

A Report of the Conference



**SURVIVING CRISES
REBUILDING RESISTANCE:**

**Women's Struggles for Sustainable Development
in South Asia**

**SEPTEMBER 11- 14, 2001
KATHMANDU, NEPAL**

Organized by
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INTRODUCTION

The South Asian Network of Gender Activists and Trainers (SANGAT), Jagori from Delhi and the Nepal Coordination Committee consisting of 12 NGO's from Nepal, organized a South Asian Conference on "Surviving Crises, Rebuilding Resistance: Women's Struggles for Sustainable Development in South Asia." This Conference was held in Kathmandu from September 11-14, 2001.

The background note on the Conference stated - "Over the last two decades, the women of South Asia have struggled on many fronts to challenge and resist the paradigm of growth and development that predicates the violent destruction of the very basis of their lives and livelihoods. Resistance to 'the dictatorship of the market' is gaining ground. Movements for sustainable agriculture, for the right to information, against large dams and displacement, for self-government, for the rights of workers in agriculture and the unorganised sector – all reflect alternative visions of development, and demonstrate that it is possible to reverse the present orientation of our economies and societies. These movements expose the contradictions in the value frameworks, analysis and motivations that underlie dominant constructions of development, and counter the theory that there can be no alternative to globalisation and market-centred models of growth.

A collective exercise, to consolidate the analysis and insights emerging from these struggles/ movements can equip our resistance with arguments and examples, to counter 'one size fits all' development models and global 'solutions' imposed from above. It can also provide a platform for a coalition of women's movements across the region, committed to taking forward joint analysis and action. This coalition will work towards developing joint strategies to resist the unsustainable, unjust and destructive paradigms of development and evolve workable, people centered and people led alternatives."

To initiate such a collective process a four-day workshop of women farmers and activists from peasant women's organisations, women's movements, people's organisations, and individual researchers and NGOs working on issues of sustainable development was organised. The workshop was built around the theme of women's experiences of crises, and of resisting, surviving and responding to crises on three major fronts – threats to livelihoods, displacement and migration, and knowledge systems and technologies.

Objectives

- Exchanges and interactions between groups and organisations engaged in struggles against anti-people development models and/or in implementing people-centred empowering alternatives.
- A deeper understanding of the nuances in the politics of “crisis construction” and “crisis response” by different actors, and of their direct and indirect implications on women.
- Greater solidarity and co-operation between women's groups, peasant organisations & people's movements, between intellectuals and researchers working on these issues, to strengthen their joint struggle to regain control of their lives and livelihoods.
- A time-bound action-plan to resist and challenge the anti people policies and programmes, and to build a coherent, feasible and sustainable “counter-project” for people-centred development in the region.

Participation

Although the organisers had planned to have about 150 men and women, there were 240 registered participants from over 80 women's organisations, CBOs, NGOs, people's organisations, women's studies centres, etc. About 50 of these were peasant women themselves. The presence of activists from people's organisations and movements was found to be particularly useful. The main movements present were Right to Information, Save the Seeds Movement, Movement of Dalits and Adivasis (Indigenous People).

The Format

The first half of every day was spent in a Plenary during which case studies of innovative development programmes and people's movements for sustainable development were presented. The three-hour afternoon sessions were held in simultaneous workshops on different themes. In the evening video films on related issues on successful development initiatives were shown. After dinner there was a session devoted to cultural programs.

Energising Setting

The Administrative Staff College in Kathmandu had been very creatively decorated in a festive and colourful atmosphere. Small and large colourful banners in different South Asian languages welcomed everyone as soon as they entered the campus. Banners were hanging from trees, pillars, walls with inspirational slogans and statements like:

- There is enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed.
- Women's Rights are Human Rights.
- Development should be like a tree, growing from below upwards.
- South Asian Solidarity for South Asian Prosperity.
- Women's Place is in the House. That is why they should be in both Houses of Parliament.
- Let us start a movement of men towards family kitchens.
- Women want truly gentle-men in families.

The Conference was energised by relevant slogans and songs sung by the participants from different countries on the issues being discussed. They soon learnt each other's slogans and everyone joined in. There were no dull moments in the conference and everyone shared a sense of belonging and solidarity.

In addition to the singing, which was an integral part of the sessions, there were cultural programmes in the evenings to facilitate sharing of cultural expressions. The participants were enthusiastic about these cultural evenings, which were not only entertaining but also created a sense of belonging and shared warmth.





CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Day One: 11 September, 2001

The Conference was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Nepal Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Crises of Survival and Women's Movement for Rebuilding Our World.

Dr. Vandana Shiva, Diverse Women for Diversity, India.

The keynote address focused on the crises of our times, which is robbing millions of their fundamental right to food, water and livelihoods. 80 million people are starving in India while 60 million tons of food rotted in go-downs. Vital resources for survival, like water and bio-diversity are being privatised and patented. Five giant transnational corporations including the Suez, Vivendi, Bechtel and Enron are trying to own the world's water and create a market worth \$800 billion. Five other big corporations such as Monsanto and Syngenta are patenting seeds, medicines, genes or cells.

Women are resisting globalisation for both its economic and political fascism. Our struggle is to reclaim our livelihoods, knowledge, and resources. We will rebuild our peace and security.

SPECIAL ADDRESS

Livelihood Crises and Women's Movement in South Asia

Ms. Vidhya Bhandari, All Nepal Women's Association and a Member of Parliament, Nepal.

We are going through severe crises today. Inequalities between people are increasing, poverty is increasing, the food crisis is getting worse and people are starving to death. There are many reasons for these crises but primary among them is the erosion of people's control over livelihood resources. The resources are being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. Along with this, there is degradation of natural resources. This has deepened the crises of rural livelihoods.

More people are being alienated from their livelihoods. But there have been efforts to counter this trend. Women's movements' all over South Asia have been creatively responding to these crises and all are a part of these processes. We need to learn from each other. We should share our experiences and come up with future strategies to counter these crises and rebuild our region.

PLENARY SESSION - SETTING THE CONTEXT

Introducing the session, Kalpana Viswanath, Jagori, said the reports and stories coming from all over the South Asian region are speaking of loss of livelihoods, lack of food, crises such as floods, droughts, and ecological degradation. The objectives of this workshop are to discuss the issues affecting each country, measures which we have taken to find alternatives and areas where we still need support from each other. Here different movements from different countries are represented. The first plenary session is focused on setting the context of the workshop from the perspective of different countries and also from the perspective of South Asia.

Kalyani Menon-Sen, Jagori, India.

The current development paradigm that has been followed for over four decades, has proved to be unsustainable. Globalisation has led to the marginalisation of vulnerable sections of society, notably women and minority ethnic communities. There are large sections of the population still deprived of the basic wherewithal for a decent living. Paradoxically, there have been increases and surpluses in food supply, yet people continue to die of hunger as they are unable to afford the high food prices. Income distribution is getting increasingly skewed and the disparities between the 'haves' and 'have nots' is widening. Transnational corporations are taking over all aspects of the economy and people are losing control over livelihood resources and traditional knowledge systems. The crisis has been further exacerbated by the ecological degradation and depletion of natural resources in the course of the 'development' process of the last few years. Affected communities are often forced to migrate - due to the occurrence of natural disasters, or in search of livelihood opportunities, or on account of displacement due to large projects.

We are hearing the word 'crisis' again and again. Crisis of poverty, education, AIDS, environment etc. Who is creating these crises and who are bearing their effects? For example, in Kashipur district of Orissa, where people are dying of hunger - everybody again talks of crisis. But is it now that people in Kashipur are hungry or has it been building up over a period of years? Is it a process, which has happened in a way that we have not noticed it? So in the following days of workshop we would like to address issues like

- Enough food to eat- the right to grow food has gone out of our agenda and changes in livelihood patterns
- Migration and displacement - why communities are moving in search of livelihoods
- Traditional knowledge systems in agriculture and health

Urmila Aryal, All Nepal Peasant Association and a Member of Parliament, Nepal.

Development should be around people and not vice versa. Nepalese people have been struggling to modernise feudal society, patriarchal institutions and laws. Nepal is one of the least developed countries. It has a population of 23.2 million of which, female are 11.62 million and male are 11.58 million. As many as 85.2 percent people live in rural areas and about 80 percent of people depend on agriculture for livelihood.

Government policies and development programmes have not been able to address the issues of sustainable development. The issues that face us are environmental degradation, unequal access of women and indigenous communities to resources and opportunities, mass poverty, burden of foreign debt, and the protection of indigenous species, knowledge and practices. The major issues and concerns that need to be addressed are lack of access to land resources, inundation of farmlands, low participation of women in decision making, regional disparities, WTO, IMF conditions, migration and displacement. Women have no right to property in Nepal.

- Women's involvement in agriculture is higher (64.3%) than that of men (27.0%). Further, women's involvement in agriculture is increasing over time. It is ironical that women are not entitled to get land rights. Women's contribution in agriculture is not accounted yet in terms of monetary value.
- The representation of women in the policy-making bodies is 5.6% in the House of Representatives and 13.3% in the National Assembly. In addition, the number of women elected in the local bodies is very small.
- The principle reasons for migration from rural areas are landlessness and lack of job opportunities. Displacement also takes place due to big hydro-electric projects, Maoist insurgency and natural disasters like flood, landslides etc.

