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Imagine a New Southasia INSA

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Imagine a New Southasia INSA

INSPIRE A NEW SOUTH ASIA! CELEBRATING UNITY IN DIVERSITY!!

BACKGROUND

South Asia is the region as home of a third of the world's poor, with more than 100 million going hungry a day. The deep-seated infringement of the basic rights of the citizens continued even in the post-colonial era with an increasing inequality, identity politics and socio-political conflicts. Sense of fragmentation, mistrust and internal political tendency to undermine each other still prevails among the states with bigger one treating smaller ones as their conquests. The current states composed of the members of the ruling class, having inherited qualities of its colonizers are characterized by their ability to oppress, divide and rule. A tainted practice of hegemony and oppression continues in the name of religion, ethnicity, caste and culture. Such a problem has sustained hatred and suspicion among the citizens of the region and triggering exploitation within countries as well. However, there are signs of hope amidst deprivation as people in Nepal are marching the country towards establishing democracy, claiming rights over natural resources in Narmada in India and asserting share of farmers in public utilities in Kansat in Bangladesh.

Imagine a New South Asia (INSA) is a broad based citizens' initiative to advance a shared sense of South Asian vision and mission to promote more

policy convergence on key issues, more regional co-operation and joint initiative at the government as well as civil society level. It seeks to promote vision of a peaceful, prosperous, just and democratic South Asia. It works with existing networks, alliances and South Asia wide initiatives and campaign. INSA initiative demands for a collective vision for plural, federated, and vibrant new South Asia where people can realize freedom, attain prosperity; celebrate diversity and unleashing pluralistic democracy. Policy work for institutional framework, mobilization of networks and movements for strengthening people's aspirations, engaging media for mobilizing peoples' opinion and celebrating and connecting cultures are the major approaches of the initiative. It has two pronged strategy i) rigorous research to understand political, social and institutional structures and processes that shape policy decisions and impacts for South Asia. ii) Campaigns (people caravan, freedom festivals) to pressurize the governments of South Asia. A National Forum represented by government, media, academicians, NGOs, campaigners, and politicians will mobilize governments and legislators for amending, and developing necessary provisions and institutions for the new South Asia. Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP)has been working as regional secretariat of INSA since 2007.

MAJOR OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES

The major outputs and outcomes of the INSA campaign during the reporting period have been recorded as follows.

RESEARCH

Research on all themes have been completed and submitted for publication to the Pearson Publications.

NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE FOR INSA

The National Steering Committees for INSA have been formed in Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan, comprising representatives from important networks and alliances and individual civil society leaders.

CARAVAN JOURNEY

All the AOs successfully carried out caravan journeys to different part of the respective countries. The outcome is promising. People from all walks of life have expressed their solidarity with the process and many have would like to join and participate in it.

The caravan event was successful in creating awareness among the people on imagining prosperous individual nations as well as a prosperous New South Asia. People from all segments of society such as peasants, workers, landless, women, youth, bonded labor, disabled, indigenous people, civil society representatives, activists, NGO representatives, teachers and students joined the caravan in their villages and towns.

MEDIA COVERAGE

There was good media coverage of events organized under INSA, which was more significant during People's Caravan (Janayatra 2007).in Nepal as well as in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

AWARENESS AND INTERNALIZATION ON DIVERSIFIED ISSUES

Interactions during caravan journeys enabled members of INSA steering committees, civil society leaders, local participants from all walks of life to raise their level of awareness and practical knowledge about local and social –group related issues and prospects.

ISSUES, CONCERNS and CHALLENGES

Mobilization of people during the Caravan was a great achievement of the INSA campaign through which numerous people's issues from below generated for a New South Asia. In addition to that community people have requested the caravan team to pass on their voices/issues to the concerned institutions. Therefore, the great challenge in front of the team members is to think of

showing accountability to these groups by following up the issues generated at the local level.

When we look at the situation in the present context, lot of efforts would be required for transforming present state into a new state. Every citizen aspires to see a state where everybody can effectively participate in all the process of social transformation. INSA has given a platform for imagining a new individual state from the perspective of imagining a New South Asia. In spite of this reality, high priority for all the citizens of individual state lies on imagining a new individual state first and on that basis a South Asia.

CHANGES TO POLICY AND PRACTICES

Policy change will take time and we should now strengthen our efforts as the first phase of research has been completed a substantial level of contact has been established with the people in the participating countries.

If the process has got due momentum the condition of the down-trodden people may changed in the course of time.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Sharing research findings with the government, political parties and civil society.
- Continue people focused campaigns, including caravan journeys.
- Exchanges of students and other categories of people across countries will help build cooperation among the countries.

RESEARCH

In the entire research process, both in the consultative activities and in the field research, political economy approach was followed. The political economy approach acknowledges and analyzes the realities of concentration of wealth and power, differential access to markets and resources, the impact of discriminatory policies and practices, and the complexity of factors shaping human action. All of the researches have tried to link macro to micro effects.

The researches have incorporated various levels of analysis into the research design, and respect the inter-relatedness of the political and the economic, use different units of analysis--the whole, different sectors, markets, and institutions, groups within sectors, on down to households and individuals.

The results of the research will be the basis for advocacy for a vibrant, united South Asia where she can imagine her people are free from hunger and deprivation and enjoying all forms of rights.

After publication of the reports the people from all corners of the region will start to advocate for taking forward the outcomes of the reports.

The final drafts of the entire research component are ready to publish, which will be published by the Pearson Publications Company.

Other than the research several programs/events were organized with mass participation from across the south Asian countries i.e. INSA Caravan in Bangladesh, People's Caravan in Nepal, Revisiting 60 Years of Freedom at Lahore, South Asian People's Conclave at Amritsar etc. The details of all these programs are given separately under the appropriate headings.

