards, countries of this region

seemed a little casual as more and more action taken by them resulted in disaster for others. Here Ms Modhumita Roy added that none of the major projects e.g. large dams and hydroelectric projects did little to help the poor as they were too poor to buy the electricity from them. The people who benefited were the contractors, bureaucrats, foreign governments etc. Although they agreed that they had no place in the rehabilitation period. Mr. Shahzad Ahmed of SDNP- Pakistan gave his opinion that to make the information of the latest disaster available to the common people ICT had no competition.

### **Unanimous Agreement of the Participants:**

Since the state level definitions of disaster in some countries are very narrow in scope, the group felt that the definition and scope of disasters should be broadened by including the people's perspective. Poor, marginalized and excluded groups of people are the first victims of disasters and face the greatest hurdle in recovering from the losses. Disasters are the key factors that make the poor people poorer and so is a constraint for poverty eradication. The problem of disaster in the present era is not perpetuated by natural phenomenon only, but also by the failure of policy and poor governance. Clarity and legal enforceability of state obligations, the level of poor people's participation, accountability of the institutions, poor people's access to information are the key factors of governance that reduce disasters. Other factors that intensify the vulnerability are the quality of services they get, their access to natural resources, their right to timely information and an ignorance of disaster vulnerabilities and weaknesses in the development policies and practices. Absence of effective Regional cooperation is an area which also contributes to the disaster problem in the region. The management of trans-boundary rivers is an example where the region has failed to cooperate effectively, even though they have policy instruments to do so. Relief measures require much improvement and must be planned based on the long-term development needs in order to be effective. An absence of a regional policy framework to deal with the cause of disasters has increased and is likely to further increase the disaster problems in the region.

### **Recommendations:**

After a lively discussion members of the group came up with a long exhaustive list of recommendations. Then a consensus was reached on prioritizing some key challenges and creating strong pressure for the immediate implementation of the following recommendations.

1. Adopt a people-centered approach in disaster discussion, planning and formulation of the policies. The poor and marginalized people (ability, gender, generation and identity) should be at the center of all disaster policies and practices.
2. Undertake necessary steps with adequate resources to meet the commitments that our governments made in the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR). They should immediately define their national priorities under the WCDR framework, with active participation from the civil societies as outlined in the commitments. The civil society will first develop regional priorities, targets and indicators to assist the governments and then monitor the progress of the commitments.
3. An effective South Asian system with a strong organizational basis should be established to share expertise, knowledge, good practices, funds and effective sharing of hydro-meteorological information.

4. We demand immediate effect of the commitment for global and Indian ocean early warning system launched in Japan at the WCDR.
5. The early warning system should not be considered as effective only from a technical viewpoint. Other important considerations have to be made like whether the most vulnerable people accessing the early warning information or whether the system is built on other disaster systems (South Asia has so many other disasters) or how many institutions are ready to follow the early warning system.
6. Relief plans and implementation should be accountable to the most vulnerable and must incorporate the longer term vulnerability issues e.g. psychosocial aspects etc.
7. Regional plans must be developed with stronger political commitments to help communities to cope with increased climate induced disasters as well as to assure climate responsive investments and policies.
8. All the development policies and practices should include disaster vulnerability. This should also include the policies, recommendations and loans from the international financial institutions and donors. All the development policies should undergo public scrutiny to evaluate if they increase people's vulnerability to disasters.
9. Political commitments to say 'no' to large scale projects like dams, irrigation structures such as river linking projects , as they create disasters for the poor and local communities.
10. Referencing to the SAARC declaration and WCDR framework, each country should proactively consult with its neighbors for any cross border development structure that may have an adverse effect on other countries.
11. The information and communication technologies should be brought into the mainstream of disaster reduction policies and practices.

### **Recommendations from the Audiences:**

Recommendation from the general public attending the presentation session:

1. The river linking project undertaken by India needs to be stopped as it is creating an environmental hazard both for Bangladesh and India.
2. The emphasis should be on the grass roots level. Something should be done with the coping mechanism for them. There is also a need for quick dissemination of information. We need to raise our voice at the state level to stop things like the Farakka Barrage.
3. We are facing the effect of man-made catastrophes. Construction in one country is affecting other countries. There should be a policy which can stop these things.
4. Regional disaster funds should be established.
5. There is a problem with the information system. Government to Government system of 72 hours is not working.
6. Development in the name of tourism in the ecologically valuable areas should be stopped.
7. There should be a master plan to mitigate disaster and we should work to follow it.

