



GLOBAL COOPERATION NOVEMBER 2005

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South Asia Partnership

The South Asia Partnership International (SAP-I) has been active for more than twenty years. In recent times, SAP-I has been seeking to influence the agenda of the meetings of governments in the region. The governments of South Asia including Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka meet as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation – SAARC. SAP-I consists of national organisations from the SAARC countries.

The agenda setting for SAP-I occurs at People's Summits which have been held each year since 2001. Very wisely, SAP-I has concentrated on a limited number of issues. These are

1. Reduction of disasters in South Asian Nations
2. Trafficking and human security
3. Social security
4. Governance and democracy
5. Peace and militarization

The process of conveying the views of the People's Summits has been an exasperating process for the leaders of SAP-I. On two occasions when the SAP-I has met the SAARC Summit has been cancelled. The SAP-I meeting has, however, proceeded. On the most recent occasion this month it was not the SAARC Summit that was cancelled but rather the SAP-I Summit. This was a great blow to all concerned.

On this occasion the cancellation occurred because of the incredible level of security surrounding the SAARC Summit. The security arrangements made it difficult for visitors to Bangladesh to get visas. Dhaka, the host city for the SAARC Summit was bolted down with 40,000 police and troops making movement around the city impossible. The Bangladesh Reporter stated "Check posts have been set up in all entry and exit points of the city and the entire city has been under security blanket" The Reporter went on to say "common people alleged that police had been harassing them without lawful ground and

realizing bribe under ‘gentlemen agreement’” There were even reports of Dhaka’s 27,000 beggars being moved out of town to tidy the city.

Despite all this, officials of SAP-I and the President and Executive Director of ICSW managed to meet for three days in Dhaka. The discussions were extremely fruitful with both SAP-I and ICSW finding ways to work together.

ICSW knows that the key issues identified by SAP-I are also the key issues for other regions. Trafficking of women and children is the scourge of many regions. The illegal trade in small arms is causing misery and poverty. The top ten legal arms trading countries are, in order of the value of trade, USA, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Brazil, Austria, Japan, Spain, Canada and the Czech Republic. (Source “Who takes the Bullet” published by Norwegian Church Aid 2005). It is devastating to realise that many of the small arms start as legal exports from these countries – and six out of the ten are European. The Norwegian report states “The overwhelming majority of small arms used to commit acts of violence have been legally produced, exported, bought and stored”. The Norwegian report does mention that Russia, China and Israel should be included in the list of top exporters. The reason they do not appear is because Russia and China only publish partial data and Israel publishes no data on arms exports.

Returning to SAARC. SAARC does not have a formal mechanism to engage with civil society. SAP-I will continue to seek ways to make the People’s agenda known to the leaders of the SAARC countries. As many of us know, much is said about the valuable contribution of civil society to global and regional agendas. But we have a long way still to go to achieve true listening and action by our governments. More reports on SAP-I will be included in future editions of Global Cooperation.

ICSW’s global programme includes a component called “South – South Cooperation”. Dr Rohit Nepali, the Executive Director of SAP-I will be a key contributor to the Black Sea Civil Society Forum that is being sponsored by ICSW. This forum is to be held in December., Dr Nepali will bring to the Black Sea civil society group the knowledge and experience of SAP-I. The Black Sea group are in the early stages on development. ICSW seeks to achieve an acceleration of civil society input into regional development through South-South Cooperation.

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Global conference on health promotion – World Health Organisation (WHO)

“Policy and partnership for action: addressing the determinants of health”. Under this heading, WHO held its sixth global conference on health promotion in August 2005 in Bangkok. Mr. Carel Tenhaeff, senior policy advisor of the Netherlands Institute for Care and Welfare, presented a paper and represented ICSW at the conference.

Introduction

A conference on policy and partnership to address the determinants of health creates uneasiness amongst the participants. One reason is that people bring different perspectives to the subject. Some have a professional interest and want health to be higher on national and international political agendas. Others relate to the field of health indirectly and are engaged in tackling the determinants of health. Their professional interests lie elsewhere, or are less specific. Such is the fate of an ICSW representative. I attended the conference from the perspective of someone working in the social field and as such, a relative outsider wondering how we could relate to health policies and programmes.

Contents: some determinants of health

Various policies and actions are innovative and promising. Here are a few. They relate to different determinants of health.

One programme has to do with the way people relate to their natural environment and the implications of this for their health. The 2004 tsunami demonstrated the risk of neglecting the coastal mangrove forests. Mangroves are the only protection against tidal waves that follow cyclones and earthquakes. On a field trip to a coastal, semi-rural district, just outside of Bangkok many of us became very conscious of the enormous threat to life without mangroves. For this reason, the Royal Princess of Thailand has become the patron of activities to save the mangroves. For more information, contact Stephen Hamann, international affairs consultant of ThaiHealth, e-mail stephen@thaihealth.or.th, website www.thaihealth.or.th.