INSA Activities organized by AO in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad)

TV Talk Show

Two TV talk shows have so far been broadcast in the private TV Channel ATN Bangla to project INSA Process. The first one was participated by NSCB members Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad , Mr. Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled and Ms. Shirin Akhter., while the second (on 19 May 2007) by RSC members Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad from Bangladesh, Dr.Jimmy Dabhi from India and Mr.Syed Naveed Qamar from Pakistan.

NSCB Meetings

Three National Steering Committee Bangladesh (NSCB) meetings were held on 18 February 2007 , 16 May 2007 and 27 January 2008.

Regional Steering Committee (RSC)

The first RSC meeting was held on 17-18 May 2007 In Koitta, Manikganj near Dhaka. A planning session of RSC was held on 2 February in Delhi. The second RSC meeting is planned to organize on 27 March 2008 in Dhaka.

Roundtable on INSA

Following the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) meeting on 17-18 May 2007, a roundtable was organized on the following day (19 May). The purpose was to inform a cross section of people drawn from various professions, organizations, and networks on the one hand and media on the other. Reports about the event

were carried by 18 national newspapers including all the English and Bengali leading dailies and also ten Bangladeshi TVs covered the event elaborately.

RTF Meeting

Regional Task Force meeting of economic management research group was held on 17 May, 2007 at Koitta, Manikganj, Bangladesh. The meeting was coordinated by Professor Muinul Islam, one of the two lead authors of the Research group on Economic Management.

Seminar/Workshop/Roundtable

a. A pre SAARC discussion session was jointly organized by Imagine A New South Asia (INSA) and South Asian Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) on theme of People's SAARC. It was held on 12 March, 2007 in Dhaka.

b. Under the auspices of Imagine A New South Asia (INSA), Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) organized a discussion session on "Sustainable Development: Reality and Future Guidelines in Bangladesh Perspective" to mark the World Environment Day 2007. The discussion session was held in the VIP Conference room of National Press Club, Dhaka on 4th June,2007 .It was chaired by Advocate Sultana Kamal, member of the Regional Steering Committee, INSA and former adviser to Bangladesh caretaker government. The key-note paper was presented by Dr.Qazi Khloliquzzaman Ahmad, Chair of the Regional Steering Committee, INSA and a Lead Author of IPCC(Inter governmental Panel on Climate Change)-Fourth Assessment (completed in 2007).

The roundtable titled 'Mother language of indigenous people and their culture' was jointly organised by Imagine a New South Asia (INSA) and Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) at the National Press Club Dhaka on 11 August 2007 to mark The World Indigenous Day. The programme was chaired by Prof Anisuzzaman , Chair ,NSCB, the meeting was also addressed by Justice Ghulam Rabbani, Raja Devasish Roy, Nawazish Ali Khan of ATN Bangla, Humaira Islam of Shakti Foundation, Khandaker Ibrahim Khaled, former deputy governor of Bangladesh Bank, Asgar Ali of Action Aid and Shamsul Huda of the Association

for Land Reform and Development. Indigenous leader Mr.Sanjeeb Drong presented the key note paper.

On 25 November 2007 INSA secretariat Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) organised the seminar on 'Social Exclusion in South Asia and Imagine a New South Asia (INSA) process ' in association with ActionAid Bangladesh at the National Press Club , Dhaka. BUP Chairman and the chair of INSA Regional Steering Committee (RSC) Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad present the key note speech. Mr.Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir of ActionAid , Shirin Akhter of Karmojibi Nari and Senior Vice President of ATN Bangla Nawazesh Ali Khan also spoke in the seminar. The seminar was chaired by Prof. Anisuzzaman, Chair, INSA National Steering Comittee Bangladesh (NSCB).

The events were covered all well circulated dailies and several TV channels.

INSA and GeJF jointly organised a seminar on" Social Exclusion in South Asia and Imagine a New South Asia (INSA) process '" on 31 January 2008 at WVA auditorium ,Dhaka. The seminar was chaired by women leader Ms.Khushi Kabir and UNDP country director Mr.Manoj Basnyat was present as guest of honour. The key note paper was presented by Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad.

Under the auspices of INSA BUP and a national NGO DORP are going to organise a discussion session on " Women in South Asia : Bangladesh Perspective" to mark the international women day on 9 March 2008 at BEA auditorium , Dhaka.

Recent Features/Articles in newspapers

A part of the key-note paper presented in the discussion session on "Sustainable Development: Reality and Future Guidelines in Bangladesh Perspective" to mark the World Environment Day 2007 was published in The Daily Shamokal on 7th June, 2007.

INSA Caravan – Bangladesh:

The first phase of INSA Caravan Journey covered northern districts of Bangladesh from 10 – 13 December 2007 and the second phase covered north-

eastern districts of Bangladesh from 14-16 February 2008.It was attended by NSCB members and their representatives. The first phase was organized in the month of Liberation of Bangladesh, just prior to The Victory Day (16TH December 2007)and the second phase was organised in the month of Mother Language Movement, just prior to the International Mother Language Day(21st February 2008). The aim of the event was to create awareness among the people on Imagining Prosperous Bangladesh as well as Prosperous New South Asia. People from all segments of society such as peasants, labors, landless, women, youth, bonded labor, disabled, indigenous people, civil society representatives, activists, NGO representatives, teachers and students joined the caravan in their villages and towns. Different types of dialogues and discussion meetings were held, followed by the cultural events (music, dance, folk song, play and poetry).

On the occasion of 36th anniversary of our great victory, people from all walk of life demanded their real freedom from hunger, poverty and disparity .People raised their voices to establish a sustainable development frame work where the voices of marginalized people should be incorporated. The caravan also sensitizes people to demand social justice and human rights. They would like to dream a new South Asia as well a new Bangladesh with socially just, economically equitable and environmentally sustainable.

The first phase of caravan started on 10 December, 2007 and ended on 13 December 2007. It covered Northern districts of Bangladesh .The caravan was inaugurated by Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chair, Regional Steering Committee of INSA. Ms. Shirin Akhter, Convener of Working Group on Popular Movement, NSCB led the caravan journey.

