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# Poverty Alleviation Initiatives

Volume 11, No. 4 October – December 2001

ISSN 0 858-334 X



ESCAP

## Sustainable development: Asia-Pacific countries negotiate strategy

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme, convened a three-day meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 28-30 November 2001, to develop a regional platform for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg next September, which would involve a 10-year review of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

The Ministerial-level Segment of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) began with a call by the Cambodian Prime Minister H.E. Hun Sen to develop a roadmap for sustainable development in the region by focusing on the fight against poverty.

The Prime Minister in his inaugural address confirmed that “sustainable use of natural resources cannot be achieved without addressing poverty issues”.

The Prime Minister said his Government recognized the need for radical reform in key natural resources management sectors such as forestry, fisheries and land, the major assets of the nation. “There is a crucial need to preserve the forests for our future generations and to maintain the ecological and biodiversity balance,” he said.

ESCAP Executive Secretary, Kim Hak-Su in his policy statement to 300 delegates from 19 countries stated that “the region’s environment continues to deteriorate and we continue to have the largest population of the world’s poor, numbering about 1 billion people.” Asia has the world’s



*Kim Hak-Su, ESCAP Executive Secretary, Chair Mareth Mok, Cambodian Environment Minister, and Ravi Sawhney, ESCAP*



ESCAP works towards reducing poverty and managing globalization



largest land mass affected by soil degradation, the greatest depletion of water for agriculture and, air pollution eight times that of cities in developed countries, according to a document released at the conference.

Mr. Kim Hak-Su continued that poverty reduction was the biggest challenge in building sustainable development in the region. But he cautioned that “there was no simple casual link between poverty and the environment as there was between population growth and environmental degradation.”

He said that ESCAP’s ultimate objective was sustainable development. “We need to manage our economic systems so that we can live off the dividend of our resources, while improving the overall quality of life and maintaining or expanding the asset base.” Mr. Kim confirmed that the ESCAP Secretariat would “encourage local level analyses to fully understand the nexus between poverty and environment.”

“This region faces every conceivable challenge in attaining sustainable development,” said ESCAP official Shahid Ahmed. He noted six initiatives that should be included in the Asian platform for the sustainable development summit: reducing poverty, cleaning up industry and reducing energy use, protecting biodiversity, improving management of water resources, protecting the marine environment, promoting environmental awareness and building institutions that could turn goals into actions.

“Asia-Pacific does not want charity, but greater understanding to let the universal spirit prevail in matters like aid, exchange of technologies and moderation of consumerism.”

Mr. Kalman Mizsei, Assistant Administrator and UNDP Regional Director for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, indicated that declining ecosystems, insufficient environmental management practices, population pressures, and climate change are all having a “disproportionately brutal impact on the poor.” He said “UNDP firmly believes that a win win situation can be developed by addressing poverty and environmental concerns simultaneously. He said that the WSSD is UNDP’s highest corporate priority for the next year, “UNDP stands for helping provide all the world’s citizens with the rights, opportunities and tools to live the kind of life they want, with a secure and healthy future for themselves and their children.”

UNDP has disbursed more than US\$ 1 billion in its environment and energy programme in Asia and the Pacific region. He concluded that UNDP’s main role is supporting “environmental governance” – i.e. the key operational task of assisting countries to build cross sectoral capacities and put in place effective policies and institutions to protect environment and reduce poverty.

Mr. Rolf Zelius, Chief of the Office of Environment and Social Development at the Asian Development Bank, said institutional and market failures had been key barriers to tackling environmental management problems. He said the involvement of government representatives from agencies responsible for environment, planning and finance was an important factor in making preparations for the success of WSSD.

“Billion of dollars are spent on identifying problems, but these problems are not being solved.” warned Cambodian Environment Minister Mok Mareth. He said economic growth needed to be pro-poor and gender sensitive, be based on sound environmental information, and engage the participation of a broad cross-section of the community.