## **Trafficking and Human Security**

**Chair of the Proceedings: Professor Bishwa Keshar Maskay**

### **The Context on Human Security and Trafficking:**

“Human Security is concerned with safeguarding and expanding people’s essential freedoms and opportunities in order to develop their potential”. “The demands of human security cover a broad range of interconnected issues involving several governance actors, including the civil society” “Human security is a critical response to new developmental challenges designed to deal with the conflicts of various nature – structural, latent and cultural.” “Human security can only be achieved when the state is stable and able to protect its people from internal conflict as well as external encroachment.” “The security of the people also entails the empowerment of societies at **various** levels.” “Human security, which is broader in scope than state security, requires strong and stable institutions.”

“Trafficking in persons” means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or a position, or vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefit to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation for the prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth.

The Group reviewed the presentations of Ms. Durga Ghimire’s *“Trafficking and Human Security”*, Ms. Sheen Farrukh’s *“Trafficking Women and Children and Human Security”*, Dr. Bishwa Maskay’s *“Human Security and Governance”* and Dr. Asha Bajpai’s *“Regional Victim/Witness Protection Protocol for Combating Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Women and Children in South Asia”*.

The group reviewed and reaffirmed the recommendations made in Islamabad at the 4<sup>th</sup> South Asian People’s Summit concerning Human Security and Peace and Trafficking in South Asia and made the following new recommendations:

**SAARC Level Recommendations:**

1. Urge the states that have not yet done so to ratify the SAARC Convention on Trafficking of Women and Children and all State Parties to the Convention to implement it without delay.
2. Establish a Treaty Monitoring System as a permanent body (GO, Civil Society Representative and Anti-trafficking Experts). The system should take care of reporting and accountability especially a bi-annual review of the issue, and should ensure preservation of the human rights of the victims during rescue, reintegration, rehabilitation and repatriation.
3. Bilateral/Trilateral and multilateral agreements must be made with regards to all aspects of trafficking.
4. SAARC heads of state must be urged to raise the issue of refugees who have been living in difficult circumstances. The repatriation process in the country of origin should be given top priority.
5. The governments of SAARC countries must be urged to ratify the UN Convention of 1990, on “The Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Member of their Families” and the Migrants Rights ILO Convention no. 96 and 143.

6. A regional migration policy must be developed to promote safe migration as it is a cross border agenda.
7. A database of missing women and children and of convicted traffickers has to be established.
8. Ratify the Regional Victim/Witness Protection Protocol for Combating Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Women and Children in South Asia and establish a regional tribunal for the protection of rights of trafficked persons.

#### **National Level Recommendations:**

1. Develop Capacity Building initiatives for Law Enforcement Agencies and Border Police/Securities and Immigration Authorities.
2. States must develop policies to implement women's economic empowerment and right to sustainable livelihood.
3. Holistic programs for survivors need to be implemented with the full recognition of the links between trafficking and migration.
4. The governments and NGOs must set up transit homes and places of safety that meet minimum standards of quality service.
5. National laws should be formulated immediately in accordance with international conventions on trafficking.
6. National governments must allocate adequate resources for implementing anti-trafficking programs.
7. Recognize the inter-linkage between Human Security and the prevention of Trafficking to promote education and vocation training for sustainable livelihood for women and children.
8. Recognize trafficking as an organized crime.

#### **Civil Society Level Recommendations**

1. Create awareness on trafficking and its various manifestations at all levels through local self help groups, watch dog committees and vigilant squads.
2. Strengthen the existing Regional and National Networks related to trafficking in Women and Children.

### **Poverty, Trade and Globalization**

#### **Moderator: Mr. Abdul Awal**

The discussion started by linking poverty with trade and globalization. It was agreed that globalization and trade liberalization are responsible for increasing poverty in South Asia. In support of this Dr. Ramanjaneyulu from India said that 16000 farmers committed suicide in India in the last ten years because of the adverse impact of globalization. He also stated that because the government does not support the marginal farmers they are pushed into a worse position.

Another participant Ms. Manjula Joshi from Rajasthan said that marginal farmers do not get subsidies but the big industrialists do. As a result the cost of cultivation for the poor farmers has increased making them even poorer. The MNCs are buying land from the poor farmers at a high price and although poor farmers make high profits, they eventually become landless.

Tedoro Max de mesa from the Philippines said that many local businesses in South Asia are being threatened by MNCs. While the countries of the region, which is home to resources like minerals and plants that are essential ingredients of medicine, have done very little to use them. MNCs established here are producing medicines and are monopolizing the market to price the medicines at rates the poor cannot afford. MNCs create scarcity in the supply of the medicines which forces the people to buy from them.