Eva Khondker, Proshika, Bangladesh

A series of global political-economic changes took place in the 1980s leading to various consequences which raised both hope and despair in our minds. We are living in a globalised world where all countries are economically integrated and which is fraught with threats and opportunities.

According to a statement from a report on Human development in South Asia, Bangladesh is 'emerging as the poorest, the most illiterate, the most undernourished, gender insensitive and indeed the most deprived region in the world'. Almost half of its population lives below the poverty line. Though women constitute half of the population and work longer hours than their male counterparts their position is weak in terms of income and they frequently become victims of social oppression like dowry, polygamy, rape, burning with acid, forced prostitution etc.

Environmental degradation in Bangladesh has reached an alarming stage, threatening the prospects of poverty eradication and promotion of sustainable development. Current agricultural practices, extensive and indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and massive deforestation are some

of the causes of ineffective productivity, instability of production and poor situation of health.

Globalisation is a process of relationships where capital controls the labour process and the owner of capital dictates the terms of business. However, in this process it is the poor, women, the marginalised groups, the ethnic, and religious minorities who get the worst deal. Globalisation has resulted in a negative impact on the lives and livelihoods of the poor and women in particular. The wholesale privatisation and denationalisation of state owned enterprises led to retrenchment and women become the first victims, since they are unorganised and politically less articulate. As the labour market is over-crowded, women workers find themselves in a very difficult situation to get any gainful employment or income earning opportunity.

As against this dismal picture, various movements to fight against gender discrimination and protect human and civil rights, struggles for poverty elimination and efforts to minimise environmental threats have gained considerable strength over the last decades in Bangladesh. The idea of people centered development has gathered a strong momentum.

Finally, it is noteworthy that Bangladesh has one of the most vibrant and organised civil society in this region and like many other countries, these organisations and movements play the role of a watchdog to uphold and establish the social, political, and economic rights of all people.

H. Podinilame, Centre for Human Development, Sri Lanka

We all are living in a very critical period of time as Sri Lankans and as South Asians. Our rights as human beings, as members of a larger civil society, as members of a farming community have been challenged. Some challenges which are faced in Sri Lanka are:

- The Paddy Land Act, 1958 of Sri Lanka has now been amended and under the new act a land bank has been created. All land has been handed over to the land bank.
- During the past 3-4 years the government has created a water secretariat. The survey of all villages and their water resources has been put under the control of the government. This implies that government is now in a position to sell water belonging to people.
- Due to civil war, thousands of women and men are living in refugee camps and lack access to proper food and shelter.

International agencies also get allies within the country so we have to fight with people within our country too. However, people's and women's movements have begun organising to fight these various oppressions.

Najma Sadeque, Shirkat Gah, Pakistan

Before talking about what globalisation did to women of Pakistan we should talk about what our own leaders did to our women. Trouble began with the green revolution. All benefits were enjoyed by big landlords, who later became feudal lords and finally became members of Parliament. The land reforms never took place in Pakistan unlike other countries of South Asia. Religion was used to suppress women and marginalised peoples. When industrialisation came we realised that colonisation had been replaced by local colonisation. Globalisation is an extension of the process.

The proportion of good arable land has gone down as dams have silted up all land, and more dams are being built. The final nail has been the corporatisation of agriculture and introduction of GMOs. We are suffering from water shortage and scarce water resources. Nobody should have the right to tell us what we have to do with our money and land.

Concluding Remarks

The session ended with comments from the chairperson, Kamla Bhasin, who emphasised that South Asian unity is necessary. LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas) if used properly, is a good medium for cooking and if not used carefully, can kill people. Similarly our LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation) should be used properly for maximum benefits. We have come here, she said, to work together to get rid of the 'TINA' syndrome- "There Is No Alternative" and create 'TIAA' syndrome- "There Is An Alternative" and if there isn't, the people of South Asia WILL CREATE IT. We have to create alternatives in education, health, agriculture, right to information etc. The 'P' of people is more important than 'P' of profit.

Afternoon Thematic Seminars

SEMINAR I

SOUTH ASIA: AN ARENA FOR GLOBAL POLITICS

Regionalisation: Localised Globalisation in South Asia

Speaker: Mr. Kanak Mani Dixit, Editor, HIMAL South Asia.

Too often the discourse around South Asia is dominated by rhetoric around the disastrous effects of globalisation and cultural invasion by the West into the region. However economic exploitation is hardly a new phenomenon for us. Whether it is in relation to the West or even within its boundaries, South Asia has seen economic exploitation throughout its history and over its geography. The same principles of globalisation operates within South Asia also. Market is market, and the ultimate aim, whether of a Western MNC or a local industrialist is to maximise profits, wherever possible through exploitation. It is often these local interventions which are more insidious. Globalisation should not be our only concern; regionalisation in its negative role also has deep and far reaching consequences.

Not only do we need to reflect on the fallout of this differential balance of power amongst different countries in the region, we also need to critically evaluate structures and systems within each country. We must look into our own countries where the problems are homegrown and not exported from overseas.

South Asia is usually understood as defined by SAARC - a group of countries with an organised forum. This only means that the sum of these countries is not more than its parts, which is what South Asia has the potential to be, in order to bring out feelings of allegiance and unity. Such an insipid conceptualisation of the region has meant that there have been no efforts or encouragement to use the inner genius and creativity of the people in envisioning their "South Asia" with which they can identify. We should define South Asia so that we speak of its diversity rather than its oneness.

As mentioned, the region shows tremendous variations in its systems of governance, which continues to be a great challenge in lending greater unity to the region. While Pakistan and India are particularly vast, Nepal has had a unit of governance reasonably adequate for its size and needs, although having its own unique problems. In spite of being only 500 miles long and 100 miles wide, its geography makes it difficult to govern. Their varied histories of governance, experience of colonisation make each unique.

Colonisation by the British stopped evolution of countries which could have evolved into their own nation states over time; the Partition is probably the most explicit example of this. Nepal, however was never colonised and this could be one reason why Nepal is doing so badly today. Not having a colonial elite to take over from the British has been a disadvantage in the short term, but may turn out to be an advantage in the long term.

The nation state in each case has also been lacking in an ideal unit of identity. Efforts at building national identity have been lopsided or politically motivated, and therefore divisive and ineffective. The above reasons may account for why there has been little economic and social advance in South Asia. More community activism has to happen before change starts occurring at the mass level. Most importantly structural change in governance has to be on the agenda for progressive change in South Asia.

Discussion

- The size of a country often means that a centre/periphery structure is inevitable to function practically as an administrative unit. Restructuring may lead to other problems such as secessionism. It is decentralisation and not secessionism which is productive. Restructuring will lead to violence in many cases.
- Looking at the process of development of an elite class in a country that has not been colonised, we can compare Nepal to Thailand, which has also never been colonised. We find that Thailand also lacks an English speaking elite, but it has instead developed an elite class that speaks and reads the same newspaper as the masses. Perhaps Nepal has not been able to similarly use this to its advantage, being next to a massive power and a long open border.
- Often what is considered as being for the greater good of one nation is harmful to another, and this creates conflict within the region - the building of a dam in India means that lands in Nepal get flooded.
- Is South Asia a concept only for the elite? Can the masses or the non elite participate or allege a South Asian identity? Intellectualism and even knowledge is centered in the metropolis in South Asia. Knowledge from Delhi, for example, doesn't even percolate to Lucknow or Patna. This has a dual effect; while knowledge remains centralized, seekers of knowledge move to the center, thus perpetuating and sustaining this effect.

SEMINAR II

GLOBAL POLITICS OF FOOD

Speaker: Mr. Anil Chaudhary, Peace, New Delhi, India.

Today, politics of food has to be seen in the context of food security. Earlier the term food security was used to mean securing food for self/family as in subsistence farming. Now the term is used to mean access to food, as there are surplus food stocks which are not properly distributed. This is a situation brought about by the green revolution which put an end to subsistence farming.

The debate is between the right to be fed vs the right to grow food and be fed. Right to be fed is being used as an alibi to argue the case for freer movement of agricultural products all over the world. At the grassroots, the concern is about the right to grow food.

Corporations, WTO, World Bank, UN Agencies and governments are the protagonists of the right to be fed. Corporations forward this argument because it brings profits to them. WTO is the platform they use and the World Bank the muscle man. Therefore, governments are playing the same tune. This lobby argues that there should not be a limit on the quantum of land owned by firms. This is a turnabout from the times of land reforms when the stress was on limiting the land holdings of individuals. They argue that agriculture has to operate on the basis of market and large

holdings lead to large-scale production without which they cannot compete in the global market. It is further said that labour will be cheaper in a large-scale operation. This has put family farms in crises. Thus, agriculture has become profitable only to corporate companies and not to the farmer. The two rights are irreconcilable and cannot co-exist. The battle between people and corporations has reached its final stages.