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**EDITORIAL**

“The region’s environment continues to deteriorate and we continue to have the largest population of the world’s poor, numbering about 1 billion people” said Mr. Kim Hak-Su Executive Secretary of ESCAP, at the Ministerial Segment of the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which opened in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on 28 November 2001. Asia has the world’s largest land mass affected by soil degradation, the greatest depletion of water for agriculture and, air pollution eight times that of cities in developed countries. The region faces every conceivable challenge in attaining sustainable development according to ESCAP official Shahid Ahmed. Six initiatives were proposed to be included in the Asian platform for the sustainable development summit. These were reducing poverty, cleaning up industry and reducing energy use, protecting biodiversity, improving management of water resources, protecting the marine environment, promoting environmental awareness and building institutions that could turn goals into actions. At the conclusion of the meeting, a seventh initiative was added, namely action on atmosphere and climate change. All seven initiatives had been adopted. Asia-Pacific does not want charity, but greater understanding to let the universal spirit prevail in matters like aid, exchange of technologies and moderation of consumerism.

Alleviating poverty was high on the agenda as delegates gathered in Bangkok on 11 December 2001 at a meeting organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to review the region’s progress in achieving goals set by recent global and regional action plans. Participants at the three-day Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas were looking at opportunities to reduce rural poverty through the increased use of information and communication technology (ICT), according to ESCAP.

We will focus on the main issues relating to the use of information and communication technology for rural poverty alleviation in our next issue.

The Committee also discussed the growing phenomenon of the urban poor, focusing on poverty, lack of access to services and exclusion from power. The Committee reviewed the region’s progress in implementing the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen Declaration and related action plans. The reassessment focused on obstacles

encountered in alleviating poverty, expanding employment and promoting the social integration of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

According to ESCAP, a majority of the Asian population is expected to be living in urban areas by 2025 and cities may become home to two thirds of the region’s poor. Other factors contributing to the rise in poverty included the 1997 Asian financial crisis, which drastically reduced economic growth in the region, causing economic contraction in several countries and resulting in decreased spending on social development and increased unemployment. In addition, the tragic events of 11 September and their aftermath had also affected regional development.

In this connection our attention turns to Afghanistan, where Afghan women called for the creation of an Afghan women’s commission to work directly with the interim government, at a two-day international roundtable in Brussels on women’s role in reconstructing Afghanistan. The round table concluded on 12 December 2001 with an action plan defining the critical actions donors must take to ensure Afghan women’s role. The commission would aid in the selection of women from inside and outside Afghanistan for leadership positions in the new administration.

The group called for rebuilding girls’ schools and training teachers; founding a women’s radio station to inform about peace, reconstruction and political developments; conducting a survey of girls forced into prostitution or trafficking because of the war or poverty; and providing emergency housing for the most vulnerable women.

The meeting was organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the government of Belgium. “We cannot have a situation where warlords are brought to the table and not women,” UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer told participants. “We cannot have a situation where leadership is seen in terms of arms and not in terms of the courage that women have shown. In short, the rebuilding process itself will suffer without women’s leadership”.

**Queries can be directed to:**

**Mr Kiran Pyakuryal,  
Chief, Rural Development Section**

**Ms Ivy Rodricks, Editor  
e-mail: [rodricks.unescap@un.org](mailto:rodricks.unescap@un.org)**



## China to host a training programme on green food and sustainable agriculture

ESCAP, since 1998, had carried out a series of activities to support organic farming and green food as a tool for rural poverty alleviation. Several meetings were organized including the Asia-Pacific Symposium on Sustainable Food Production, Income Generation and Consumer Protection, Beijing, 23 to 26 June 1998; the Asia-Pacific Symposium to establish a Network on Green Food and Sustainable Agriculture, Kunming (China), 8 to 11 November 2001; and a Symposium on Exploring the Potential of Organic Agriculture for Rural Poverty Alleviation in Asia and the Pacific, held in Chiang Mai (Thailand) from 26 to 29 November 2001. One concrete result from the previous ESCAP activities in this area was the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Organic Farming and Green Food Information Network (OFGF.NET) as a non-profit international organization.

The Rural Development Section of ESCAP's Population and Rural and Urban Development Division has begun preparations for another activity to facilitate the exchange of information on green food and sustainable agriculture among countries in the region. In close cooperation with the China Green Food Association and with financial support of the Government of China, a six day Workshop-cum-Field Training on Green Food and Sustainable Agriculture is scheduled to be held towards the end of April 2002 in Xi'an, Shangxi Province, China. Workshop sessions will address policy – making, as well as managerial and technical aspects of green food. The China Green Food Development Center will provide training on the certification system for green food developed in China as well as quality standards. Several training sessions will be carried out in the field at green food farms in the vicinity of Xi'an city. There will be plenty of formal and informal opportunities for the exchange of experience among participants.