Dr. Ramanjaneyulu said that trade will be healthy between equal groups. So before going for globalization and trade liberalization every country should first strengthen the local market and only then go for regional and international trade. He also said that tariff reduction should be linked with subsidy reduction and that a patent on life should not be allowed.

The following issues were also discussed in the session:

- The general people are not aware of the bad effects of globalization on our socio economic conditions because of the non-transparency of the national and international agreements and programs involving the civil society.
- By privatizing the service sectors the government withdraws its services from them and causes the cost of services to rise and many people to lose their jobs.
- Governments should give poor people who depend upon agriculture a chance to come out of the atrocious poverty circle.
- A day by day reduction in investment in agriculture is pushing down the farmers into more problems.
- Globalization has caused housing facilities for the poor to get scarcer as the MNCs are allowed to invest money in real estate development.
- The government alone cannot solve the problem relating to poverty, trade and globalization. The civil society must also share in the responsibility to make a change.
- The instability in policies of the South Asian countries is a prime barrier to poverty eradication.
- Information should be easily accessible to the general people.

#### **Recommendations:**

- A central data system should be provided for the entire SAARC region to enable access to information.
- The media can be used to explore information.
- There should be a stable poverty eradication policy.
- Local trade needs to be strengthened before going for globalization and trade liberalization to avoid any kind of adverse impact on the civil society.
- There should be a strong people's movement to arouse government concern and initiate more responsible actions on issues relating to the civil society.
- Transparency of government proceedings should be maintained for the sake of people's well-being.
- Actions should be taken at the national, regional and international stage.
- User groups need to be consulted before adopting new technologies.
- SAARC nations should come together to make the best use of their technologies together.

## Livelihood, Gender & Labor

### **Gender:**

Gender and Caste Discrimination was a topic covered in the thematic discussions on February 5, 2005. Although a number of recommendations were made some important issues like the following should have been included.

When the government of Nepal set free traditional bonded laborers known locally as Kamaiyas each family of the community was awarded a plot of 10 kathas of land. The land was however registered in the name of the male head of each family. This is a discriminatory regulation that the government must immediately abolish.

Local institutions must be made in accordance with universal laws - Nepal.

Implementation is the main problem. There is a big gap between policy and practice.

Mindsets have to be changed from home - Sahriah (BGD)

The government should give space to women in policy making & other strategic decision making- Sahriah (BGD).

### **Caste Discrimination:**

India and Nepal have the same problem with Dalits or bonded laborers who are only given food for their labor. In India there is a law for them but Nepal has no law for the Dalit rights – Meen Gurung (Nepal)

The government distributes allowances to widows who have reached the age of 60 but any widow of a defense person is given an allowance from the time of her husband's death. The government must amend this discriminatory practice.

### **Livelihood:**

In the second session on February 6, 2005, discussions were held on livelihood and labor issues. The following important points were excluded from the recommendations:

1. Redistribution of land (Mr. Jagat - Nepal).
2. Business people should join the People's Summit (Mr. Anwar-SAP-BGD)
3. Nepalese land is greatly affected by Indian dams.
4. The voice of poor people directly involved in agriculture must be strengthened.(Pakistan)
5. The government should introduce other alternatives of livelihood for the poorest people. (Mr. Monu Gupta- BGD)
6. 'No' corporate farming. (Mr. Rajshekhar- India)
7. People who have been dislocated by dam construction and other reasons must be compensated properly (Pakistan, Nepal, and BGD).
8. Separate/ alternative development plans for coastal belts needed. (Mr. Noresh-BGD)
9. Farmers must have the right to produce safe food. (Mr. Zakir-BGD)

### **Labor:**

Strong protests need to be made against child labor in South Asian countries.

'Day Care Center' facility should be provided for working women (Mr. Sahnara-BGD)

Bonded labor of children found in 'Shundorbon', a common practice both in India and BGD.