The second phase of caravan started on 14 February , 2008 and ended on 16 February 2008. It covered North- Eastern part of Bangladesh .The caravan was inaugurated and led by Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chair, Regional Steering Committee of INSA.

A camera team was engaged to record the whole event. Several documentaries (with English subtitles) are being prepared to be shown to members and other interested partners (including Action Aid), and to be telecast through private TV channels across Bangladesh.

A short version of the audio –visual document was presented in the last NSCB meeting.

INSA ESSAY COMPETITION 2007

Under the auspices of INSA, Bnagladesh Unnayan Parishad(BUP) has organized an essay competition for the students of class viii to xii .The topic of the essay competition is **"ENVISIONING SOUTH ASIA: THE YOUTH PERSPECTIVES"**. The programme was launched in a meeting of INSA working group on Popular Movement held on 9th September,2007 at BUP's conference room. First, Second and Third position holders will be awarded prizes and INSA will take initiative to poublish selected essays. Due to final examination and eid vacation very few competitors have been submitted the essay since last week. So the WG suggests to extend the dead line of essay submission upto 31 st March 2008 and the news of competition should advertise in the dailies . For this co- sponsor is being serched.

INSA Media Fellowship Programme

INSA has a Media Fellowship Programme for young, mid-career journalists. The fellowships would allow them to take time off from their routine beats to research and publish articles/photo essays on issues concerning the less privileged, that need to be high on our society's agenda, but do not find mention there for a variety of reasons.

The fellowships support pursuit of in-depth, creative field research on these concerns and writing about them with adequate evidence - qualitative and quantitative - to impact the public policy and the domain of social consciousness.

Two fellowships will be awarded this year to print and electronic journalists. Out

of which one fellowship will be awarded for projects with specific emphasis on conditions in flood or cyclone affected coastal areas. One fellowship will be awarded to electronic journalists.

Women journalists are particularly welcome. Applicants must have demonstrated commitment to the development concerns of the less privileged in society.

A guide line for media fellowship programme already developed by the secretariat with the consultation of Media Group.It is now in the final stage and hopefully it will be launched in the end of February.

INSA Activities organized by AO in Nepal (NGO Federation of Nepal)

STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

A total of six meetings of National Steering Committee were held for sharing INSA, developing consensus on the national framework for the study on Human Rights, Democracy and Governance and for preparing and reviewing actions, reflections and learning of the Janayatra (People's Caravan).

REGIONAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

The Regional Task Forces Meeting on Human Rights, Democracy and Governance, Natural Resources and Sustainable Environment and Peace and Justice held in Kathmandu on 28-30 June 2007 in which country authors and representatives from Action Aid-South Asia, India and Nepal participated. The

meeting developed outlines for the researches on the respective themes and built shared understanding on INSA. The respective countries shared progress on Peoples' Caravan and Freedom of Festivals. Discussions were also made on Media Strategy including sharing of INSA initiatives with Media. Two Members of Parliamentarian from Nepal interacted with the participants in an informal meeting. A total of 24 participants including 4 in Human Rights, Democracy and Governance, 8 in Peace and Justice and 6 in Natural Resources and Sustainable Environment and 6 as representatives of Action Aid and NGO Federation of Nepal directly involved in the meeting. NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) hosted the event.

PEOPLE'S CARAVAN

In order to build on the people's hope of the April Movement 2006 in Nepal, Janayatra 2007 was organized from 9-21 September 2007 with a slogan 'People's Right to Resources, Means and Power: Foundation for Democratic Republic New Nepal' with the following objectives

- Pressurize the political leaders to make a favorable environment to conduct Constitution Assembly election within slated time.
- Enhance grass root level people's power for building an inclusive democratic republic New Nepal
- Raise voices of landless, people in poverty, dalit, indigenous people and women for rights over resources, freedom, dignity and livelihoods

The Janayatra was announced on 6 September 2007 at Bhrikuti Mandap premises, Kathmandu amid a mass gathering of over thousand people represented by Women, Dalit, Students, Human Rights Activists, Teachers, Landless Community, Badi Community, Civil Society organizations and political parties. The Janayatra started on same day from Ilam, Ramechhap and Baitadi on 9 September and conversed at Butwal on the World Peace Day on 21 September. Volunteers and spokes persons were given orientation on the process of the campaigning on 8th September 2007.

When the caravan was in its way, local people welcomed the Janayatries by organizing different programmes including cultural shows and corner meetings. People including landless, youths, students, women, dalit, janajati, disabled, squatters came into street and chanted slogan against the poverty, injustice and inequality. They also requested the Janayatries to pass on their demands to the government. For example, in a corner meeting held in Hariwan (Sarlahi distirct), landless squatters put their demand for an immediate allocation of land to them by organizing signature campaign with a slogan 'Radical Land Reform'. They also requested the Yatris to pressurise the government to rescue the squatters from the state of landlessness. The Janayatris shared the concerns expressed by the local people during Janayatra in the closing ceremony held at Butwal.

Route of Janayatra:

There were three routes of Janayatra Ilam, Ramechhap and Baitadi. Ilam route followed Ilam, Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusa, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, Makawanpur, Chitawan, Nawalparasi and converged at Butawal. Ramechhap route followed Ramechhap, Dolakha, Sindhupalchok, Kavrepalanchok, Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Dhading, Chitawan (Mungling), Tanahun, Kaski, Baglung, Doti, Syangja, Palpa and Butawal. The Baitadi route followed Baitadi, Dadeldhura, Kanchanpur, Kailali, Bardiya, Banke, Dang, Kapilvastu and Butawal. Janayatra moved to villages and community without confining to road head areas.

Participants: A total of 109 Janayatries including 34 women representing poor, dalits, indigenous nationalities, disables, women, Madhesis, youths, students, peasants, labors and marginalized groups participated in the Janayatra.