Eleven countries, namely Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam, will be invited to participate in the workshop with financial support from the ESCAP secretariat. Participants will represent government and/or non-governmental organizations depending on the country. Upon return from the training workshop, each participants is expected to organize follow-up activities at the national level, so as to share the proceedings and outcome of this workshop with various counterparts within their respective countries.

For further information, please contact Margot Schuerman, Economic Affairs Officer, Rural Development Section, Population and Rural and Urban Development Division, email <[schuerman.unescap@un.org](mailto:schuerman.unescap@un.org)>.



## **FADINAP closes with the Regional Workshop on Integrated Plant Nutrition Systems (IPNS) Development and Rural Poverty Alleviation**

**T**he Fertilizer Advisory Development and Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (FADINAP) a programme of Rural Development Section (RDS) met for its final major activity, the Regional Workshop on Integrated Plant Nutrition Systems (IPNS) Development and Rural Poverty Alleviation in the United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok from 18 to 20 September 2001 to review the progress made in IPNS implementation, by the participating countries. FADINAP invited most of its 27 member countries in Asia and the Pacific and representatives from FAO and DANIDA-funded Integrated Soil Fertility and Fertilizer Management Project in Bangladesh. Just as the concept of integrated plant nutrition systems (IPNS) and sustainable agriculture is taking firm root in Asian countries, German assistance to FADINAP is drawing to a close. The programme had been funded by Germany for a little over a decade, with recognized success and

appreciation by the participating member countries.

During the past four years, ESCAP through FADINAP had been assisting Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam to reorient their agricultural policies from Green-Revolution-type high chemical input agriculture towards a more environmentally sustainable agriculture. The observation made in many developing countries following the introduction of high-yielding seed varieties in the 1960s and 1970s was that, after rapid growth of rice and wheat production in the 1980s and 1990s, growth rates faltered or could only be maintained with increasing dosages of chemical fertilizers. Another observation was the changing soil structures due to reduced organic matter content and moisture holding capacities, depletion of trace elements and increased soil erosion and other forms of environmental degradation. At the same time, dependence on commercial farm

inputs had put farmers in cycles of indebtedness they found increasingly difficult to escape.

The IPNS programme implemented by ESCAP's Rural Development Section through FADINAP supported surveys of farming conditions in the five participating countries of Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam to establish methods of plant nutrition management and forms of sustainable production that could be adjusted and combined with modern inputs, namely the recycling of farm waste, composting, and green manuring, among others. In some countries the existing traditional methods were submitted to scientific scrutiny, to cite an example, the preparation of compost, where it was found that the existing methods led to substantial nutrient losses. Revised procedures were developed and farmers were trained in their application. This resulted in substantial income increases, in Nepal, where vegetable growers were able to double their income. Since the cultivation of garden vegetable is an activity often carried out by women, the project demonstrated an opportunity on how to generate additional income for this often disadvantaged group.

After detailed deliberations, participants to the regional workshop came up with conclusions and recommendations to promote IPNS development in Asia and the Pacific region.

For detailed information, go to [www.fadinap.org/ipns](http://www.fadinap.org/ipns)





## **Government of Japan and UNDP launch ICT trust fund with US\$5 million contribution from Japan**

**W**ith a US\$5 million contribution from the Government of Japan, Mr Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on 31 October 2001 launched the organization's first Trust Fund for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for Development.

In receiving the fund, Malloch Brown said "This generous contribution moves the Government of Japan and the UNDP one step closer towards creating "digital opportunities" for all and responds in concrete terms to requests for assistance from developing countries who wish to harness the promise of ICT for development". "ICT provides powerful tools and can serve as a critical enabler to achieve many of the development goals agreed to, by world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit".

While many developing countries are convinced of ICT's potential, they are not in a position to take advantage of it. Recent estimates indicated that less than 15 per cent of the total number of ICT and Internet users lived in these countries. The digital divide threatens to exacerbate the existing social and economic inequalities between countries and communities and increases the cost of inaction.

