

Furthering the struggle against the social injustice of poverty in the South Asia region

SAAPE and the South Asia Poverty and Vulnerability Report

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Context

A vast majority of the people in South Asia are persistently struggling for a better livelihood and survival. Out of the total population of the world, almost one quarter - about 1.6 billion people - live in South Asia, today, sadly enough, more than 40 per cent of the world's poor. Another distinguishing factor is the large variation in population size as well as the level and pace of socio-economic development across the region which is not similar to regional groupings in other parts of the world. A stark image of the region emerges from the analysis of the Human Development Index (HDI), the inequality adjusted HDI and poverty by income and deprivation (SAAPE, 2013). The issue of exclusion is clearly highlighted by the gender inequality index which is extremely high at 0.568. It is almost at par with the gender inequality index of Sub-Saharan Africa, which is 0.577 (UNDP, 2013). In this context the role of people's alliances is important for achieving dignified living and sustainable peace in the region.

SAAPE

South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) is an alliance of like-academics, trade unions, peasant associations, women organisations, NGOs and other people's organisations from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, working together towards eradication of poverty social justice in the region.

SAAPE was formed following a consultation meeting in 2000 in Manesar, against poverty and injustice it has formed a large network within the establish people's agenda. Some regional and global networks for



minded mass-based organisations, community based organisations, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and promotion of human rights and

India. During 13 years of struggle region and in the global arena to instance are La via Campesina,

Jubilee South Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (JSAPMDD), World Social Forum (WSF), LDC Watch, Social Watch, Eurostep, etc. with whom SAAPE is working together for strong representation of the people. Similarly, in South Asia, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established at state-level; however SAARC failed to fulfil the promised goals for a better South Asia given that it has been dominated and appropriated by the national governments of the region.. In this context, in order to influence the official process and raise the grassroots issues and voices the People's SAARC platform was established and this process was initiated by SAAPE. Therefore, SAAPE is continuously and effectively working for the eradication of poverty, injustice and all forms of violation of human rights in South Asia.

SAAPE sees itself as platform of like minded organisations and individuals. The governance structure of SAAPE is comprised of the General Assembly (GA), Annual General Meeting (AGM), Core Committee (CC), issue- based Campaign groups and the Secretariat. SAAPE members are primarily engaged in food sovereignty, livelihood and employment, gender justice, demilitarisation, democratisation and social justice.

The member organisations of SAAPE food sovereignty campaign have been facilitating the anti-land grabbing movements in South Asian countries. SAAPE's gender justice campaign group advances the movements for political rights of women in South Asia realising the fact that without their representation in decision-making in the political process, it is not likely that their rights will be ensured. The women's movement in Nepal took a leap of success when a mandatory provision was made in the Constitution for the 33 per cent representation of women in the CA (2008-2011). The women's movement in Nepal is struggling for a proportionate representation of women in all mechanisms of the state (local and national government) including in leadership positions of political parties. Similarly, SAAPE campaigns on demilitarisation, democratisation and social justice is taking place in south Asian countries.

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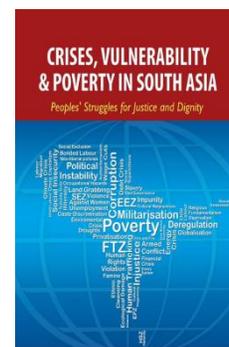
SAAPE's basic premises are grounded on the reality that the present dominant top-down development paradigm is lacking a proper dialogue with, and participation of, the primary rights holders - the poor and marginalised - in policy, planning, and decision-making is a major obstacle to eradicate poverty. SAAPE firmly believes that the politics of creating and perpetuating poverty needs to be tackled and addressed in order to gain freedom from the vicious trap of poverty. As a contribution to the alternative development paradigm, SAAPE publishes its Poverty and Vulnerability Report every 3 years since 2003 in which not only root causes of poverty and proven alternatives at the grassroots are presented but also pertinent issues linked to poverty eradication needing organised voices at the grass root people's level are also covered by the report. The singular strength of these reports as pointed out by many activists and policy makers is that the analysis moves from macro level data to first person accounts of field realities.