## **Recommendations:**

1. All state parties should include a **Gender Equality Policy** in government policies (education/health) and constitutions.
2. Governments should encourage gender sensitive curriculums in the education systems.
3. Governments should take affirmative action to eradicate all forms of discrimination (i.e. caste/ ethnic/political/social / educational / cultural / economical / private / public)
4. State parties should ensure the equal rights of all citizens to Rights to property, equal access to resources, land, credit and eradicate all forms of unlawful tradition which discriminate between the sexes.
5. Governments should take action to increase women in decision-making bodies by giving quotas and reservation seats.
6. All Governments should take immediate actions to follow the provisions of **CEDAW** and **appoint monitoring bodies** to look into implementation.
7. Governments should take all necessary steps to ensure women's reproductive health and all issues related to health.
8. Governments should grant overseas voting rights for migrant workers.
9. Governments should ensure Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and also ensure monitoring and reporting as part of the international commitment.
10. All SAARC countries should ensure **rights to access to free education** up to 10<sup>th</sup> grade.
11. Governments should eradicate all forms of discriminations in relation to caste, class, gender, ethnicity, marital status, political opinion, age, parental status, and maternity indigenous status.
12. Governments should ensure citizenship rights to all people.
13. Governments should take more welfare measures to ensure the rights of single mothers, female headed households and widows, since the process has seriously affected the widows.
14. All state parties should take into account all obligations under ratified conventions (all stakeholders should include the dialogue) in relation to economic rights and issues related to the livelihoods of the people.
15. All Governments should take appropriate measures to protect the rights of the women's informal economy (i.e. domestic workers, legal migrant workers, agricultural workers etc.)

## **Governance**

Bad governance, which is generally carried out by the elite, is the cause of poverty. There should be proper decentralization of power. The central government should include three topics:

1. Political affairs
2. Fiscal policies
3. Legislative or Judicial affairs

Other steps should be decentralized to the local level. (Mr. Rishi Raj – Nepal)

Efficiency of bureaucracy needs to be increased. There are two major problems associated with it:

Poor participation and lack of efficiency. (Dr. Padma Ratnayake – Sri Lanka)

Nepal wants to be more clear and specific on resource mobilization power. Only decentralization is not enough, proper devolution is necessary. The system should power the civil society. (Mr. Rishi Raj – Nepal)

The decentralization and devolution of power raise the question “Who will elect the judges?”

It was an open question put by Mr. Richard Harmston from SAP Canada to all the participants. Nepalese participants suggested answered that judges should be appointed centrally. Bangladeshi members seemed to be confused.

**We recognize** Good Governance to be honest, accountable and trustworthy. It has to be competent and effective, with transparent institutions. It allows ordinary citizens the maximum say in how their affairs are managed at the local level so that their institutions can reflect their needs and aspirations as far as possible. It promotes-and in turn, depends on –democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, freedom of speech for the advancement of women, ethnic groups, minorities and all marginalized groups.

**We advocate** more effective governance through the devolution of political decision-making to the local level of government. This should include fiscal and administrative decentralization and more direct accountability to the people, Local governance should enable greater people’s participation in the planning, delivery and assessment of services to the people and the fulfillment of their rights.

**We believe,**

- NGOs and civil society organizations should join together to launch a multi – year regional campaign for good governance in South Asia, to include
- Stronger legal framework and implementation of decentralized local government institutions;
- Reservation of at least one third of all elected seats for women at all levels of government;
- Education training and other capacity building measures of elected officials, candidates and political parties.

### **Process Recommendation**

We recommend that the conclusion of the 2005 People’s Summit be widely distributed and encourage follow up work to be undertaken by civil society organizations and that the results and progress be reported back as a basis for discussion at the Peoples Summit 2006

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## Peace and Militarization

### Existing Situation in the Region

- Economic and social discrimination based on caste, religion, ethnicity and gender
- Maoist Insurgency in Nepal
- Divisive politics of cultural nationalism in India
- Atrocity by State, Non - state and insurgents and gross violation of human rights in Kashmir
- Unrest in North East Region of India and atrocities by the army
- Bomb and grenade attacks against political leaders at public meetings and cultural programs in various parts of Bangladesh
- Arbitrary killings in the name of encounters in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal
- Orchestrating threat of terrorism in India by the State in order to justify increased militarization and Police Raj
- Denial of the practice of cultural heritage
- Existence of cultural hegemony in region
- Emergence of fascism in the form of fundamentalist religious groups supported by governments in the region
- Different regional networks of insurgents present to strengthen their regional and national initiatives
- Different conflict promoting groups specialized in different areas like
  - Manipulating medias
  - Destruction of properties
  - Killing innocent people
  - Sexually assault women in conflict situation
- Misinformation on different countries
  - “Pakistanis are terrorists”
  - “Bangladeshis are infiltrators”
  - “Nepalese as Maoists”
- Draconian laws like Prevention Of Terrorism Act (POTA) in India used for gross violation of human rights

### **Causes of Conflicting Situation**

- Feudalistic and neo- feudalistic character of the states
- Non-inclusive and non-transparent character of the states
- Social Exclusion (Caste, Religious, Ethnic, Linguistic and Gender discrimination)
- Higher level of corruption
- No Rule of Law
- Vicious Cycle of Poverty
- General Neglect of the poor from rights to social security
- Lack of accountability of political leaders
- Vested Interest of forces of privatization