For his part, Denis Gilhooly, Director of ICT for Development at UNDP said, "It is becoming clear that the potential contribution to development is too great for this to be left to a patchwork of stand-alone initiatives. While the private sector is the principal driver in this process, it cannot act alone. Our work in the Digital Opportunity Initiative, a public-private partnership with Accenture and the Markle Foundation, points to the need for national ICT strategies to address the full range of policy, infrastructure, applications, human capacity development, and enterprise issues. This trust fund is aimed at providing countries with some assistance in doing exactly that".

The UNDP ICT for Development Trust Fund will support ICT work in six main areas, including the design of national e-development strategies; initiatives to put ICT in the service of democratic governance, poverty reduction and other development imperatives; capacity-building and implementation assistance; and promotion of ICT's potential. It will also support the adaptation of such technologies and related systems to meet local conditions and address regional, national and local needs. To complement ICT strategies at the national level, the trust fund dedicates resources to support innovative approaches and bottom-up initiatives.

It provides a mechanism for fast-track follow-up to the recommendations of global task forces, such as the United Nations ICT Task Force and the G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force) set up to address the digital divide. The DOT Force, launched with the support of the Japanese Government at the Okinawa-Kyushu G8 Summit in 2000, is a cooperative effort to identify ways in which the technology revolution can benefit all the world's people, especially the poorest and most marginalized groups. The DOT Force action plan was approved by the G8 Leaders at Genoa. UNDP co-hosted the secretariat along with the World Bank.

UNDP's partnership approach stresses the need to adopt inclusive and consultative processes in countries involving the private and not-for-profit sectors in addition to government. The trust fund mechanism is structured to provide the donor community, the private sector, and non-profit foundations with flexibility to contribute funds earmarked for specific kinds of assistance. It simplifies the process through which developing countries can access these funds, while ensuring accountability through rigorous reporting requirements and auditing procedures.





UNDP has been a leader in recent international efforts to address the digital divide and mainstream ICT as an enabler for development. Through programmes and initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Networking Programme, the Asia

Pacific Development Information Programme and the Internet Initiative for Africa, UNDP has already helped deploy Internet nodes in more than 45 countries and has trained over 25,000 organizations and institutions.

For more information on the ICT Trust Fund, visit, <http://www.undp.org/trustfunds/TTF-ICTe.PDF>

## Biogas and clean water for women in Viet Nam

A team of scientists and development specialists is helping women in rural and mountainous areas in Viet Nam take advantage of science and technology to improve their lives, promote equality and reduce poverty.

Two projects, one promoting biogas as an alternative energy source and the other providing access to clean water, are examples of how technology can be used by and for women.

The team, from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, is headed by Deputy Director, Tran Xuan Dinh. It is participating in a regional assessment on women and technology carried out by the Asia Pacific Gender Equality Network (APGEN) and the UNESCO South-East Asia Regional Office for Science and Technology.

The biogas project, in Quang Ninh province, has helped families reduce household chores by 40 per cent, eliminated smoke from cooking over wood fires and put animal waste to good use. A biogas tank, built from bricks and other local materials, generates gas for cooking, heating water and other uses from waste from stables,

latrines and kitchens. It costs less than a septic tank.

The process yields fertilizer for vegetable gardens and fruit trees, increasing household income. Women have more time for themselves, their families and social activities. About three quarters of the province's 58 villages have households using biogas. Costs are shared equally by the ministry, the Farmers' Union and participating households.

In Tong Dau commune, Hoa Binh province, another project aims to provide women access to clean water, freeing them from the backbreaking job of fetching water from distant springs. It will also improve health care for the commune's 4,700 people by providing clean water for the district hospital and upgrading family hygiene. Local women helped identify water sources and sites for wells. The ministry is seeking funds to construct the wells and piping systems.

Ten other countries are participating in the APGEN regional assessment, which aims to promote women's empowerment through science and technology. The project is identifying best practices in five areas: renewable

energy, water, biotechnology, health and, information and communications technology. APGEN activities are implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) with funding from UNDP.