Alliances and federations those actively took part in the Janayatra were NGO Federation of Nepal, Federation of Community Forestry Users' Group Nepal (FECOFUN), National Land Rights Concern Group, National Land Rights Forum, Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities, National Federation of Disabled Nepal, Human Rights Alliance, Federation of Democratic Trade Union Nepal, National Dalit Network, Community Forestry Support Network, Inter Federations

Women Network, National Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Users' Nepal, National Federation of Irrigation Water Users' Nepal, Dalit NGO Federation and Women Human Rights National Network.

A small committee formed under the National Steering Committee took responsibility for overall management of the Janayatra, by establishing secretariat at Land Rights Concern Group, Baneswor. More than 200 preparatory meetings were held at the community levels.

Issues and concerns of Janayatra: Some of the major concernss raised during the caravan were

- A peaceful, independent and impartial constituent assembly election guaranteeing the involvement of grass root people in the entire process of building a new Nepal.
- Create a basis for the fulfillment of making a new constitution guaranteeing a bright, democratic, federal republic, people oriented and inclusive Nepal.
- Feudalism, discriminatory practices and cultures prevail in Nepal has refrained woman, Dalit, indigenous group to obtain power, dignity and recognition in the society. New Nepal must guarantee the delegation of power and dignity to people.
- People oriented land reform process and impartial distribution of land for increasing ownership and right over natural resources like forest, water and land of the farmers and poor people.
- Give due recognition to the community based forest management and consider the forest users as a right holders of the resources.
- Suspension of impartial treaties and policies and formulation of new water policies ensuring people's right to own water resources. Stop the multinational invasion in the water sector.

People's Contribution: The Local communities provided countless accommodation and food with the Yatries of their own resources and local FMs aired live broadcasting on Janayatra.

MEDIA MOBILIZATION-MEDIA GROUP MEETING AND MEDIA LOBBY

NGO Federation of Nepal and Action Aid Nepal strongly engaged in bringing the Janayatra in media coverage. Number of follow up meeting and visit were made with the media persons. The Janayatra Secretariat had circulated daily updates of the Janayatra with Media in the evening. As a result news covered by the media on Janayatra was very satisfactory.

INSA Activities organized by AO in Pakistan (Sustainable Development Policy Institute,SDPI))

First Meeting of Steering Committee - Pakistan 16 April 2007

An introductory meeting on Imagine New South Asia Project was organized on April 16th 2007, in which people and experts from all walk of life has been invited in order to discuss and plan a strategy for the orientation, capacity building and implementation of this project. More than 30 people have participated in the meeting.

The National steering committee was constituted in order to steer various project activities and would ensure that these activities help to meet project's objectives. The names for the thematic areas were also proposed. It was decided that the meeting of the steering committee would took place after every two months. It was also decided that the members of the steering committee should be between 30-35.

Seminar SDPI: 16 April 2007

A seminar on “New South Asia & New Realities” was also organized on the 16th April 2007, in view of the general public interest. The main focus of the seminar was primarily on imagining a new South Asia free from hunger, poverty, conflicts, inequalities and despair and to reject hegemony and oppression in the name of religion, ethnicity, caste and culture. Experts and civil society representatives had made presentation on different aspect of the above-mentioned topic.

The speakers have shared their experience of “South Asia Policy Forum India” by requesting South Asian governments to take effective measures to make the region a free zone where people enjoyed free movement across the borders without any passport or visa. More than 35 people have attended the seminar, and media has given good coverage of the event.

Youth Group Discussion: 29 May 2007

An interactive group discussion on “New South Asia and New Realities”, organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) with the view to accentuate the insight and understanding of the youth of a New South Asia free from poverty, hunger, conflict and social justice. Students also demanded the HEC scholarship to study in South Asian States and to promote tourism. Around 30 students from 10 reputable universities of Pakistan have participated in the discussion. This was a very rare opportunity to listen the candid views of youngsters. AAJ TV recorded the discussion and would be telecasting a report on it.

School children play:3 June 2007 INSA- SDPI partially sponsored a play, which was presented by Mazmoon-i-Shauq school children put a charming performance as they brought history to life in a stage drama titled “Iss miti kay sau rang**”.** This play was depicting scenes from as early as the Mehargarh civilization down to Alexander, the Mughals and then to the present day. In the play the narrator was famous Urdu poet Ghalib played by a student with the opening scene to inform the audience about the migration of the ancestors from

Africa, and their settlement in Potohar and the setting up of the first village with the name Mehargarh. One scene on the life of Chadragupta Maurya's Grandson Ashok, was also played that how he embraced Buddhism and gave up violence. As the scenes progress, Ghalib laments wars and children present how people complain about more bombs and less school, not enough hospitals and opportunities.

Revisiting 60 Years of Freedom :11 - 12 Aug 2007 SDPI facilitated the regional conference titled Revisiting Sixty Years of Freedom under the "Imagine a New South Asia (INSA)" campaign and organized a conference on 11-12 August 2007 at Ambassador Hotel, Lahore. The conference was an attempt to reassess freedom and reset our priorities. People want freedom from hunger, poverty, want, fear, and freedom to live with dignity. This is premised on the axiom that every single individual on earth has both the potential and the right to live a decent life. This event gave us a chance to shun the tainted practice of hegemony and oppression in the name of religions, ethnicity, caste and culture. Also, this was an opportunity to strive for a democratic, decentralized political system. Besides local activists, researchers, academia and intellectuals from all over the country, delegates from other South Asian countries attended the event which was covered by all major newspapers and television channels: (Details on SDPI website)

• A reception dinner was given on 10 Aug 2007 to the leading journalist of Pakistan to make their understanding on the initiative on imaging a New South Asia.

• Press conferences and talk shows were also held after the event, press coverage can be seen on SDPI website.