A surprising initiative has to do with peace in day-to-day life. This is an important issue in Albania. There are deep and long-standing divisions within the population. The divisions have grave consequences for both mental and physical health. It is necessary to deal with the health consequences. But this is only fighting the symptoms. The cause is not dealt with. In order to do so, the foundation “Conflict resolution and reconciliation of disputes” was established. More information is available from Rasim Gjoka, executive director; e-mail gjoka@albaniaonline.net, website www.afcr-al.org.

Ewa Persson-Göransson, State Secretary of the Swedish Ministry on Health and Social Affairs provided an impressive example of building a public health strategy. It is based on the wider determinants of health at the national level. A national institute exists to influence the underlying causes of deaths and ill-health. It involves many stakeholders and partners because most health determinants fall under policy areas other than health and medical care. For more information contact Bosse Pettersson, deputy director-general to the National Institute of Public Health, Sweden, e-mail bosse.pettersson@fhi.se.

Work and income are another important set of determinants. Carel Tenhaeff's presentation to the workshop on marginalized people concerned a re-integration programme for long-term unemployed women in Amsterdam into the formal labour market. In this training-cum-work experience programme, attention was given to the health condition of the participants. It was demonstrated that increased participation in the labour market goes hand-in-hand with health improvement. For more information contact c.tenhaeff@nizw.nl or check the web community <http://groups.msn.com/comprehensiveaction>.

Outcome: the Bangkok charter

The overall outcome of the conference is the Bangkok Charter. There are four pages of recommendations on policies and partnerships to make health promotion central to the global development agenda, to communities, and to civil society. It is argued that the global commitment to reduce poverty by addressing all of the millennium goals is a critical entry point for health promotion. The document is quite abstract. Much is expected from partnership between local, national and international authorities and NGO's, but these expectations have been worded in a very general way. It could be argued that the members of ICSW and other NGO's present at the conference are already engaged in much of the work to be done according to the Charter.

Representing ICSW: the NGO Ad-hoc advisory committee

Prior to the conference, a NGO Ad-hoc Advisory Group on Health Promotion had been formed. It is a partnership of international NGO's. Twenty national and international NGOs were consulted. On the basis of this consultation, the following statement was made during the plenary closing session of the conference:

"We appreciate and welcome the call for partnership to ensure sustainable health promotion. We consider partnership a mutual investment to achieve a shared goal. On the basis of this understanding, we are committed to play our role in disseminating the Charter and its implementation. Our global outreach and presence to the very grassroots level puts us in a position to be key partners and to bring synergy into the process. We therefore call on WHO to involve NGOs as partners in the process of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Charter. This implies close working relationships with NGOs at the international, regional, national and country levels. Further, we would welcome the evaluation of the partnership to assess impact before and at the next Conference in 2009".

Now what?

A meeting has been scheduled for 23rd February 2006 by WHO to consult NGOs on the actions to be taken.

Gender and Women's Empowerment

Anne Herdt, ICSW Special Representative in Geneva attended a briefing at the UN on gender issues. Augusto Lopez-Claros, Chief Economic Adviser of the World Economic Forum (WEF) outlined the WEF's survey of 58 countries to measure the size of the gender gap. The 20-page report is available through the WEF website. <http://www.weforum.org/>

Commentaries were added by Ewa Zimmy, Senior Gender Adviser, Economic Commission for Europe, and Manuela Tomei, Senior Specialist in Discrimination in Employment at the International Labour Office. Both Zimmy and Tomei applauded the initiative of WEF in undertaking this survey. Both pointed out that it was incomplete in its coverage in many ways. Lopez-Claros explained that he would like to work with them in the new and enlarged version. This was but a first step.

Lopez-Claros explained the motivation of WEF for the survey and the methodology. The motivation came from seeing global differences in economic performance. The WEF wished to determine how countries made use of resources in the areas of education, competitiveness, stability, institutions, corruption and opportunities for women.

They then developed 25 variables which they divided into 5 pillars:

Economic participation including remuneration for equal work and poverty reduction (women make up most of the poor): Economic opportunities including low/high-paying jobs, childcare and maternity benefits: Political empowerment including men bring their priorities and values which do not always reflect women's values: Educational attainment including different levels achieved by women: Health and wellbeing including maternity care and living conditions

The highlight of the survey was that the countries which scored highest in gender equality also scored highest in competitiveness.

Implicit in the measurements is that unpaid work is not valued nor is work that is caring for people highly paid.

In the expanded version WEF plans to include violence against women, a section on the legal underpinning of gender bias and more information on employment.

Conferences

32nd. International Conference on Social Welfare 16th to 20th July 2006. Brasilia, Brazil.

Theme: Social Inclusion: facing poverty and social inequality

Other themes will include; Poverty and Inequality in a Century of Waste and Strategies for Human Development. For further information <http://www.cbciss.icsw32.org/>

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