*For more information, please contact Marion Tan, UNDP/APGEN.*



*A biogas tank under construction*



*The project is benefitting women. Viet Nam requests funding for public administration reform*



## Donors and United Nations Agencies gather in Brussels to listen to the priorities of Afghan women

Nearly 40 Afghan women travelled to Brussels for a roundtable on “Building Women’s Leadership in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan”. Held from 10 to 11 December 2001, the meeting was co-organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Government of Belgium. The women formulated the Brussels Action Plan, identifying critical actions that they wanted donors to undertake to ensure that women are central to efforts to rebuild their country.

The roundtable brought together a diverse group of Afghan women from varying backgrounds and political beliefs, both from within and outside of Afghanistan. A journalist and a community development worker from within Afghanistan, activists from refugee camps in Pakistan and Islamic Republic of Iran as well as Afghan women living in Europe and the United States were among those participating.

The women called for the creation of a Commission of Afghan Women to work directly with the interim authority and provisional government that was agreed to at the United Nations-sponsored meeting held in Bonn in early December. The Commission would coordinate efforts to provide names of Afghan women from within and outside of Afghanistan who could be considered for leadership positions, as new government structures are being created.

Other priorities articulated by the group included:

- Rebuilding of girls’ schools and provision of massive and immediate teacher training courses to ensure the re-opening of schools by March 2002.
- Establishing a women’s radio station to convey messages of peace and information on reconstruction, rehabilitation and political developments.
- Conducting a survey to identify the problems and solutions for women and girls who have been forced into prostitution and trafficking as a result of war, poverty, and an oppressive regime.
- Providing housing for the most vulnerable women, including widows, female-headed households, and disabled women.

Stressing the importance of listening to Afghan Women’s Voices, Noeleen Heyzer, UNIFEM Executive Director, told participants, “We cannot have a situation where warlords are brought to the table, and not women. We cannot have a situation where leadership is seen in terms of arms, and not in terms of the courage that women have shown. In short, the rebuilding process itself will suffer without women’s leadership”.

Eddy Boutmans, State Secretary for Development Cooperation in Belgium, noted that Brussels has been the site of two meetings of Afghan women over the past two weeks, referring to the Afghan Women’s Summit held from 4 to 6 December. He observed that choosing Brussels as a site for these meetings “is also due to the fact that Belgium, the European Union and the European Commission are becoming increasingly aware of the importance and need of an active gender policy in our own member states”.

Women met directly with decision-makers from donor and United Nations agencies – including Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of UNDP and Miekko Nishimuza, Vice-President of the South Asia Division of the World Bank. Emma Bonino, EU Parliamentarian and a long-time advocate for Afghan women, also addressed the group.

As a concrete follow-up to the meeting, UNIFEM will establish a Fund for Afghan Women’s Leadership to support and promote ongoing capacity building of women and women’s organizations. All of the donors and United Nations agencies at the meeting affirmed their commitment to maintaining a strong focus on women’s participation in community, regional and national efforts to rebuild Afghanistan. The conference ended with the adoption of a final Call to Action indicating donor commitments and the full text of Afghan women’s priorities.





## Netherlands gives big backing to UNEP in run up to World Summit on Sustainable Development

An announcement on 28 November 2001, confirmed that the Government of the Netherlands had almost doubled their contribution for the year 2001.

The Netherlands, already a significant financial supporter of the organization, had on 28 November 2001 decided to raise their contribution to the core budget of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) by around US\$2.1 million to a total of about US\$4.5 million.

The Environment Fund, which in recent years has been declining, is UNEP's core funding. It is critical for the organization's activities in areas such as chemicals, early warning of disasters, wildlife and environmental law as laid out in UNEP's work programme and authorized by its Governing Council of 58 nations, the organization's supreme decision-making body.

Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP, said: "The decision by the Dutch to give us this much needed and much welcomed support has come at an important time as we head for next year's crucial World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. We are facing the New Year with renewed optimism concerning the financial stability of the organization. I can only again thank the Government of the Netherlands for their substantial and timely intervention".

The increase in contributions comes in the wake of review and assessment of UNEP by the Government of the Netherlands.

Gertjan Storm, the Netherlands Ambassador to Kenya and Permanent Representative to UNEP in Nairobi, Kenya, said: "We were pleased with what we found. It is our conclusion that UNEP has become a more efficient and effective organization and that our money is being generally well spent. The increased contributions recognize the importance of the environment in the goal of delivering a healthier, less poverty ridden and a more sustainably developed world. Indeed we are keen for UNEP to deliver on the issue of poverty and its links with the environment. The increased funding also underlines our support for the Executive Director and the excellent work he is carrying out on behalf of the international community".