Disarmament to Combat Poverty Campaign November 03, 2007

A Planning Meeting of Civil Society on Disarmament to Combat Poverty Campaign was held at Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad on November 03, 2007 with the following Agenda items:

1. Introducing the campaign to participants in Pakistan

2. Planning for the Conference on “Nuclear Arms Race and Nuclear-free South Asian Zone” in December7-9, 2007 Lahore
3. Launching of campaign in Pakistan and at South Asian level
4. Any other/general observations

Networking:

In order to organize the National Steering Committee and Thematic Task Force the following activities were conducted:

• Individual Meetings with NGOs and Political Parties in Pakistan

• Telephonic conversation with South Asian partners.
• Meetings with AAPK staff.
• Group Discussion
• Special Meeting with Actionaid Staff
• Press Conferences
• Interviews on Different TV channels
• Interviews on Radio
• Documentaries prepared and run on different Channels
• Articles Wrote in the Newspapers

DVDs:

• Prepared DVD of the students’ event.

• 2 DVDs of Revisiting the Sixty Years of Freedom Activity.
• Posters prepared as a tool for advocacy campaign.

Media:

• Press Conferences: Two press conferences were held one each in Peshawar and Karachi. The member of National Steering Committee from the Provinces has organized this press briefing sessions to promote INSA among the stakeholders of the respective provinces.

• Dr. Abid Q. Suleri and Eng. MA Jabbar have given talk on the vision and mission of "INSA Project" and its activities at AJJ TV and Sindh TV channel respectively. Further more Dr. Abid and Syed Naveed Qamar, both had a dialogue on Sindh TV.

• Documentary prepared on INSA were played at AAJ TV and Sindh TV channels.

• Dr. Abid Q. Suleri has given an interview on FM-93.

Articles:

Dr. Abid Q. Suleri has written several articles.

Meetings:

• National Steering Committee Meeting: Besides the planned activities several other meetings were also conducted. Two national Steering Committee meetings were taken place one before the Lahore activity of Revisiting Sixty years of Freedom about the selection of the speakers and planning of the event. The other NSC meeting taken place after the event for future planning.

• Meeting with Networks i.e Pakistan NGO,s Federation (PNF), CORIN, Sustainable Agriculture Action Group (SAAG) were held to create broader ownership of freedom festival that would be held in Lahore and to organized it in a participatory and consultative manner, consultations were held with like-minded non-government organizations. It was agreed that PNF would represented twenty of its member. It was promised by SUNGI Development Foundation that they would organize a panel on freedom from disaster. Where as SAAG members will also be participating in Lahore event.

A follow up meeting of INSA project was held on 15th August 2007. In which Mr. Aimal Khan, Mr. Rashid Titumir, Ms. Tasleem Mazhar and Ms. Mehnaz Ajmal have participated. In the meeting the project deliverables were discussed which should be submitted to Actionaid by the end of August 2007. Mr. Titumir asked SDPI for the maximum involvement of AAPk staff in the INSA project activities. It was stressed that National Steering Committee should be broadened. The need for the development of strategy is felt to involve SAARC people to develop one plate forum. It was also decided that the activities under INSA project should be disseminated at grassroots especially in Actionaid Pakistan's Development Areas (DAs). It was also highlighted that there is dire need of effective coordination between INSA and Single International Campaign on Hunger of AAPK. A parliamentarian forum for South Asian Parliamentarians is also planned which would be led by Syed Naveed Qamar. Further more Mr. Titumir discussed that in order to expand project activities in Afghanistan, special efforts are required to establish a base in Pakistan. He also said that SDPI should look for funding for the future activities.

INSA Activities organized by AO in India (Indian Social Institute)

South Asia Policy Forum India :31 March – 1 April 2007

South Asia Policy Forum was being organized on March 31 – April 1, 2007 to share and exchange thoughts and ideas on the advancement of South Asia, coinciding with 14th SAARC Summit in New Delhi in India. 12 people including Academic, policy analysts, writers, diplomats, women rights, media, human rights, Justice has participated in the event from Pakistan in different capacities.

The forum, jointly organized by Centre for Development and Human Rights and Institute for Human Development, organized in partnership of Action Aid International. Regional organizations Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, Sustainable Development of Pakistan, Indian Social Institute and NGO Federation of Nepal were associative partners at the forum.

The purpose of the forum was;

a. To explore policy options and alternatives to realize social and economic rights and regional cooperation across South Asia;

b. To develop a South Asia wide vision and policy alternatives to build peace, justice, democracy and equity in the region.

c. To identify agenda for policy research.

The Forum comprised of five thematic sessions

a. Economic Management

b. Human Rights, Democracy and Governance

c. Environment and Natural Resources

d. Peace & Justice

e. Women Rights, besides inaugural and concluding sessions

Syed Naveed Qamar, Member National Assembly- Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarian. Former Federal Minister – Government of Pakistan has participated in the inaugural session and represented Pakistan and said that this is a good forum to put our dreams forward with open eyes to achieve our goals and to translate these goals in actions that would help in changing the lives of the people living in South Asia. Our goals can be achieved by removing the environment of mistrust through focusing on the common interest at regional level. The most important areas are the economic integration, environment, human rights, governance etc that would serve the interests of the small countries as well as the population of South Asia as a whole.

Engineer M. A. Jabbar, Former Senior Vice President - FPCCT, Pakistan talked on Economic management. Dr. Mohammad Farooq Khan, Religious Scholar, Pakistan speaks in the session on Peace and Justice. Haji Mohammad Adeel, Former Provincial Minister NWFP, Former Deputy Speaker – NWFP Assembly, Senior Vice President – Awami National Party in the session on Human Rights, Democracy and Governance has shard his views while Mr. Arshad Hameed Abbasi – Environment Activist given the speech on Environment and Natural resources. And Mr. Akram Zaki, Former Secretary General - Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan has concluded the program.

Press Briefing was held on March 29, 2007 in India on the outcome of the South Asia Policy Forum. Followed by Planning Meeting on March 30, 2007. Members of National Steering Committees, Regional Technical Committee, Representative of Anchor Organizations, Country Directors, and Focal Persons in AAI CPs attended the meeting.