Discussion

- Agriculture was not part of the WTO Uruguay round of talks in 1952. It was brought into the purview of WTO later because the European Union and the United States had built up enough capacity to produce surplus food and had to find a market for the same. The combination of reduction in duties and subsidies and removal of restrictions have resulted in the prices of food in the world market being cheaper than in India.
- Farmers need to be convinced that they should grow food crops rather than cash crops, although the latter option may seem to be more economically lucrative. An experiment was conducted in Orissa in 1998 where the Mahila groups had taken up cultivation of brinjal instead of rice in their holdings. They claimed that there was an increase in wage rate from Rs.25 to Rs.40 because of this change. They were asked to maintain an income and expenditure account and they realised that their expenditure on rice had increased. Ultimately, they realised that their real wage had decreased rather than increased.
- In Pakistan, after independence, people thought that they had the right to decide what to grow and eat. But, economic policy in Pakistan, was dictated from outside. Green revolution had the worst effect in Pakistan - it destroyed the soil and biodiversity.
- The green revolution led to corporatisation. Mono-cropping has resulted in a situation where the entire crop could be destroyed because of an epidemic. Also, trading of agricultural products is subject to the vagaries of the market situation.
- The silent word 'profit' in the phrase 'sustainable development' is being used by multilateral agencies these days. The World Bank makes a profit in excess of 1 billion dollars annually. When they faced the crisis of capitalism whereby sources of capital and interest were drying up, they turned to new sources such as food, water, health and education. Fifty years ago, food was never spoken of with regard to trade or profits.
- Shrimp farming in Bangladesh requires salinisation of the farms which leads to degradation of the soil, making the land useless for cultivation. When shrimps could not fetch a good price in the market due to spread of epidemic, the farmers could not reclaim their land for cultivation.



SEMINAR II

REAPPROPRIATING WOMEN'S KNOWLEDGE

Speakers: Ms. Abha Bhaiya, JAGORI, India, Ms. Philomina Vincent, AIKYA, India

Women's Knowledge Systems

Ms. Abha Bhaiya, JAGORI, India

The entire cosmos is a cooperative. Similarly all living beings also form a cooperative. For example – a flutter of butterfly sends out ripples of cosmological changes in a rainforest. When we realise that the world is an interdependent co-operative enterprise, we can build a sustainable environment. Women understand this interconnection because they have to reproduce and nurture. With growing centrality of an aggressive, violent, unethical global market, we are witnessing a destruction of these interconnections that women have been instrumental in maintaining. The increased practice of patriarchal capitalism has been the destruction of our rich heritage of livelihoods. A woman-centered ethic propagates "*jeevanvadi dhara*" (life supporting process) not "*jeevan virodhi dhara*" (life destruction process).

A large terrain of activities, mainly performed by women, preserved and passed to the next generation are traditional and vital to human society, eg., saving seeds, using herbs for healing, preserving forest and lands, giving birth, etc. The traditional role of women in nurturing seeds is endangered by modern technologies and patent laws. There is a war being waged to control the production of seed and control of the land.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, India, in a daily newspaper recently gave an advertisement: "Get your baby delivered in the Hospital". By this advertisement the government is advocating delivery at hospitals for reasons of hygiene and safety, but in fact in rural areas, approximately 60% of deliveries are done at home by midwives because of lack of access to hospital/health centres. In Nepal, midwives are under great pressure because they have to perform abortions which are illegal.

Childbirth is a natural process, but has become medicalised and supported by pharmaceutical companies. The rage against this paradigm of childbirth has resulted in a process called "SAANJH", which means the time of dusk. Women are neither in a state of darkness nor in light. Hence with a vision to help women to walk into the bright light of knowledge SAANJH has been started. It is a parallel healing, growing, nurturing, and preserving movement, which is working towards reviving and documenting traditional knowledge. "SAANJH", focuses on documenting women's knowledge about plants and healing practices.

Experiences Regarding Appropriateness of Women's Knowledge

Philomina Vincent, AIKYA, India.

Women in India, particularly in rural areas, lack access to and knowledge of quality health care. However, India has a rich heritage of indigenous systems in

health care. Women, especially, in rural and tribal areas are healers and practitioners. To document women's knowledge about herbs "AIKYA" – a network of activists and trainers was formed and began working with indigenous and folk practitioners, especially, women healers. Its main objective was to provide new opportunities to the rural poor, tribal, landless with a special focus on women and children, towards a better quality of life. Today AIKYA has grown and become a field based training organisation involved in helping people rediscover and organise their potential to lead a better quality life.

In the process of AIKYA's involvement in SHODHINI (a project to document women's traditional knowledge) it was discovered that there are rural women who know about medicinal plants, herbal preparations and their usage in women's health. A study conducted revealed that women know about 350 varieties of medicinal plants, preparation of herbal medicine and healing process. Simple herbal remedies range from commonly used food items like garlic, gooseberry, turmeric, drumstick to commonly grown plants like tulasi, mint, drumstick leaves, etc.



Day Two : 12 September, 2001

Plenary Session: Struggling Against the Mainstream

The Chair invited speakers of the day to experiences of their organisations in relation to their effort to build alternatives for change.

South Asian Partnership, Pakistan

The South Asian Partnership has been working for 10 years with farming communities/small cultivators ensuring growth and lobbying around policies that affect their lives. Women's contribution is not recognised and they are not paid well. The problems in their area include lack of education for girls, women's lack of participation in decision making, water scarcity etc.

All Nepal Peasant Association, Nepal

Working with the people in their area, they find polygamy is decreasing. They have also tried to spread the fact that that women work as hard , or even harder than men. They also work towards saving natural resources for the future.

Proshika, Bangladesh

They have been working since 1976 in areas like training, education, shrimp cultivation etc. They have organised several women groups to work towards environmental protection. They shared the case of 'Madhupur' forest and its socio-economic condition. It is a sal forest of 1,005 thousand ha but now only 325 thousand ha is left. Proshika started work there in 1991 and has been trying to get attention to the issue of deforestation.

Mahila Samakhya, U.P and A.P., India

Mahila Samakhya means women's education for equality developed and evolved for women. It is a government program which is need based and addresses the issues of grassroots women. It also has courts for women, education programmes, health initiatives, policy advocacy programmes etc. Their strategy is to organise village women to develop analytical perspectives, negotiate, and take forward the program.

AP Mahila Samakhya

They work with women and ensure female participation in all our programmes. They feel that women need to be in the decision making body and they should be encouraged to come forward through the media of education. With a focus on decentralisation their aim is to develop leaders to be in decision making bodies.

SEACOW, Nepal

SEACOW started its work with Chepang community of Chitwan district. Working closely with the community they feel that food security is brought by increase in purchasing power, increase in exchange of goods, saving of grain, increase in grain production and conservation of livelihood resources and knowledge. They feel that the food crises resulted from increase in population and its impact on natural resources, dependence on rain water for farming, declining productivity due to soil erosion and declining productivity in slash and burn cultivation practices. They have initiated activities in production and processing of non-timber forest resources and their market management, increase in exchange of products, savings of grain and better utilisation, conservation of livelihood resources and knowledge. They also engage in income generating activities for women.

Centre for Human Development (CHD), Sri Lanka

They have formed a federation of farmers in 18 districts in Sri Lanka whose long-term objective is to generate an effective base for present and future generations to guarantee sustainable livelihoods by revitalising the use of indigenous seeds and plants and indigenous knowledge systems in agriculture. Prior to this intervention, people were facing high costs of inputs into production, elimination of small farmers from agriculture, high percentage of abandoned paddy fields, loss of livelihood, increased mother and child malnutrition and social unrest and instability. They have formed 'National Seed Farmers Federation' to continue action at the grassroots level and districts. As a result they have identified 144 traditional varieties of paddy, 307 threatened medicinal plants, 80 varieties of pulses in

farmers' fields, 52 varieties of yams, 28 varieties of cereals, 88 varieties of vegetables, 54 varieties of banana.

WOREC, Nepal.

Women Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) has been working in four districts of Nepal on issues related to health, indigenous knowledge, domestic violence etc. They have been able to establish health resource centres, mahila adalats(courts). They have also been advocating for women's health rights.

ANANDI, India.

This organisation is involved in transforming women's lives by exposure to local level government offices, introducing technology to reduce drudgery, addressing child care needs, income generation activities linked to regeneration, legal education, intra-mandal linkages, and creating linkages for networking and advocacy. This approach has led to women's increased access to resources, increased time for participation in activities, community sharing, reduced violence, building strength and solidarity, and alternative support mechanisms. The issues addressed are food security, land rights right to water, rights of single women, right over produce of common property, land lease programmes, strengthening and ensuring sustainability of women's groups.

MADE, Nepal.

They have been working in the areas of livelihood and agriculture for the past 8 years. They work with landless farmers by providing pieces of land to them and supporting them to gain self-sufficiency. They also look at the involvement of women in agriculture. Apart from agriculture the other aspects of work are health and hygiene.

AME, India.

They build local knowledge of people towards synergising with various actors in the system. The main thrust areas are capacity building of NGOs both technical and awareness, capacity building of partner organisations and people at the grassroots. AME works for sustainable development but every programme incorporates the element of gender equality. All programmes aim at methods to bring markets to women. They also conduct gender sensitization programmes within the organisation.

NECOS, Nepal.

This organisation was established in 1995 and the major thrust areas are education and training, sustainable agriculture, capacity building, NGO mobilisation. The main problems faced while working with the community are illiteracy, poverty, forced marriage and violence against women.

Afternoon Thematic Seminars

SEMINAR I

WTO AND TRADE RELATED ISSUES

Speakers: B.K. Kelyla, India, Najma Sadeque, Shirkat Gah, Pakistan.

New Patent Regime: Major Problems and Strategy

B.K. Keyla, India

The main objectives of GATT were raising the standard of living and growth of volume of real income. GATT recognised the unequal conditions of developed and developing nations. Therefore differential measures were promoted. There was flexibility in the quantitative restructuring, planning of imports, and tariff and customs duty could be designed. This kept the economy of developing countries in a safe position.