### **Effects of Conflict:**

- More than 11,000 people have died and 300,000 migrated to India and other countries due to Maoist Insurgency in Nepal and more than 50,000 killed and more than 100,000 missing in Kashmir; more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Eastern Nepal
- Social fabric torn apart in Pakistan and Bangladesh (specially for minorities and ethnic groups)
- Violence and disruptions related to Maoist insurgency has literally terrorized the Schooling Environment
  - Unlawful mass abduction of students and teachers
  - Collection of regular money from teachers by Maoist
- Industries and business enterprises providing tax and money to insurgents in Nepal
- Frequent strike calls by insurgents and lack of reliable security from state to business entrepreneurs in Nepal
- Health posts and other service providing institutions in rural areas of Nepal have been closed down due to conflict.
- Destruction of development Infrastructure
- Millions of internally displaced people in India and Nepal
- Forced payments collected from Civilians and Donors by insurgents and some organizations even requested to close down the organization
- Radiation from nuclear experimentation has caused health hazards in India
- Increased military budget and cutting down of development budget in the region
- Countries not encouraging citizens to travel to other countries of South Asia
  - harassment in immigration section
  - Indians traveling to Pakistan have been suspected of being terrorist supporters and vice versa

### **Recommendations: Civil Society Level**

- Declaration of December 8 as Annual SAARC Peace day (Day of SAARC Establishment) which will be celebrated by different development stakeholders
- Strengthening culture of peace by developing regional coalition to promote dialogue and peace in Asia
- Creation of People's Peace Commission and Civic Monitoring Mechanism
- Promoting peace building experience sharing at regional level and ensuring effective use of Information Communication and Technology in peace promoting process

- Increasing people to people contact for better understanding, prejudice reduction and peace building
- Developing mechanism to ensure participation of marginalized community members who face discrimination in decision making on the basis of caste, gender and ethnicity.
- The Civil Society instead of acting as a cadre of political parties should act to fulfill people's concerns
- Advocacy of change in educational curriculum to minimize hostile behavior of citizens towards people of other countries
  - Organize multi stakeholder interactions to raise the issue of hostile curriculum
  - Provide training to educational curriculum personnel and book writers to facilitate alternative educational writing

## **FINAL DECLARATION**

### **PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEOPLE'S SAARC**

**Dhaka, 6 February 2005**

**BRAC Center INN, Mohakhali,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

This representative assembly of civil society organizations and network of South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) condemns the unwarranted postponement the SAARC heads of state Summit and calls for its immediate convening to discuss the current social, political and economic issues.

The People's assembly has been deeply devastated and grieved by the Tsunami disaster and offers its heartfelt sympathies to the survivors and expresses concern over the neglect of states in providing relevant information to citizens and for failing to forewarn the people. We also express anger and shock over the mishandling of the post-disaster situation, failure in creating systems to reach the victims and the delivery of relief and assistance in rehabilitation. We recognize that the problems of disaster in our era are magnified by the failure of policy and poor governance. We appreciate the unprecedented generosity and benevolence of the people of the world and call for an effective mechanism to coordinate the relief efforts. We endorse the priorities and commitments made in the World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) framework of action. We urge an effective South Asian system with a sound organizational structure to share expertise, knowledge and hydro-meteorological information.

This assembly views with concern the recent developments in Nepal and the suspension of fundamental rights and civil liberties is unacceptable. It calls for the restoration of basic human rights and democracy in Nepal forthwith. The states must not be allowed to suspend fundamental rights and civil liberties under any pretext. Rights to information and communication as fundamental rights of respective citizens must be ensured.

The People's Summit expresses concern over the rapidly growing militarization of the states in the name of national interest and security. Such policies are detrimental to peace and democracy in the region and give rise to extremism, intolerance, confrontation and conflict. It therefore demands an end to recent arms deals and the immediate reduction in military expenditures.

We urge immediate negotiations without pre-conditions among SAARC states on existing and potential conflict-generating issues such as territorial disputes, shared water resources, and hydrocarbons resources. The Assembly demands the suspension of all mega hydroelectric projects that adversely affect the lives and livelihoods of millions and call for the development of a mutually agreed code of conduct for projects that negatively impact neighboring countries.

The assembly demands the right to live in a peaceful environment, not threatened by national nuclear policies and demands an immediate freeze on all nuclear designs and missile systems. We urge the states to take express measures for the eradication of nuclear weapons to make South Asia a nuclear free zone. States should enhance a culture of peace through dialogue and change in curricula and media.