Meeting on International Campaign "Disarmament to Combat Poverty" 5-6 October, 2007 New Delhi, India

The meeting was held on 5-6thth October 2007 at Indian Social Institute (ISI) New Delhi, India jointly organized by FEDINA (India) and Pakistan Institute of Labor Education and Research (PILER) Pakistan. Its broad objective is to enable the masses to understand the correlation between military expenses, militarism and militarization of the state and society with eradication of poverty, ignored social sectors, effects on fundamental rights of the citizens and democratic values. It also aims at taking some measures to resolve the governments of North and South (generally referred as producers and buyers respectively), to reduce military expenses, militarism and militarization of the state and society to combat poverty, promote social security and develop social sectors like housing, health and education.

Delhi meeting summary

During the two-days meeting, the participants from Pakistan, India, Sweden and France discussed various aspects of the campaign at length ranging from its concept, aims and objectives, growing social, economic, political, cultural inequalities and challenges related to increasing trends of militarization of the state and society at the cost of social sectors, approaches and measures to achieve progressive outcomes and to identify a realistic and concrete line of action to make it a mass political movement. There were discussions covering the interests and related issues of producers countries, however, due to overwhelming participation from South Asia (India and Pakistan) most of the deliberations reflected Southern contexts.

It was unanimously resolved that increasing trends of military expenditures (which also involve the nuclear arms race) and militarization of state and society have made the world a dangerous place to live in as both intended and unintended use of such mass destructive weapons could trigger tragic accidents beyond anyone's imagination. It was also realized that such trends have a direct effect on social sectors, lives and livelihoods of the masses, poses serious threats to environment and other natural resources besides endangering the civil, political, economic, democratic, social and cultural rights of the people at large.

It was agreed that it is high time to question the concepts of national security, rationale for increasing irrational defense spending and arms race, nuclearization, nature of political and otherwise disputes to address the real issues in the South Asian countries. It was decided to form a core group of NGOs from arms seller/producers and buyers countries to make collaborative efforts to compel their respective governments for at least a 10% symbolic reduction of their annual military expenditures, which shall be diverted for the development of social sectors. Finally, the participants adopted a seven-point strategy to take forward the campaign in their respective countries as well as internationally

South Asian People's Conclave (*Sarhadein ab Nahin)*

Right from the very beginning, the whole campaign has been designed as citizen's initiative where there is celebration of shared cultures, traditions, solidarity with different movements at the grassroots etc. Apart from the fact that the civil society policy and research organization would work collectively to prepare a series of policy documents, through consultative process, that would help to move forward toward more sub regional cooperation and road map towards clear policy convergence on key areas for joint action and initiatives... The artists, activists and eminent people in various fields will join the campaign towards a peaceful, prosperous and just South Asia. This all will go a long way in help create a momentum towards a common aspirations

To celebrate shared culture, history, important milestones in growing together of all South Asian countries, traditions etc. a South Asian People's Conclave *(Sarhadein ab Nahin)* was planned at the very beginning of the campaign, to take stock of the aspirations of the marginalized as well as joining hands with popular movements of the region. An event that becomes learning experience for the participating groups so that they could relate with it. These are some of the reasons that the festival has been named as *Sarhadein ab Nahin* as it resonates to our vision of new and vibrant South Asia.

All the issues that are important to South Asia that directly or indirectly affects the aspirations of the marginalized and which is becoming a hindrance in attaining full citizenship were given prominence at the festival. The democratic struggle of the entire refugee's living in different South Asian countries was discussed. The festival was an amalgamation of academic exercises and cultural celebrations. The target of the festival was not only the marginalized communities but the youth and students representing different sections of the society. Some of the issues that were taken up for discussions at the Conclave were:

- Borderless south Asia
- Peace
- Citizenship, democracy, human rights
- Government: interface of people
- Question of displaced
- Government sponsored terrorism
- Militarization, nuclear disarmament
- Fascism and communalism
- Status of women in south Asia

Delegates from almost all the South Asian countries participated in the conclave. As for India, the festival witnessed representation from riot affected families of Gujarat and other states, victims of violence in Jammu & Kashmir, North-Eastern

states of India, refugees from Pakistan living in the Indian state of Rajasthan, peace activists and representatives of different refugee groups living in India etc.

A total of 370 delegates from across the south Asian countries participated in the conclave at Amritsar on 26th and 27th October 2007. The venue for the conclave was Spring Dale Senior School and was hosted by Punarjyot.

The Conclave was inaugurated with a welcome speech by Ms. Manveen Sandhu, Principal, Spring Dale Senior School, who talked about 60 years of Independence of the sub-continent and mostly focused her speech on the people to people contact between the two sides of Punjab. She caught the essence of the aspirations of the common people when she said, “We are just a hand away from each other but are still very-very far”. This rather set the tone for the two days session by observing that “the problem being experienced by all the citizens of South Asia is one and the same and their aspirations are common as well”. She emphasized the need for chalking out ways that would help in really making the dreams come true.

Dr Shivinder Singh Sandhu, a leading orthopedic surgeon and the local host and Director of Punarjyot said that, **“**We have to teach ourselves to have a fearless mind and raise our voice in order to bring peace. We also need to take this movement of building A New South Asia to the masses.” Prof. Kamal Chenoy of Jawaharlal University, New Delhi was of the view that, “It is very important for us to take the problems of people of South Asia as our own problems, then only can our dream of making a confederation come true. He also said that sorting out fights with discussions and debates is a better idea than getting into wars, instead of spending money on armaments the need of the common people should be satisfied.”