There were 7 rounds of GATT meetings on the agenda of tariff and non-tariff barriers between developed countries. In the eighth round, which is otherwise called Uruguay round held in 1986 there was an agenda which was unrelated to trade, which included - intellectual property rights, investments, services, domestic agricultural policy and dispute settlement mechanisms.

The developing nations unitedly opposed this. In 1989, developing countries were pressurised to accept the new agenda by USA. The final WTO Act emerged with about 29 agreements and no concessions were available on preferential treatment. Members were to accept the package in toto. No flexibility was available on the conditions and strict timeframe for implementation. No such conditions were imposed on the developing nations during the earlier GATT rounds. Uniform high standards were envisaged for other economic issues.

There were many concerns arising from the introduction of product patent system. Almost 70% of the products in the developing nations were covered. The role of domestic production was not given importance. The patent rights were given for a longer duration of 20 years as compared to 5-14 years given earlier. The patent laws related to production lead to monopoly. Both the process of making the products and the products themselves are covered in the patent laws.

WTO and Trade Related Issue

Najma Sadeque, Shirkat Gah, Pakistan

There are practical difficulties which are faced by women and people of Pakistan especially farmers in the agriculture sector. We should be able to question the legitimacy of WTO and patent laws. We are pushed to accept them. MNCs have become entities who have accumulated wealth of many nations. We can see a list of influences affecting the fertiliser, pharmaceutical and financial institutions through WTO. WTO wants freedom to trade with anyone. The independence obtained from

colonisation has now been lost and we have even lost the right to grow food.

The British exploited the natural resources of our nation and the final product was sold back to us. WTO also does the same and most of the resources in the developing nations have been exploited, such as cotton which is exported from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The green revolution has resulted in the loss of seeds and biodiversity and led to mono-cropping in Pakistan. We should be aware of the propaganda which is advocating biotechnology in place of organic farming. This will also affect bio-diversity in the long run.

Discussion

- Though the prices of drugs, appear to be low at the moment due to monopolisation, there is going to be continuous increase in the prices across all the countries. There is also a danger of existing medicines being produced using biotechnology, in which case these would become more expensive. May be in the next round of discussions, this problem will be dealt with although at the moment we are still talking about problems related to implementation.
- Is there an alternative to green revolution? Monocropping has led to loss of bio-diversity and these crops are favouring only the rich farmers and not the poor. The poor have become poorer because of the loss of biodiversity.
- Farm subsidies have been reduced these days in developing nations. This is in view of increasing productivity in the US in order to supply to other countries, thereby creating a situation of dependency among developing nations.

SEMINAR II

HUNGER, POVERTY AND THE STATE

Speakers: Sarbaraj Khadka, RRN, Nepal, Manmath Bhajandeo, ADHIKAR, India, Naheed Sultana, Bangladesh.

Empowerment through Access to Resources: Some Strategies for Food Security to Eradicate Poverty

Sarbaraj Khadka, RRN, Nepal.

Nepal is a land-locked mountainous poor country with a per capita income of only US\$220. About 90 percent of the population still live in rural areas. Agriculture has an important role in the economy and society. It is an important source of mass employment. 81 percent of the economically active population is employed in subsistence agriculture. The unemployment rate in Nepal is around 52 percent.

Since agriculture is the mainstay of Nepal economy, majority of people have to depend on the land resources. Food occupies a very significant role in the process of

economic development in Nepal. Production of food grain is the major source of livelihood. However, after more than four decades of planned economic development, Nepal's food grain production is falling short to feed the growing population. Nepal which was recognised as a food grain exporter during the eighties has lost its self-sufficiency in food grain production and has now become an importer.

Some of the most prominent issues and concerns around food security in the country are:

- Conventional development paradigm to ensure food security
- State policy (SAP, legal reforms, engagement in International financial institutions and WTO etc.)
- Inventions and inducement of green revolution technology (HYV, chemicals, cropping etc.)
- Population management (birth controls, resettlement etc.)
- Resource management (exploitation techniques of natural resource base etc.)
- Impact of green revolution on the poor marginalised farmers.
- Further deprivation and marginalisation of dispossessed people.
- Increased threat to food security.
- Loss of livelihood options.
- Environmental degradation.
- Promotion of technology and continuous degeneration of indigenous knowledge and traditional skills.

Access to food and food-producing resources is the fundamental principle of social justice. But the truth is that one fifth of the world's population suffer from hunger and starvation, whereas tremendous amount of surplus food is being either fed to livestock or wasted in storehouses of rich countries.

A very simple question is that if developed nations and international institutions and national ruling elites are so concerned with food insecurity, then why is food security for all not seen as a fundamental measure of development policy, a policy based on the principle of social justice? Why are development policies not within the framework of social equity, agrarian reforms, decentralisation and democratic control of food producing resources and other redistributive measures?

Hunger, Poverty and the State: Manmath Bhajandeo, ADHIKAR, India.

Out of its total population of about 100 crore, over 40 percent are estimated to be poor in India. In addition, the literacy rate (especially in case of women) is low and large portions of the population live in rural areas and are primarily involved in agriculture. The thrust of policy in India for a very long time has been to reduce poverty, particularly in rural areas. One of the strategies adopted for this has been to extend the outreach of formal financial institutions to rural areas. In addition, credit

policy mandated commercial banks to lend at least 40% of their advances to the priority sector, including 18% to agriculture.

Orissa is very rich in mineral resources, however the government is neglecting the use of these resources. In 1981, 30 percent of land was forest but now it is only 19 percent. 85 percent of roads are "kachha". Malnutrition and diseases like malaria are the main causes for people dying in the state. Today we have a situation where people are starving in Orissa while there are stocks of grains available in government – controlled godowns.

SEMINAR III

PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS AND THE STATE IN SOUTH ASIA

Speakers: Nikhil De, Narayan Singh, Sushila, MKSS, Rajasthan, India.

There was screening of a 40 minute film (produced by Jan Madhyam) that served as an introduction to the people's movement that MKSS organised and led for people's right to information in Ajmer district of Rajasthan. This movement began in 1994. The basic issues addressed by the movement are - what is happening to the money that the government is spending in our name and how do we make public officials accountable to the people?

The film provided a glimpse of the people's movement for the right to information. It captured the conflicts between the state and people's struggle for their right to information. Through this struggle people demanded their legitimate share in the affairs/power exercised by the state over their lives. It was only because this was a broad-based people's movement that such a struggle could take place. As a result of the movement several Public Hearings were held and it was found that as much as Rs. 70 lakhs was lost in one Panchayat. In the state of Rajasthan itself there are over 9000 panchayats. This gives an idea on the scale at which scams are taking place.

It was critical that the movement started and continued with the support and resources of people so that no one could stop the movement. The goal of the movement was to put pressure on the state, not to capture the state via electoral politics. The movement for the right to information originated with the movement for minimum wages. As our movement for minimum wages evolved, we started the process of gaining control over public documents, documents controlled by the government in people's name but which are never shared with the people. This is how the whole issue of right to information emerged. We began to realise that if so many fraudulent practices and scams were taking place in something as small scale as laborers' wages, how many large-scale scams must be taking place in the name of development? Since women are the ones who are not only labourers, but also raising and feeding their families, they have been centrally involved in the movement.

If we analyse people's relationship with the state historically, we will see that even in the colonial period there was a system of accountability. However, that accountability existed from a public servant to a higher officer in the hierarchy. So, there was and has been in place an efficient system of accountability. Only it needs to be turned around vis-a-vis the people. We want the public servants to be accountable to the people instead of their bosses. Our main aim, at the end, is to find the spaces, to increase the power of the people so that we can collectively diminish the illegal/unauthorised power that the state has acquired in its own hands.

MKSS derives its social and political space, strength and legitimacy from the fact that it is a people's movement and does not accept any money from the government or international donors. We are also bound by the same norms that we are trying to enforce, so we have to be prepared to give answers to people as well. When we demand accountability from others, it also means that we ourselves have to be accountable.

Discussion

- The relationship between the state and the movement is always changing and there are chances that movements such as these are labelled as anti-national. In the case of MKSS, the government could not stop the movement. But there were other issues in terms of the movement's relationship with the community. For example, there was a fatwa in the community that if anyone participates in a dharna, he will be thrown out of his caste. A jati-panchayat was held to stop individuals from participating in the dharna but these hurdles were overcome by the people's commitment to the cause.
- Women's participation in the movement did make an impact on women's relationship/position within their families. Seclusion (*Ghoonghat* and *parda*) still exists in the region, but the rural woman realises that she has to fight her own battles. The movement supports the 33% reservation scheme. However, many women have been co-opted within the system and we insist on the same standards for everyone.
- There is a law in Rajasthan and other states (including Maharashtra, Karnataka, MP, Tamil Nadu and Delhi) whereby people have the right to gain access to copies of any papers of any government department. It is a sequential process: one has to first fight for the law, then the implementation of that law, to address the weaknesses of the law, and then to bring about changes.
- The relationship between people's movements and the state is one of conflict. In every people's movement, the right to information is essential. The movement challenges the paradigm of development, it gives people the power to define what development ought to be and also to challenge what they do not believe to be "development."

SEMINAR IV

BIOTECHNOLOGIES: NEW WEAPONS IN AN OLD WAR

Speaker: Devender Sharma, India.