The Summit notes that a majority of our people depends on agriculture for their livelihood and food security. It reiterates the urgent need for land reforms and land rights for indigenous people with special efforts for the inclusion of the people of coastal and resource poor areas. It calls for legislation on rights of people employed in the informal sector such as domestic and agriculture workers.

Recognizing the ever-increasing global interdependence, we welcome mutually beneficial cooperation between countries and regions; however, we deplore the trends of the corporate culture that adversely affects the marginalized and poorer sections of South Asia. The assembly strongly urges the states to abolish the monopoly of MNCs on patent rights and corporate farming.

The Assembly advocates a comprehensive mechanism to deal with the voluntary repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons keeping in view the refugee situation in almost all the SAARC countries. South Asia should be a refugee-free zone. Also required are measures to protect the rights of the migrant workers.

The Assembly denounces the privatization of basic services mainly water, health, education and power, and demands an end to neo-liberal economic guidelines detrimental to the survival of poor and marginalized people.

The Assembly urges all states to ratify and implement the SAARC Convention on Trafficking of Women and Children. We urge the ratification of the Regional Victim/Witness Protection Protocol to “Combating Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of Women and Children in South Asia” and the establishment of a Regional Tribunal for the Protection of Trafficked Persons.

The gathering takes serious note of the gender disparity and insensitivity in various national policies and practices and demands that the SAARC states implement gender equality in all areas of national control and influence. The state parties should take action for increased participation especially of women and excluded sections of society in decision-making bodies at all levels through affirmative actions.

To advance good governance throughout South Asia, we advocate a policy action by all states in two areas: to establish stronger legal frameworks and implementation of devolved local government, and to institute reservation of seats for women in at least one third of all elected bodies at all levels of government.

The assembly reiterates the need for the ratification and implementation of various United Nations international and regional conventions, covenants and treaties signed by the states.

The participating organizations committed themselves to deliver these messages to their governments and to report on their progress at the next People’s Summit.

## **SOLIDARITY SPEECH**

### **PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEOPLE'S SAARC**

**Dhaka, 6 February 2005**

**BRAC Center INN, Mohakhali,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

#### **Mr. Richard Harmston**

Executive Director, SAP- Canada.

Mr. Richard Harmston started his speech by conveying his condolence for the Tsunami affected people. He strongly demanded a demonstration to face further disasters. He also stated that there were also many differences between the so-called North and South where many of the issues identified had differences in the two sections of the world. They are however outnumbered by the similarities and commonalities. He also described activities of southern NGOs for the help of northern NGOs. Mr. Richard stated that we were beginning to discover what unity really means and called this event one of regional advocacy. He also felt that it was also an opportunity to articulate a common human agenda of the whole region. He expressed solidarity with the recommendations that had been proposed. The challenge for all was to translate this local solidarity. He raised the question on how to cooperate practically. He suggested that a practical plan must be developed to mobilize everyone in the region and to carry out an effective campaign. It was his opinion that northern NGOs were looking to the southern NGOs for leadership to deal with the issues of the region. He thought that it would be a matter of great pride for the northern NGOs to join with people of South Asia to execute those actions. He concluded by wishing every success to the people's summit.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

### PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR PEOPLE'S SAARC Dhaka, 6 February 2005

**BRAC Center INN, Mohakhali,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

#### Press Conference

1. Mr. Syed Nurul Alam (Bangladesh), Executive Director, Sap- Bangladesh
2. Ms. Bushra Gohar (Pakistan), Chairperson, SAP- International
3. Dr. Padma Ratnayake (Sri Lanka), SAP- Sri Lanka
4. Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali (Nepal), Executive Director, SAP- International.
5. Dr. Madan Pariyar (Nepal), SAP International
6. Dr. Ranjith Cabral (Sri Lanka), SAP International
7. Mr. T P Gyawali (Nepal), SAP Nepal
8. Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed, SAPPE
9. Mr. Sohrab Hossain, SAPPE
10. Mr. Syed Tamjid ur Rahman, ChangeMaker

#### Inaugural Ceremony

1. Ms. Bushra Gohar – Chairperson, SAP- International
2. Ms Rokeya Kabir – Focal Person, SAPPE
3. Mr. Syed Nurul Alam – Convener, Sap- Bangladesh
4. Dr. Rohit Kumar Nepali – Executive Director, SAP- International
5. Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed -SAPPE