Dr LC Jain, Magsasay Awardee, Eminent Gandhian, Economist said that**,** “The first and the foremost thing required to build a peaceful South Asia is to stop any

kind of violence against women". Prof. Babu Methew, Country Director, ActionAid India first of all congratulated Spring Dale Senior School for organizing this conclave and felt that the Conclave could not have been organized in a better place than Spring Dale. He said that, "We must demand the need of building a confederation in the region and spread the message to the ordinary people because they are the ones who can actually understand the need of building A Peaceful South Asia." Usmaan Peerzaada**,** CEO Rafi Peer Theatre Workshop Lahore, said that, "Through Punarjyot, Amritsar and Rafi Peer Theatre, Lahore, we share the thoughts, dreams, aspirations of Lahore and Amritsar by celebrating one common culture. He said that no religion teaches us to be intolerant or to exploit, man is the biggest exploiter of this land and the tragedy is that man is the creator and yet man is the destroyer, so it is man who has to understand and change himself in order to create peace".

Inaugural session also witnessed brief presentation by women leader and activists. Ms Radhika Adhikari of Bhutan shared the problems faced by the women of Bhutan. She said that, "In Bhutan women help men in all processes of production but at the time of decision making she has no significance. Girls are forced to work in bars and restaurants which increase the risks of HIV Aids, and there are also a whole lot of girls missing." She pleaded to everyone to extend a hand of help in order to improve the condition of women in the country. Mr. Jahel Ahmed of Kashmir gave a heart rending speech where he said that, 'In Kashmir people still haven't realized their true identity. They are confused of being a Hindustani or a Pakistani. He said that he is very happy with the idea of building A New South Asia since people in Kashmir will get an identity, the identity of being a South Asian. Ms Vinita Kurum from Nepal expressed her joy in coming to the historic city of Amritsar and hoped that this festival would spread message of peace and harmony amongst all. Ms Gujri Devi from Rajasthan said that she is very happy to come to the land of Punjab, A land which played a big role in the freedom struggle and requested everyone to join hands in order to finish all kinds of boundaries that spread hatred and separatism.

Discussions in the Sub-Group:

After the inaugural session, on the first day, delegates were divided into three groups and given three different topics to deliberate upon. After the discussion in the sub-groups, the outcome of the discussion was presented in the main plenary.

The first group was asked to discuss the *"Issues of Refugees in South Asia",* which consisted of approximately 100 delegates representing refugees from Burma, Tibet, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka etc. There were also members from local civil society organizations and students representing University of Delhi, Gurunank Dev University, Amritsar, Senior School Students etc. The important issues that emerged from the discussion from the first group were:

a. S.B Subha from Nepal informed that 1,08,000 refugees of Nepal went to Bhutan but were denied the rights of citizenship by the Bhutan Government.
b. Similarly refugees of Pakistan settled in Rajasthan are facing a lot of problems in educating their children due to non-availability of Indian Nationality.
c. Three lakh refugees have settled in India but no moral support is extended to them. Through Manipur, Mizoram; refugees reached India. The refugee camps were sponsored by United Nations High Commission Refugee but India has no Refugee law.
d. Mr Ashok and Mr Nadesh Lingam stated that for the first time, the government of Tamil Nadu has released guidelines for NGO's working with refugees. This has been made possible due to constant advocacy with Tamil Nadu government. Refugees are living in 117 camps of 25 districts. They are allowed to move out of the camps at 6:00 a.m in the

morning and come back at 6:00 p.m, so their livelihood and higher studies are being affected.

e. Mr Baba Jan Qadri from Kashmir suggested that 10 lakh people who migrated to Jammu due to military in Kashmir should come back to Kashmir.

Second Sub-Group was asked to discuss on the *Human Rights of the minorities*, *ethnic groups and communities.* This group mostly consisted of participants from Indian states of North East, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat, who shared their views on the Human Rights violation of minorities in their respective states.

a. Delegates from Gujarat shared their trauma of 2002 carnage/pogrom and sorry state of Human Rights of the Muslims as well as Christians. One thing common that came out from the presentation and discussion of the Gujarati delegates was that even though Muslims were the victims during the 2002 carnage, they are still being targeted by the State machinery and imprisoned on false pretext. In this context, Mohammad Owais talked about his younger brother who is in jail for the last four years on false charges, the only reason that he sees for his imprisonment is that, since he worked for social causes and talked about the rights of the Muslims in the state, he is being victimized.

b. Mr S.K Shastri from Haryana said that a person named Baljit was killed by a Valmiki Society boy, his house was burnt. He also told us that there is a lot of
discrimination in Haryana on basis of Caste/Religion.

a. Mr Yogesh from Madhya Pradesh said that there are conflicts between the Christian people and the tribal and conversion is being made an issue in mostly BJP ruled states

b. Mr Prakash from Manipur said that there are no human rights in the state. Army can do anything from search to shoot.

c. Mrs Shama Parvin from Delhi said shops, household goods was burnt, and people returning from work were beaten and imprisoned. The government was suppose to give Rs 1 lakh to the injured but did not give. She also told us that people and police in Delhi trouble Muslim girls in the slums, therefore they are scared to venture out of their houses and hence, remain uneducated.

d. Participant from Assam said that the ethnic and tribal communities who work in tea gardens are compelled to live in inhuman conditions.

e. Razia Patel from Maharashtra said that there is problem of identity. People are questioned about their true identity and are called Anti-Indians.

Third topic given to the sub-group for discussion on the first day was titled *"What is Democracy for the underprivileged million in South Asia".*

a. The minorities, backward classes, Muslims and Christians are denied their fundamental human rights because of caste, creed, religion and economic disparities.

b. Kashmiris face identity crisis problems. Innocent people are massacred and some trapped in false cases. Innocent students are put behind bars.

c. There is women exploitation in Gujarat, Bhutan, Nepal, Orrisa and Rajasthan.

d. In Chattisgarh, children under the age of 14 years are exploited.

e. In Bhutan, the Refugee camps give rise to polygamy, child marriage. Girls are forced to work in bars, which increases the risk of HIV.

f. Multinational companies in Himachal Pradesh are becoming super powers leading to unemployment and eradicating small scale industries.

g. Muslim are living in dilapidated conditions, facing lot of civic problems e.g. electricity, cleaniness etc in most of the areas inhabited by the Muslims in India

h. People in Nepal yearn for true democracy, are against monarchy and nepotism. They want constituent assembly to help them as the main population is kept backward.