Biotechnology research has gone now into private hands and the main aim is 'profit security' rather than 'food security'. Highly populated countries like India and China generate statistics on the population of hunger to present biotechnology as the only way to solve food crises. If countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh solve the hunger problem, 48% of world's food problem would be solved. If the surplus food grains, which are otherwise being eaten away by rodents, could reach the poor there would be no need to sell biotechnology.

There are many changes in global agriculture systems. For example in India, where land holding size has gone down but the number of farmers has gone up vs. USA where the scene is reverse - only 0.5%-2% population are dependent on agriculture.

There is great diversity in India regarding varieties. India has 45,000 species of plants. Donors are making efforts to document traditional knowledge. They are funding local consultants to record it and hand it over to them. This leads to more patents, for example 1000 patents on *aloevera* plant which has medicinal properties to cure dry eyes. This plant has been mentioned in our *charaka samhita* and in olden days people used to wash and crush the leaves and put the solution in their eyes for curing the dryness of their eyes. Now the same has been patented by a US firm with minimum cosmetic changes. It is very significant that 48% of the 4,000 patents registered in the US are based on Indian plant remedies.

Incorrect information is being deliberately propagated. For example Bt Corn was force-fed to mice who eventually died but this data was suppressed. Bt cotton is genetically modified cotton with a gene from a bacteria. In another example in 1986-87, the Indonesian rice crop was destroyed by an insect called 'brown plant hopper'. This insect devastated the crop and there was no chemical control available. President Suharto called for help and scientists from FAO as well as IRRI suggested a ban on the use of pesticides on rice. In one go he banned 57 pesticides on rice and the crops were saved. Two years later, rice production went up by 18 percent and consumption of pesticides came down by 65 percent. This is the model which we should adopt for cotton in India. If we were to ban the pesticides on cotton, the predators which are the natural enemies of bollworm insect would proliferate and they would take care of the pest.

Kalahandi, an area in Orissa, India, is famous for its hunger and starvation. Interestingly enough, Kalahandi is the biggest contributor of surplus rice to the central kitty or to the Food Corporation of India. People who produce that rice, who labour to produce that rice, cannot buy that rice and therefore die of hunger, starvation.

We are increasingly getting into a paradigm, which actually takes us away from the ground realities and therefore in the years to come, we will see more and more

people succumbing to hunger in India. Biotechnology, which is being pushed in the name of hunger will actually create more hunger. It is therefore important for all of us to question and raise our voices. We should be aware that more and more people are dying today by producing more rather than by producing less.

Discussion

- Often documentation of traditional knowledge is done for use within one's own country, without the realisation that other countries are giving funds for obtaining this information and securing patent rights.
- The need to raise levels of food production to meet the needs of a growing population in South Asia was discussed, and it was suggested that a blindly antagonistic approach to biotechnology was not appropriate. Several participants cited statistics to show that the framework and methodology of studies on agricultural production were flawed by the scientists' own assumptions. As a matter of fact, there is a growing body of data to support the view that organic agriculture on small holdings has a higher and more sustainable level of productivity than genetically modified varieties.
- The nexus between the scientific community and the biotech corporations is a major factor influencing the present policy shift in favour of biotechnology solutions to the perceived "problem" of artificially-created food shortages. Biotech corporations are among the largest funders of scientific research and are able to influence agenda-setting and discussions on research priorities at the highest levels. The agricultural research establishment in India, for example, is increasingly accessing funds from agri-business corporations for research on issues (such as increasing the shelf-life of fruits and vegetables) that are immaterial to the problem of hunger in India, but of great value to agri-business and large exporters.
- The issue of "food security" is itself being presented in a manner that foregrounds the "right to eat food" rather than the "right to grow food". This is a typical top-down solution that has the potential to undermine the land struggles of farmers and peasants. Several countries in crisis have succumbed to pressures from donors and are giving contracts to agri-business corporations to meet the food needs of the country. these arrangements will continue even after the present crisis is over, and will then become a rationale for backtracking on land reform and cutting off public investments in agriculture.





Day Three: 13 September, 2001

PLENARY SESSION: PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR A NEW PARADIGM

This session focussed on the struggle of people's movements for new development paradigms. The current mainstream paradigms of development are top-down, in collaboration with multi-lateral agencies, transnational companies and the elites from various countries. Contrary to this our paradigms strive to be pro-people, pro-nature and are not profit-oriented. Small NGOs therefore are not enough for this task: we need to align with and support larger movements that are fighting for new pro-people paradigms.

The Movement for Land Rights, Nepal.

The movement is a popular and important movement in the history of Nepal. Since the movement began, more than 30-40,000 people have been freed from bonded labour. After they were freed, the struggle against landowners began. Support from other organisations was readily forthcoming. The government has promised to give them land now. Many organisations are collecting funds in the name of bonded labourers, including political parties. Their main slogan is 'land to the tiller'.

Beej Bachao Andolan, India.

This is a non-funded agricultural movement as well as a political movement. It is based on the belief that the seed is a symbol against the colonisation of knowledge. The Andolan is active in Uttaranchal and works with the main objective of saving seeds that have disappeared after the Green Revolution. Before 1960 there were more than 3000 varieties of rice grown in India. Now there are only 305 varieties left. With many years of work they have now an inventory of 305 seeds and 30 varieties of wheat. Development takes time to reach the hills, so it has been spared the ill effects of the green revolution, relatively speaking. They have tried to reactivate the use of these varieties of seeds by distributing seeds amongst farmers. From Arcot to Asol in Uttaranchal we have had a *padayatra* (march) and have tried to spread awareness about seeds. They have also collectively grown and distributed different varieties of seeds and are against the colonising of seeds. They believe that seeds must remain in the control of farmers. The poorer countries have been the richest in terms of seed diversity. Agriculture has now become an industry. Cash cropping has led to destruction. Traditional crops benefit human beings, animals and the earth.

Kantha Shakti, Sri Lanka.

Kantha Shakti is a part of the women's movement in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lanka neo-liberal economic policies were introduced in the 1970s, which has caused many problems. The solution to the 20-year-old civil war is

nowhere in sight. There is discrimination against women. Political crimes abound in Sri Lanka and women suffer because of that. Of the many organisations that exist in Sri Lanka are the Women's NGO Forum, Mothers and Daughters Front, Jaffna Mother's Front, Muslim women's organisations. Women are subordinated and marginalised in the political decision making process.

Kantha Shakti's campaigns are against anti-people policies and programmes at all levels. We work with village women. Most farmers are women, but women's agricultural inputs are not accounted for. Due to the efforts of the women's groups this has become visible.

Boti Majhi Kalyan Samiti, Nepal.

This is a movement for people's control over natural resources. The fisherfolk community is waging a struggle against regulation over use of natural resources. Fishing is not allowed in the National Park and this has affected livelihoods. There has been significant land alienation in the area. The fisherfolk have thus started a movement for use of resources. They believe that the National Park is important, but it should not restrict use over resources.

Bangladeshi Group Presentation.

The women's movement in Bangladesh has a rich history. Women played an active role in the Liberation War of 1971. However, after the war women were not considered as freedom fighters. The Bangladesh Mahila Parishad was a network formed by all women's organisations in the country. The NGO movement initiated different programmes related to education and agriculture. Religious fundamentalism has created a problem. Strong alliances began with movements as well as NGOs joining in the campaign against religious fundamentalism which is anti-women. As a result of this joint struggle they have had one major achievement which came in the form of a High Court directive prohibiting the use of fatwas.

The empowerment of women is also a political movement with women's activists unitedly trying to have direct election to the Parliament. In 1997 there were direct election in local bodies and with it, 30,000 women have been elected in local bodies.

There is a strong movement called the 'Forum for Regenerating Agriculture.' After the 60s, when the Green Revolution was underway, nobody understood the consequences of the use of fertilizers. But soon fish flow declined, land productivity decreased, hazards to human and animal health increased. A movement against the group of pesticides called the 'Dirty Dozen' was initiated. More than 200 organisations participated. Another movement called the 'Naya Krishi' movement was initiated. 3000 women and men were part of this movement to practice environment-friendly agriculture.

Shirkat Gah and the Garib Kisan Tehrik, Pakistan.

The main issues linked to natural resources in Pakistan are: corporatisation of agriculture, GM seeds that have been allowed to come in, and

marginalisation of women farmers from agriculture. Linkages have had to be formed to fight these issues. Privatisation of water is another issue.

Garib Kisan Tehrik in Pakistan is working with small farmers. Women's mobility is under constant restriction. When they announced 33% reservation for women in local bodies, people asked, where are the women? Now, after elections, 32,000 women will be sitting in local bodies.

Women's Foundation of Nepal.

Women's Foundation of Nepal was formed in 1988. The issues confronting it were how to change the law for greater justice for women. A Property Rights Bill has been passed: it does not recognise joint ownership of property. 58 organisations have come together to lobby against this. Social customs in Nepal discriminate against women. Witch-hunting and alcoholism are other issues that oppress women.

Gorakhpur Environment Action Group, India.

There is a need for people's control over natural resources. In Uttar Pradesh, in the post-green revolution phase, small and marginal farmers were most badly affected and now by the new dimensions that are emerging from globalisation. One and a half years back, small and marginal farmers got together in UP to start a rights-based movement for the first time. Land rights and land management are key issues. Control and joint ownership of agricultural resources, sustainability of agriculture (as opposed to sustainability of production) should be emphasised. Within the rights framework, support price and access of small and marginal farmers need to be looked into.