#### Opening Presentation

- 📁 🗨️ Natural Disasters: Issues and Concerns in South Asia: Mr. Saidur Rahman, Ex-Executive Director, Oxfam Bangladesh
- 📄 🗨️ Poverty, Livelihoods and Social Justice in South Asia: Imperatives for the New Millennium: Presented by Mr. Mahfuz Kabir, Research Officer, BISS, Dhaka
- 📄 🗨️ Trafficking and Human Security: Ms. Durga Ghimire, ABC Nepal, Nepal
- 📄 🗨️ Trafficking Women and Children and Human Security: Ms. Sheen Farrukh, Pakistan
- 📄 🗨️ South Asian Labor and Development: Mr. Tazeen Javed, Pakistan
- 🕒 🗨️ Gender Rights: Ms. Rokeya Kabir, Bangladesh, Focal Person – SAAPE
- 📄 🗨️ Governance: Dr. Padma Ratnayake, Sri Lanka, Executive Director – SAP Sri Lanka

☞☞☞ Peace and Militarization: Mr. Sharfarz Khan, Professor, Peshawar University, Pakistan

☞☞☞ Bhutan Issue: Ms. Kalpana Dhakal Rizal, Program Coordinator, Bhutanese Women & Youth Empowerment Program

## Thematic Group

### **Mitigation of Natural Catastrophe**

1. Mr. Deepak Paudel (Nepal), Chair person, Natural Disaster Management Forum
2. Ms. Modhumita Roy (India) - Action Aid-India
3. Mr. Monsoor Raza (Pakistan) - ACT International, Church World Service, DRP-Coordinator
4. Mr. Nabidur Rahman (Bangladesh), Deputy Director, (Research, Evaluation & Monitoring), Bangladesh Extension Education Services
5. Mr. T P Gyawali (Nepal) – SAP – Nepal
6. Mr. Shahzad Ahmed (Pakistan) – IUCN, SDNP, Information Coordinator
7. Mr. Khurshid Alam (Bangladesh), International Emergencies Team, Action Aid International
8. Advocate Firoz Ahmed (Bangladesh), Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA)
9. Mr. Naser Khan (Bangladesh), Environmental Activist, Poribesh Bachao Andolon
10. Dr Ranjith Cabral (Sri Lanka) – SAP International
11. Mr. Mohammed Tahseen (Pakistan) , SAP- Pakistan, Executive Director
12. Dr Madan Pariyar (Nepal), SAP International
13. Mr. Ashek Ishtiaq Haq (Bangladesh) – Change Maker BD
14. Mr. Musfeq-us-Saleheen (Bangladesh) – Change Maker BD

### **Trafficking and Human Security**

1. Ms. Kalpana Dhakal Rizal - BWYEP
2. Mr. Pranab K. Nandi – ATSEC Bangladesh
3. Ms. Durga Ghimire – ABC Nepal
4. Ms. Kumari Singh Khadka –Nepal
5. Prof. Radha Sharma – Women Security Pressure Group (Nepal/Kathmandu)
6. Eshrat Hossain Lipton – CDJF, Galachipa, Pataukhali
7. Samit Kumar Datta Moley - CDJF and the Daily Ittefaq, Bangladesh
8. Mr. Marc Dolgin – SAP Canada
9. Mr. Syed Saiful Haque – WARBE, Bangladesh
10. Mr. Bharampreet J. Singh – USAID/India
11. Mr. Klein Helpe – SARI/Equity
12. Dr. Asha Bajpai – Reader, Tata Institute of Social Sciences/ Mumbai – India
13. Ms. Laxmi Gurung – HLCIT
14. Ms. Momtaz Roomy – Mukti Nari-o-Shishu Unnayan Shongstha, Kushtia
15. Ms. Dolores A. Donovan- USAID, India
16. Prof. Bishwa Keshar Maskay – Member, Int’l Board, SAP-I.
17. Ms. Sheen Farrukh – Journalist/Pakistan

18. Ms. Bushra Gohar – President, SAP-I
19. Mr. Adilur Rahman Khan – Deputy Attorney General for Bangladesh
20. Mr. Diran Hafiz – ChangeMaker, Bangladesh

#### **Poverty, Trade & Globalization:**

1. Moderator: Mr. Abdul Awal, Chief Coordinator, Noakhali Rural Development Society, Bangladesh
2. Dr. Ramanjaneyulu, Executive Director, Centre for Sustainable Agriculture, India
3. Mr. Pial Rahman, Associate Researcher, Coastal Development Partnership, Khulna, Bangladesh
4. Tedoro Max de mesa (Philippines), Advisor, Forum Asia
5. Ms. Laxmi Gurung- Nepal
6. Ms.W. Indrasiri, SAP- Sri Lanka
7. Ms. Farhana Islam, Communication Officer, Wave Foundation, Bangladesh
8. Mr. Dilip Shrestha, SAP- Nepal
9. Ms. Bandana Nath, BASAS (ED), Barisal, Bangladesh
10. Mr. Md. Wahidur Rahman, Change Maker, Bangladesh
11. Mr. Zakia Jalil, ChangeMaker, Bangladesh
12. Mr. Rabindra Nath Bishwas, RRE, Jessore, Bangladesh