On the second day as well, the delegates were again divided into three groups and given three different topics to deliberate upon. The first group discussed the issue of "*Militarization and Nuclearization in South Asia"* The highlight of this discussions were:

a. Mr. Jatin Desai from Mumbai informed that for militarization, a plane F-16 is purchased worth 60 million dollars whereas with the same amount 20,000 hospitals can be constructed. He also said that in India, 19 paise of one rupee is spent on defense, 3 paise on health & 2.5p on primary education therefore the budget allocation should be more people oriented than military oriented.

b. Dr. Jagroop S. Sandhu, Prof. of Political Science Deptt. G.N.D.U. stated that 98% of world trade is conducted through wider ways. But it has been affected due to an unending game of weapons. Common issues are ignored due to nuclearisation.

c. It was followed by a house discussion in which Mr. Babar Jan Qadri from Kashmir stated that nuclearisation is a conspiracy. 60% of natural resources are in Asia but majority is being used by west and not for the welfare of Asians.

d. Dr. Charaf, a missionary from *Khudai Khidmetgar*, An International Orginasation, feeling sad upon the condition of Kashmiris, said that the refined art of Kashmiris which was needle and chisel is rapidly eloping from the region. With terrorism, youth have gone astray; they have started picking up weapons. This psychological change has brought the Kashmir society to a total chaos.

e. Ms. Zulekha Jabin, a social activist from Chattisgarh stressed upon the causes of terrorism. She considered the mingling of feudalism, communalism and capitalism as a major cause for the problem.

f. Mr. Shuja Shah from Himalayan Mission for Advocacy, Youth Awareness and Training (HIMAYAT) said that there is a gross violation of Human Rights in Kashmir. Elderly People, children, even mentally challenged or handicapped people are not spared. Women are the worst sufferers. Sexual exploitation and the sex scandals are on a rise and this all can be attributed to the presence of military and militarization of the area.

g. Ms. Phyo Phyo from Burma stated about the consequences of military rule in Burma. She explained about uprising in September in which more than 200 people were shot dead by the regimes and more than 6,000 men and women were arrested. Arms should not be allowed to enter Burma.

Another topic given to the delegates to deliberate upon was "*Violence against minorities and rise of religious fundamental in South Asia"*, which again witnessed healthy discussion and concrete suggestions as how to root this out from the South Asian countries.

a. According to the activists from Bhutan, "Religious prosecution and discrimination against Christians is the major issue in Bhutan. Absolute power lies in the hands of the king. However, a bit of flexibility is assured as of 2008.

b. Discrimination against Muslims and tribal is a cause of worry in Rajasthan as well. These minorities are blamed for all the riots in Rajasthan and are also targeted by the RSS.

c. Mr. Prakash from Manipur told the house that conflicts between the people of same religion but different seats really bothers Manipur. These conflicts are taken advantage of by the government.

d. Kashmir, once known as a heaven on Earth turned out to be a hell for the residents due to constant turmoil and violence.

e. Increase in the number of divorce cases has also become a pressing issue for South Asia. Survey reports that out of every five houses in Orrisa, there exist two houses with three generations of women divorced. The main reason for this is the interference of the Mullahs and lack of awareness amongst women.

f. Even in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, the condition of women is pitiful. They are subjected to rape and mental torture by their families and are deprived of education and facilities like mobiles and two wheelers.

Last topic for discussion in the two day conclave was ***"****Development and Conflict Induced Displacement and the plight of the excluded in South Asia"*.

a. Mr Lakhan Singh talked about exploitation of natural resources e.g. Shivnath River which is a 32 km river bed was sold for a very minimal price. He also mentioned about the Naxalite Problems arising because of displacement of people and multinational companies i.e. corporate groups like Jindals taking over and exploiting resources.

b. Ms Sitara Begum from Orissa talked about the displacement taking place in the name of development, main victims being the senior citizens, tribal, fairer sex and children. The social, economic and political conditions of the common man are deteriorating every day.

c. Sister Ann from Jharkand, who was connected with Mahila Samiti for 12 years stated that the girls who were sent as domestic workers to Delhi and other parts of India are maltreated. Widows are being burnt alive in name of sorcery and witch craft for acquiring their land.

d. 16-20 lakh people have migrated to Delhi and are living in slums. Only 13 lakh out of them have been provided shelter. For the preparation of *2010 Common Wealth Games* people are being evacuated from slum areas and sent to dilapidated places where the living conditions are deplorable and there are no means of livelihood available.

e. Activist from Kashmir said that 75% of agricultural land has been taken over by the administrations. He mentioned that the quality of saffron is deteriorating because of cement factories and people are being misled as far as handicrafts are concerned since shawls are imported from Amritsar by the Kashmiris and then sold as Kashmiri shawls.

f. Mr Saito from Assam said that since 1947, 19 lakh people have been rendered homeless in the name of economic development, 40 lakh people have been affected by Dam Projects and 58,000 people have been displaced in the name of Economic Development.

g. Ms Radhika Adhikari from Bhutan said that because of the Green Belt Policy in the borders of West Bengal and Assam, people are being uprooted from their settlements. She mentioned that the government exploited common Bhutanese and categorized them into 7 categories, implemented a “Martial Act” which means if a Bhutanese would marry a Non Bhutanese, their off spring would be categorized under the Non Bhutanese group.

In the concluding session, Ms Zakia Jowher, Theme Leader Peace and Human Security ActionAid, representing the INSA group, read out the *Declaration of the South Asian People’s Conclave* which is based on the feelings shared by the delegates of the different countries and their suggestions to build a peaceful South Asia.