Farmers and 79 NGOs work together in this unique movement. Small and marginal units are economically and environmentally viable. An Agricultural policy has been formulated in UP for the first time because of pressure from grassroots movements. Issues of sustainability are being taken up by government programmes, and though they have their limitations, it signifies a beginning. For the first time people are demanding compensation for flood instead of relief.

Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghathan, India.

The area they work in is hilly, with people usually having small landholdings and drought is endemic. The main issue here is unemployment. The organisation decided to address this need for employment through a campaign for right to information. The local government bodies went on strike as a result of this sustained pressure from the people. Both women and men are part of the organisation. It is a non-funded organisation. People get grain when they come for demonstrations or meetings. The organisation is independent of the government. They raise resources through people and other supporters. The idea is that the campaign should spread to the rest of the country.

Their effort is to keep control over the state, not vice versa. The question of accountability around development funding is key to the campaign for the right to information. Public hearings are held and panchayat records are

examined by the people. Another strategy is to set up grocery shops, where only part of the profit will be taken. This had an impact on local markets, in terms of keeping prices down.

Pani Bachao Andolan and Jungle Zameen Andolan, India

Rajasthan is a drought-prone region and the state has consistently failed to provide water. The aim of the Andolan was to build tanks for water storage and both women and men would have to contribute towards constructing them. Initially there was resistance, but women soon gathered in hundreds. There have been three years of drought in Rajasthan and 3000 tanks have been built which have been filled with water since the monsoons.

Women who never stepped out of the house now make demands of the Panchayat and self help groups have also been formed.

Aastha, India.

South Rajasthan is a tribal area. For generations tribal people have lived off the resources in the area. They are dependent on resources from the forests which have been depleted. The state has been unresponsive to people's needs. The only land that is now available for development or industrialisation is adivasi land. A cement factory was to come up in the area, on the adivasi land. The people got together to struggle against this and drove them out.

Some of the issues in the area are: sexual violence against women, adolescent girls and widows, women's health, police and government atrocities and corruption.

Afternoon Thematic Seminars

SEMINAR I

DEVELOPMENT DISPLACEMENT AND MIGRATION

Speaker: Bina Srinivasan, India.

In the South Asian context, the effort to modernise has been characterised by centralised development paradigms. Hydro-electric projects, power plants, canals, mines, nuclear plants, industrialisation have been the hallmarks of development. However, the benefits of this development have been uneven and not accrued uniformly across all sections of society.

Apart from large-scale depletion of natural resources, haphazard planning, hazardous technologies which have had its impacts on the lives and livelihoods of women in particular, development is often accompanied by direct displacement. Deforestation to feed the ever increasing needs of industrialisation, lack of employment because of land alienation and fragmentation of land in rural areas, siphoning off of resources to urban centres, migration to urban areas are some of the indirect ways in which displacement has occurred. Whether direct or indirect, displacement is an

integral part of the current development paradigm.

Studies indicate that the communities so displaced usually belong to socially, economically and politically marginalised communities. These communities are economically and socially vulnerable. Further, displacement has manifold impacts on these marginalised communities. It has had negative implications for traditional livelihood systems, kinship support structures, cultural and social identities, it plunges communities into a crisis that they are not equipped to deal with as they are forced to operate in alien social and economic contexts and it often impairs the ability of communities to regenerate internal and external resources in order to maintain a certain minimum cohesion. The loss of resources traditionally accessible to them and absence of other resources leads to impoverishment as their own coping mechanisms are often inadequate to deal with changed economic contexts, for example, the switch over from subsistence agriculture to commercial cropping.

Some of the documented effects of displacement on women are:

- increased drudgery due to scarcity of fuel, fodder and water.
- social isolation due to fragmentation of community support structures.
- loss of security due to alteration in support mechanisms.
- increased sexual vulnerabilities, and
- reduced access to health care and economic mobility leading to further loss of status and autonomy.

As marginalised entities within the marginalised communities which suffer re-settlement, women's experiences are rarely documented or recognized. National and international policies have tried to mitigate the negative impacts of displacement on communities; however, they reinforce the invisibility of women's realities and demonstrate a lack of deeper understanding of women's positions within the social, cultural and economic matrix of communities.

Wherever there has been oppression there has been resistance. Women have always participated in struggles against displacement. Even as they participate in large numbers, their role in struggles and movements continue to be marginalised in terms of decision-making. Struggles against displacement often do not take women's issues as serious issues: instances of sexual harassment, rape within and outside the movements, rape as state repression, unequal division of labour, sexist attitudes and so on continue to be part of women's experiences in movements. There is often, no scope for women to express these issues as the leadership is often too caught up in the other dimensions of struggle.

These are some of the issues that have emerged in the context of development, displacement and women. It is important to try and deepen our understanding of how they manifest in our lives and how resistance to policies and paradigms that continue to uproot women can make a difference.

Discussion

- It is a fact that women are moving today, on their own and with their families, for the sake of livelihood. With the feminisation of poverty and of migration, women's migration has increasingly become a prominent feature of globalisation. The debate in the South Asian context on women and migration has tended to focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation. While this is a serious problem, the debate should not be limited to this aspect alone – there is a wide spectrum of sites and circumstances of work to which women are migrating. Also the State looks at women as victims who must be protected from trafficking; but such protection often becomes a tool for the violation of women's rights.
- In the case of internal migration and displacement, often a migrant is seen as an 'outsider' and constitutes the marginalised in the urban area. Rights of access to health, sanitation, water, education etc. are violated – these are every citizen's rights. The notion of citizenship is a double-edged sword, and where it can implicate some in one situation, it can be invoked to address these violations.
- Dams being built in India lead to displacement along the Nepal border. When the dams are opened, fields are flooded and in many cases storage spaces and rice grains get washed away. This creates a lot of suffering and is a dominant crisis in Nepal, and causes tension in relations between the two countries.
- Part of the only original forest of the Indo Gangetic plains is in Chitwan, Nepal. Since the government took it over as a national park, it has displaced thousands of people, both tribal and non tribal. The rivers are in an area taken over by the government. The tribal communities were fisher folk and the non-tribals worked on land. These communities lived off the resources in this forest, and have been increasingly impoverished and displaced since the creation of this national park. In other places where highways are being built people have been displaced.

SEMINAR II

TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS: IMPACT OF STATE POLICIES

Speakers: Nalini Nayak, SEWA, India. Amita Shah, GIDR, India

Traditional livelihood in Fisheries

Nalini Nayak, SEWA, India

Fishery is more sustainable than other traditional livelihoods. In marine fisheries, 60 percent fish is concentrated in narrow 50m deep belt along the shore. They can be reached with small craft/gear. Even large fish come inshore some times. These fish are accessible to small coastal communities. In fishing communities men go out to sea to catch fish, while women are involved in the process of changing fish to money. Women preserve, conserve and market fish by adopting small technologies based on their own ideas and skills. The entire trade is based on renewable resources (viz. sail boats, sun drying, wooden boats etc). Fishery is more of an open

access system where the communities adopt a policy of "catch for your own need". Now the marketing network is also reaching interior areas.

Some of the government policies like "blue revolution" increased the fish and shrimp catch for export. Trawler nets were imported from Norway. However, it was inappropriate in case of shrimp as it breeds inshore. Also since a specialised technology was adopted to catch a single species it resulted in exhaustion of the species in less than 10 years. When shrimp was exhausted trawlers started catching other species and they were sold much cheaper than traditional artisanal fish.

The first campaign by women was opposing the ban on carrying fish in public buses. When women were given separate buses for this purpose and asked to run it themselves, they refused and demanded that the state government look into the matter. Later transport for women became part of the welfare package. The issue of penetration by trawlers into inshore fisheries began as a movement by fish workers of Goa and Kerala and it led to a ban on inshore trawler fishing in monsoon after 8 years. This came to be called the "marine regulation". The movement produced data to show that traditional fisheries were more productive than the trawler industry.

State Policies on Natural Resources

Amita Shah, GIDR, India

So far there has been no integrated policy on natural resources. The programmes/policies are sector specific, they are user-oriented rather than regeneration oriented. There have been new institutions for participatory resource use like JFM, PIM, WDP for forests and also in irrigation and watershed programmes. There are a lot of missing links in the watershed development programmes like addressing the strategic role of women, regeneration of community participatory resources, agronomic practices, mobilisation of local resources and other such issues. Thus, there is a need to strengthen sustainable resource use, e.g., water, equity, economic viability and cross subsidy, local institutions and economic benefits to local communities.

Discussion

- Common property resources are neglected by policy makers because they meet the interests and needs of the poor and not landed farmers. The government wasteland policies are aimed at misappropriation of CPR.
- There has been a decline in the number of women making fishing nets following an increase in the import of nets.
- Pakistani farmers feel that PRA is designed for big farmers and excludes women completely.
- Watershed approach was a donor promoted strategy, and has led to erosion of traditional ecologies. PRA is false in most cases and women's knowledge is mostly misappropriated.
- The state policies main interest has been to sideline the real issue of inequitable land holding structure - instruments like land and tenancy act are untouched in policy/programme documents.