#### **Governance, Peace and Militarization**

1. Dr. Padma Ratnayake – Sri Lanka (Chair)
2. Mr. Richard Harmston – SAP Canada
3. Ms. Syeda Monira Khatun – Bangladesh
4. Mr. Uttam Chowdhury – Bangladesh
5. Mr. Jagadish Chandra Das – Bangladesh
6. Mr. Rishi Raj Lamsal – Nepal
7. Mr. Dev Man Chowdhury
8. Mr. Bimal Gadai – Nepal
9. Ms. Laxmi Pariyar – Nepal
10. Mr. Noman Ahmed Khan – Bangladesh
11. Mr. Md. Mizanur Rahman – ActionAid, Bangladesh
12. Mr. Paul Rodrique – SUMS, Siragonj, Bangladesh
13. Mr. M. Rahman – Bangladesh
14. Prof. Dr. Husneyara - Bangladesh
15. Ms. Durga Sob – Nepal
16. Mr. H.L. Shrestha – Nepal
17. Dr. Thapalia – Nepal
18. Ms. Meena Gurung – Nepal
19. Mr. K.P Shrestha – Nepal
20. Ms. Parbali Shrestha – Nepal
21. Mr. Milon Bikash Pal – Bangladesh
22. Mr. Anwar Hossain, SAP-Bangladesh
23. Mr. Golam Kibria -Bishwo Shahitto Kendro, Bangladesh
24. Mrs. Shikha Shrestha- Bellanet
25. Mr. Upendra Malla Tara – Nepal
26. Ms. Zakia Jowher– ActionAid-India

27. Prof Dr. Sarfaraz Khan – Pakistan
28. Ms. Ratna Shrestha – Nepal
29. Ms. Bimala Gurung – Nepal
30. Md. Rafiqul Islam – Bangladesh
31. Mr. Malla K. Sundar

## **Livelihood, Labor, Gender, Social Justice**

- 📁👤 Ms. Kalyani Shah- Nepal
- 📄👤 Mr. Meen Bishwakarma – Nepal
- 📄👤 Mr. Ram Doyal Yadov- Nepal
- 📄👤 Mr. Jagat Durja- Nepal
- 📄👤 Mr. Pashupati Choudhury- Nepal
- 🕒👤 Mr. Panjawaty Pathak- Nepal
- 🌐👤 Ms. Monu Gupta- Remold, Bangladesh
- 🗣️👤 Mr. Rupan Roy Chowdhury- TARD, Bangladesh
- 🗣️👤 Mr. Md. Aminuzzaman- Bandhan, Bangladesh
- 📁📁👤 Mr. Zakir Hossain- Farmer's Voice, Bangladesh
- 📁📁👤 Mr. H.M Zakir Ahmed- PRDS, Bangladesh
- 📁📄👤 Mr. Sahabuddin Panna- Bangladesh
- 📁📄👤 Mr. K.M Enayet Hossain – SDA, Bangladesh
- 📁📄👤 Mr. Zakir Hossain Miraz- CBDP, Bangladesh
- 📁📄👤 Mr. Shankar Lal Das- Reporter, Janakantha
- 📁🕒👤 Ms. Masuda Rowshan- IED, Bangladesh
- 📁🌐👤 Ms. Saharia Parveen – IED, Bangladesh
- 📁🗣️👤 Ms. Rahima Sultana Kajol- Avas, Bangladesh
- 📁🗣️👤 **Abro- Bangladesh**
- 📄📁👤 Mr. Khaja Mohiuddin Lovlu- Bangladesh
- 📄📁👤 Ad. Md. Samsuddin - Bangladesh
- 📄📄👤 Ms. Shamila Daluwatte – Sri Lanka
- 📄📄👤 Mr. Gaddam Raja Shekhar– CSA India (SAAPE)
- 📄📄👤 Ms. Aisha Rahim – Pakistan
- 📄📄👤 Mr. Qamar Ul Hasan – Pakistan
- 📄🕒👤 Mr. Maqsd Ahmed- Pakistan
- 📄🌐👤 Mr. Malik Mahboob- Pakistan
- 📄🗣️👤 Mr. Tareq Awan - Pakistan

## **Rapporteur**

**Mr. Syed Tamjid ur Rahman, Consultant**