The first report published in 2003, "Poverty in South Asia : Civil Society Perspective" was an introduction to the status and nature of poverty in the South Asian countries. The second report "Poverty in South Asia : Civil Society Concerns", was published in 2006 which focused on five thematic areas; food sovereignty, gender justice, labour rights, peace, justice and demilitarisation and democratic and just governance in the region. The third report of 2010, "Poverty and Vulnerability Cycles in South Asia : Narratives of Survival and Struggles" analysed the poverty and vulnerability cycles, capturing the narratives of the survival and struggles of people in the region.

All the SAAPE Poverty Reports are available freely on the SAAPE website.

SAAPE Poverty and Vulnerability Report 2013

The current report *Crises, Vulnerability and Poverty in South Asia : People's* focuses on the crises, vulnerability and poverty in South Asia. The report against the injustice and indignity caused by the crisis-led vulnerability and and suggests sustainable alternatives. The broad effects and impacts of the and poverty have been analysed along with its impacts on various socio-assessment on the effect of globalisation on female workers in particular relation between the macroeconomic and labour policies and globalisation the concerns of on-going social movements in South Asia and the impact of effects of neo-liberal led policies and programmes. The report presents paradigms based on the emerging trend across South Asia of the peoples' restoration of the right to life and dignity. The alternative paradigms stand independent, but rather strongly link the knowledge already built on by SAAPE in the poverty report of previous years.



Struggles for Justice and Dignity features the voices of people poverty across the sub-continent economic crisis on vulnerability economic groups. Further, an has been made within which the is debated. The report highlights the acts of resistance against the possible alternative development movements in the fight for presented in this report do not

The alternative paradigm demands the reversing of the trickle-down or top-down approach of the dominant paradigm that perpetuates the exploitation of the deprived and downtrodden through grabbing of resources, opportunities and benefits. The root of the problem is systemic and is linked to a state system driven by anti-people legal, regulatory and related institutional setups. Thus, this report provides a critical review of the broad economic policy regime adopted by the South Asian states, the actors and factors influencing or dictating them. This is followed by an examination of transmission mechanisms and the likely effects on the national economy as well as living conditions of the people at the grassroots.

At the grassroots level, community and cooperative-based production, services and organisations form the important ingredients of an alternative paradigm. Denouncing militarisation and campaigning for mutual trust and cooperation among the South Asian countries should be an implicit part of the alternative paradigm for South Asia. For the purpose of defending the alternative

paradigm, an alliance-building of people facing deprivation and marginalisation is the most powerful tool that can challenge the unequal power relations.

The strong alliances of social movements and peoples' platforms in South Asia gives a ray of hope that brings countervailing power from people, thus returning power to the people in every sphere of life.

Appendix : Data tables on South Asia countries

Country	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	South Asia
Population (in million), Mid-2012	33.4	152.9	0.7	1259.7	0.3	26.6	180.4	21.2	1675.2
Share of population in South Asia (in %)	1.99	9.13	0.04	75.20	0.02	1.59	10.77	1.27	100.00
Per capita GDP	543	743	2346	1489	6405	619	1189	2835	
PPP Per capita GDP (USD)	1312	1416	5113	3296	5476	1115	2609	4772	3368
HDI	0.374	0.515	0.538	0.554	0.688	0.463	0.515	0.715	0.558
Inequality Adjusted HDI		0.363		0.392	0.495	0.301	0.346	0.579	0.393
Gender based Inequality	0.707	0.550	0.495	0.617	0.320	0.558	0.573	0.419	0.601
Multi-dimensional poverty Ratio		57.8	27.2	53.7	5.2	64.7	49.4	5.3	
Intensity of Deprivation		50.4	43.9	52.7	35.6	54.0	53.4	38.7	
Population below Poverty at PPP USD 1.25 a day, 2000-2009		49.6	26.2	42.6	1.5	55.1	22.6	7.0	
National Poverty Line 2000-2009	36.0	40.0	23.2	27.5		30.9	22.3	15.2	

References:

- UNDP (2013), *Human Development Report*. New York: UNDP.
- South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) (2013), *Crises, Vulnerability and Poverty in South Asia : People's Struggles for Justice and Dignity*. Kathmandu: SAAPE Secretariat.