SEMINAR III

LINKING THEORY AND PRACTICE

Speakers: Sara Ahmed, IRMA, India. Nandini Prasad, Mahila Samakhya, Andhra Pradesh, India. Kusum Rawat, Mahila Samakhya, Garhwal (Uttaranchal) India. Jahnvi Andharia, ANANDI, India

Gender: An Institutional Concern

Sara Ahmed, IRMA

Work on organisations in the West had, for a long time, remained gender blind and women's issues were seen as private issues. The work of feminist sociologists as well as that of development feminists and development researchers in the last two decades has shown that organisations are gendered institutions. This implies that concerns need to be addressed internally within organisations. The concerns within organisations have to be, therefore, focused on capacity building in ways that place the questions of gender inequality and equity at the center. This needs to happen internally and also through a focus on gender impacted development outcomes and gender policies. There are various frameworks that focus on the mainstreaming of gender concerns:

- Analytical Framework.
- Substantive level - Reaching a shared vision, Laws, Organisational policies.
- Structural level - words into action, procedures, regulations, activities.
- Cultural level - hearts as well as minds, beliefs, attitudes, values.

It is important to address these different levels, while organisations often may address only one or two levels.

Issues of Food Security and Livelihood in Reality

Nandini Prasad, Mahila Samkhya, A.P., India

Mahila Samakhya, a programme for women's empowerment in India, regards the empowerment of women as critical precondition for their participation in the education process. Education in the MS has to be linked to literacy to develop women's ability to think critically and as fostering decision making and action through collective processes. The interrelatedness of different aspects of gender concerns is at the heart of how MS has developed its approach to women's empowerment. They include health, education, natural resources, governance, social and gender issues such as untouchability, child marriage, child labour, jogini initiation, minimum wages, violence within and outside the family.

The emergence of women in agriculture in MS, Andhra Pradesh was a result of several factors and processes, including:

- demands for loans and income generation schemes in the face of spiralling webs of poverty, debt, exploitation and bondage.
- critique of existing economic programs among women and search for alternative, sustainable livelihoods.

- a critical awareness among women of their lack of access to credit and ownership of lands.
- initiation of land-lease, nurseries, vegetable gardening etc. on pilot basis.
- spate of cotton farmers' suicides and deaths of adolescent girls in the project area that led to discussions on shifting agricultural practices.
- decentralisation as prerequisite for power in women's hands.

Discussions on agricultural practices revealed many shifts in the last few decades, including a shift in the crops that were produced. The priorities for crops reveal a move from sustenance driven to market driven food crops, and from sustainable to non-sustainable cropping patterns. These changes have gone hand in hand with:

- a gradual disappearance of traditional grain storage practices.
- shift from organic farming to increased use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides.
- replacement of 'friendly' pests by dangerous pests.
- move from low-input and high-output to high-input and low output.

Accordingly, the key goals of Samatha Dharani (Sustainable dryland agriculture with Mahila Sanghams in AP) were to enable women to:

- exploit the productive potential of rainfed drylands.
- achieve household food security while conserving and regenerating the natural resource base and.
- gain access to productive resources and information technology.

The various components and activities of this program included:

- collective farming of fallow, government-owned, and private lands by women's collectives and growing of food crops.
- land lease/ownership by women's collectives and reclamation of lands.
- setting up of grain and seed banks, and promotion of organic manure and farming (vermicompost and bio-fertilizers like neem).
- efforts to develop decentralised marketing systems, diversified farming systems and strengthening access of women to alternative and sustainable energy systems.
- support women's collectives to get farm equipment, crop inputs, and risk coverage, and access to informal credit training, extension services in dry-land agriculture and information technology through setting up of mandal information centers.

Issues of Food Security and Livelihood in Reality

Kusum Rawat, Mahila Samakhya, U.P., India.

In Tehri-Garhwal, Mahila Samakhya has had many accomplishments in linking food security and women's empowerment. By building on women's practices and knowledge at the grassroots level, traditional knowledge systems of farming communities are being revived and reinstalled.

Our goal has been to give women the status of the farmer, and to bring about food security in our own fields, not in fair price shops. By promoting collective farming, we have tried to create a space for negotiation. We have used our literacy primers (Hamari Pothi) to revive and celebrate traditional (and women-centred) understandings about farming and seeds, and the consequences of globalisation on agriculture and lives of people.

We have collaborated with the Beej Bachao Andolan and succeeded in changing many dominant patriarchal attitudes. Many men came forward to help the women in household/domestic chores, in raising children and taking care of the animals. There were also instances where upper caste people gave their land to the Harijans. These developments have given us the confidence that we are in a position to do community oriented work that goes beyond empowering only women but address all marginalised groups.

Mahila Samakhya, A.P. and U.P.

At the same time, there are also certain dilemmas and contradictions. Our biggest dilemmas have emerged from the involvement of several different kinds of actors at different levels. Our funding came from UNDP, our trainers came from the government, scientists came from professional fields and the people with whom we worked were in our villages. It was difficult to negotiate the conflicting agendas and interests of all these actors within Mahila Samakhya. But we have tried to communicate to the non-local experts that we don't want their training, just money and services. Another set of challenges emerges from the control of cash by men - this leads to gender-based conflicts when we are trying to recover seeds of non-cash crops.

Women's Participation in Natural Resource Management

Jahnvi, ANANDI, India.

The research study which we undertook focused on the ways that women, particularly poor women, prioritise their concerns and negotiate these with other groups within the community. Our research focussed on:

- women's participation in natural resource management.
- the impact of women's participation on gender relations and.
- the organizational mechanisms used to enable women to achieve their goals.

The organisations chosen included two which worked only with women (Kachh Mahila Vikas Sangathan and Deccan Development Society), two which worked with women and men (Aragami and Aga Khan Rural Support Program) and one that worked with Dalit women (Khudawadi).

How do these organisations address the interconnected questions/agendas of equity, sustainable livelihoods, complementing knowledge base and social transformation? To understand, assess and evaluate this we focussed on strategies at the

organisation level and the field level.

At the organisational level, we have to consider two dimensions - engendering organisations and gender-awareness planning.

Engendering organisations involves:

- . Innovative collaborations
- . Gender sensitive leadership
- . Gender sensitisation training
- . Bringing gender balance in staff
- . Allocation of human and financial resources to address gender concerns
- . Developing a safe and secure organisational environment

Gender awareness planning involves:

- . Gender analysis within the organisations
- . Enabling negotiation
- . Changing program thrusts
- . Monitoring and Evaluation

Field level strategies involve:

- . Enabling and legitimising women's participation in Natural Resource Management.
- . Participation of older and more experienced women in initial stages.
- . Lateral learning processes.
- . Developing entry points for women's involvement and,
- . Creation of separate forums for women and men.

Discussion

- . In Garhwal and in Pakistan grassroot workers have experienced how deeply ingrained social and familial attitudes affect women's positions in the organisations, and their struggles in the private and public realms.
- . Gender awareness at the community level proves to be a lot easier than implementing these changes within the organization. Organisations have both formal and informal communication systems and both have to be addressed in order to create a gender sensitive environment within the organisation.

SEMINAR IV

POLITICS OF TRAFFICKING AND SEX WORK

Speakers: Natasha Ahmad, Independent Researcher, Bangladesh, Dr. Jyoti Sanghera, GAATW and CFLR India, Reshmi Ghosh, DMSC, India

In Search of Dreams:

Study on the Situation of the Trafficked Women & Children from Bangladesh and Nepal-

Natasha Ahmed, Bangladesh

During the course of the study it was found out that for every trafficked person there were hundreds of people who have migrated to India illegally and are subjected to human rights' violation and live in constant fear. The study therefore, broadened its sphere by including the undocumented migrants smuggled into India from Bangladesh. Some of the objectives of the study were:

- to study trafficking in women and children with a view to see how people from Nepal and Bangladesh are trafficked to India, what they do after their arrival, their present situation and future plans,
- to investigate into the socio-economic background of these people,
- the circumstances under which people decide to leave their country of birth and move to an unknown place and,
- to understand the pull and push factors and also the reasons why these migrants continue to live in India.

Reasons Behind Trafficking:

- Main reason for trafficking or illegal migration (among men and women) is poverty and lack of opportunities.
- Socio-political situation or the decision to migrate is also responsible for trafficking.
- Pressure on young girls in Bangladesh to get married also leads them to being trafficked.
- Divorced or widowed women also have limited options to live their own life.

Migration for a better life is a common phenomenon world wide, some are doing it legally and some illegally. People from Bangladesh living in India without any legal status are termed as illegal foreign nationals. India is a vast country and it has a lot of illegal foreign nationals from neighboring countries viz. Afghanistan, Myanmar, Iran, Tibet, who have been given 'refugee status.' Having legal status as refugees ensures they are not harassed by the law enforcing agencies nor asked to leave the country.

However, while conducting this study we found hundreds of Bangladeshi migrants living in constant fear. As illegal foreign nationals some had experienced brutal behavior from law enforcing agencies, some had been arrested and were in the

lock-ups, and no one was allowed to visit them.

Unfortunately, in the name of illegal migrants from Bangladesh, Bangla speaking Indian Muslims have often become victims of certain political parties/law enforcing agencies whose aims and objectives are communal. It is important for the countries concerned to create conditions through co-operation and a spirit of accommodation to enable the people - trafficked and/or undocumented migrants to return to the country of origin voluntarily and with dignity.

It is apparent that an organised network is actively engaged on both sides of the border – the network that exists operates for both trafficked or illegal migrants. The way money changes hands - often openly, from respondents to *dalals* to law enforcing personnel to other third party actors, transporting/smuggling people across borders evidently is a lucrative business. Women who are actually trafficked deserve separate treatment from migrants. It is also true that the situation for both the groups, trafficked and undocumented migrants are intertwined and their problems have often to be addressed simultaneously.

Conceptual Clarity on Trafficking

Jyoti Sanghera, India

Trafficking is both a very complex and a very simple issue. We need to differentiate between trafficking and migration and between trafficking and prostitution in order to get a clearer understanding of what is exactly entailed in trafficking. The fact that the distinctions between these concepts are collapsed implies a certain political understanding. The theme of this seminar is globalisation and we need to examine its impact on women and communities.

One of the most important challenges facing the world today is how to deal with migration and immigration. There are no proactive, pro-people policies to deal with this and the only response has been towards stopping movement. This is a problematic position when there are so many people who want to move for a variety of reasons. Lack of food security and sustainable livelihoods are some of the reasons but there are many other reasons which propel men and women to move.

In this context of increased migration and increasing curtailment, why is there such a concern with trafficking today? It is an attempt to stop migration, to come up with legislation to stop the migration of certain kinds of people. Thus at the international level, the trafficking debates are focused on preventing free migration or immigration and at the national level, the debates have focused on prostitution.

As liberal, democratic minded people we need to question our responses to trafficking – millions of dollars have been sunk into anti – trafficking work and today there are many new NGO's working on the issue and many new laws being

contemplated in different countries. And yet in South Asia, nobody knows how many people have been trafficked. When men move, it is migration and when women do, it is trafficking. They are once again being seen as only victims. Internationally the language of violence has been co-opted and women are seen as needing protection.

Trafficking, by definition, is certainly a form of violence and abuse – a harm that people face in the process of migration. Sometimes they are forced into certain sites of work and held there under coercion or slavery-like conditions. But the question we need to ask is should we stop migration or should we work towards safety in the process of movement. Forced prostitution certainly should be stopped and women who want to leave should be given the options, but beyond that we must work towards protecting rights.

There are new anti- trafficking laws that are going to be passed which are seeking to criminalize prostitution. There are several women's groups who have also taken up this position and asked for more stringent laws and punishment. But more stringent punishment often only results in less conviction.

DMSC Perspectives on Trafficking and Sex Work

Reshmi Ghosh, DMSC, India.

There are several reasons for increased trafficking - increasingly stringent anti-immigration laws and lack of access to information. Trafficking is a violation of fundamental rights. But this must be distinguished from sex work between consenting adults. In order to be legitimate, sex work has to get rid of all abuses. We feel that collectivising and organising of sex workers is the best strategy to monitor and prevent trafficking. They are in a position to find out whether any new girls have entered the trade much easier than social workers and police. DMSC has established three self-regulatory boards which is made up of 60% sex workers and 40% others such as lawyers, social workers and other professionals. The aim of these boards is to prevent the exploitation and violation of human rights in the profession.

Discussion

- How do we address the question of the choice to do sex work and what alternatives are there for women to leave the profession? We need to address the issue of choice in a larger perspective – what kinds of choices are available to women in general? Do we have a choice not to get married? If we look at the institution of marriage, there are many women who continue in a relationship in which they are not happy. But we do not speak about abolition of marriage. We have an analysis of marriage as a patriarchal institution and at the same time seek to protect women's rights within the institution.
- At this point, prostitution is not a criminal activity, but all the activities

surrounding it are - and thus prostitution itself tends to be regarded as a criminal activity. But during a raid, it is not the pimp, madam or clients who are picked up. If we look at decriminalising this, it would entail recognition of sex work as work - that they are in the market providing a service. All aspects of prostitution would then be removed from the purview of criminal activity. Legalisation on the other hand would also entail regulating the activity and would in effect, increase state control over the lives and work of sex workers.

- It is sometimes said that decriminalising or legitimising would lead to more women entering the profession. But in countries where decriminalisation has taken place, the numbers of women entering the profession has not gone up. It is easier for women to report abuse and violence when their activities are not seen as criminal.
- The issue of stigma has to be addressed by the whole society. It is the responsibility of society and not the individual, as these are all things created by society. It is important to make sure that rights are not violated. When a fundamental right becomes a privilege of a few, it is no longer a right.
- There is need to analyse debates on trafficking because it is such a loud debate today and there is tremendous polarisation. The debate is only allowing two possible positions for women - either as a victim of trafficking or as a criminal who is an illegal migrant.



Day Four: 14 - September, 2001

CONCLUDING SESSION

In the last session Kamla Bhasin made the concluding remarks and said, " this has been a very successful conference because of the number and diversity of organisations who have participated - 90 organisations are present here from five countries of South Asia. Men and women from grassroots organisations, NGOs and movements are here. We have all learnt a lot from each other. This has been a joint effort from the beginning. We believe that the women and men present here will take this work forward. The biggest challenge before us, Kamla said, is to take forward human values.

Violence will stop only when inequalities end. Let us build on what has happened over the last few days and move ahead. Let us go back to our country groups and decide how to go ahead."

SANGAT stands for togetherness, it is a dream, an aspiration. SANGAT was formed 5 years back in Bangladesh in a village. 25 women and men trainers from South Asia came together and created this network. Six months later we wanted to include activists too. Four South Asian conferences have been held before this, and this is the largest conference so far. The SANGAT Secretariat was first in Pakistan. Now it is in Delhi with JAGORI. It has been decided here that the Secretariat would move to Bangladesh in March 2002.

To summarise their concern and commitment, participants at the Conference issued a declaration which was given to the press and shared with all the participating organisations.



Final Declaration

We, 240 women and men activists representing 80 women's organisations, people's movements and NGOs, have come together in Kathmandu to reaffirm our solidarity and reassert our determination to continue our struggles against the unjust, inequitable and unsustainable development processes being imposed on us by vested interests.

We challenge the dominance of the market over all fields of human life and endeavor.

We reject development paradigms that are premised on the control and exploitation of the lives, labour and resources of the many by the few.

We condemn all forms of violence, whatever the cause that inspires them and regardless of whether perpetrated by men on women, countries on each other or by human beings on nature.

We oppose all forms of armed conflict and the legitimisation of military force as a mechanism for the resolution of disputes between and within countries and communities.

We assert our right to choose our own way of life and work, and to resist the displacement and takeover of our homes and habitats in the name of a mythical "larger public good."

We reiterate our faith in the strength and capacity of the women and men of South Asia to determine the course of their own development and take charge of their own future.

WE WANT:

♀ An immediate embargo on any further rounds of negotiations under the WTO regime, in view of its disastrous impacts on the majority of the global population, and a complete restructuring of global trade frameworks to protect the interests of developing countries.

♀ A commitment from our governments and international bodies that the provisioning of basic human needs such as food, water, health and education shall not be left to the unscrupulous mercies of the market, and will continue to be seen as public goods and human rights of all citizens.

♀ Immediate action to stop biopiracy and the plundering of people's knowledge and national resources, by debarring global corporate interests from gaining access to or encroaching on them.

♀ Protection of people's rights (particularly the rights of poor and marginalized groups) over land, water, forests and other natural resources, so that they are not tampered with or undermined on the pretext of economic liberalisation.

- ♀ Decentralised and community-controlled mechanisms for conservation of biological resources including seeds, medicinal plants, animals and micro-organisms.
- ♀ A halt to militarisation, immediate action to declare South Asia a nuclear-free zone and redirection of military expenditure into sectors of human development.
- ♀ Realisation of people's right to information, and transparency and accountability in processes of economic decision-making and policy formulation at all levels, with space and time for broad-based consultations and for people (particularly marginalised and powerless groups) to exercise their veto power.
- ♀ A people's review of the impacts of emerging biotechnologies, and strong action to prevent their unregulated exploitation and abuse.

WE PLEDGE

- ♀ To continue and expand our search for people-centred, equitable, gender-just and environmentally sustainable ways of life and work.
- ♀ To respect, nurture and build on the rich diversity of nature, culture and knowledge systems in our region, and to infuse them with the feminist values of equality, peace and collaboration.
- ♀ To shun violence of all kinds in our homes, organisations and communities, and to strive for dignity and equality in all our private and public relationships.
- ♀ To strengthen democratic values and ways of functioning within our families, communities, workplaces and social movements.
- ♀ To take a firm stand against communalism, religious fundamentalism and any other ideologies that pose a threat to the rights, identities and security of one or other group of people.
- ♀ To support processes that give voice and agency to women, Dalits, indigenous people and all other oppressed and marginalized groups who have so far been denied their rights to speak or act for themselves.
- ♀ To protect and promote the rights and interests of those who have been made invisible and who are denied their identity, like unrecorded migrants, bonded workers, women who have been imprisoned without cause or under fabricated cases, and women and children in refugee camps.

AND

♀ To simplify our own lifestyles - to bring down our use of resources and levels of consumption to ecologically sustainable levels, and to adopt equality, non-violence and respect for nature as core values to be practised in our personal lives.

We are determined to take forward the process initiated at Kathmandu – to strengthen our network and to work together to develop and implement a new paradigm of people-centred development that will bring peace, equality and prosperity to South Asia.

To sustain the unity we have forged, we must meet more often than we do at present. We will therefore bring pressure on our governments to ease the restrictions on inter-country travel in South Asia, not just for trade and diplomacy, but for FRIENDSHIP.



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