The Netherlands is also backing specific projects through so called Trust or "earmarked" funds. Over the past two years they have provided important amounts of funding for areas such as environmental law for Africa, economics and trade, the drawing up of UNEP's pioneering Global Environment Outlook Report and the Global Programme of Action (GPA) for reducing pollution of the seas from the land. The GPA is headquartered in the Hague.

UNEP's core work programme, the lion's share of which is funded from the Environment Fund, is estimated at about US\$50 million a year. Other basic costs include around US\$14.5 million for management and administrative support costs. Last year contributions from governments, which are made on a voluntary basis, to the Environment Fund amounted to some US\$41 million. UNEP managed to afford the programme last year because it was able to carry over about US\$22 million from the previous biennium budget.

UNEP's fund raising experts anticipate that the final figure for 2001 would be up to US\$45 million. While still a shortfall, it is far higher than had been feared.

For more information please contact: Tore J Brevik, UNEP Spokesman/Director, Division of Communications and Public Information, on Tel: 254 2 623292, E-mail: [tore.brevik@unep.org](mailto:tore.brevik@unep.org), Nick Nuttall, UNEP Head of Media, on Tel: 254 2 623084, Mobile 254 (0) 733 632755, E-mail: [nick.nuttall@unep.org](mailto:nick.nuttall@unep.org)





## Parliamentarians' call for action

### Call for Action

**Convinced** that poverty is one of the most important factors that cause ill-health and diseases, such as tuberculosis and malaria, and that ill-health essentially leads to poverty, and that global advocacy for social development rightly accords poverty alleviation and health development a central place in the overall socio-economic development agendas – at national and international levels,

**Realizing** the close nexus among poverty, environment and health and aware of the urgent need to break this vicious circle through macro and micro level interventions, .....

**Recognizing** the paradoxical situation that while government investments in health and the subsidies inherent therein are meant for the poor, who disproportionately suffer from ill-health, disease and premature mortality, the benefits in reality are mostly reaped by the higher and middle income groups, .....

**Realizing** that the poor, who are voiceless at present and need to be empowered to organize themselves, as it will lead to their active involvement in health programmes and enable them to become proactive to protect and promote their own health and alleviate their poverty, .....

**Convinced** of the primary responsibility of governments for providing accessible and affordable health care to the poor by allocation of adequate budgetary resources,

**We, the Parliamentarians attending the Regional Conference on Impact of Tuberculosis and Malaria on Poverty call upon ourselves and all our colleagues to act on the following:**

### (1) Advocacy

- 1.1 Advocate the urgency to break the vicious circle of poverty and diseases, in view of the detrimental effects of diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis on poverty and the fact that poverty aggravates both malaria and tuberculosis,
- 1.2 Debate on poverty, inside and outside the parliament, should include the health dimensions in order to focus on the centrality of health in development and poverty reduction,
- 1.3 Facilitate the government to negotiate with World Bank, other global financial agencies, bilateral donors and megafoundations for substantially stepping up their assistance for health development of the poor, while avoiding verticality and thus ensuring sustainability,
- 1.4 Advocate adequate budgetary provision for health and other allied sectors which deal with

**T**he Regional Conference of Parliamentarians on Impact of Tuberculosis and Malaria on Poverty was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, from 27-29 November 2000. Inaugurated by Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the Conference was hosted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh, with the support of the South-East Asia Regional Office of the World Health Organization (WHO-SEARO). It was the sixth in the series of regional conferences of parliamentarians, organized since 1996, on important health issues in the perspective of sustainable development.

Parliamentarians and other eminent persons from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand participated in the Conference.



safe water supply and basic sanitation, nutrition, and healthy environment as they impact public health, especially of the poor.

## (2) Policy Issues

- 2.1 Ensure that macro-economic policy places equal emphasis on accelerating the rate of economic growth as well as equitable distribution of the fruits of that growth by proportionately increasing investment in health, education and the basic minimum needs of the poor.
- 2.2 Progressively increase the proportion of GDP for the health sector to at least 4-5 per cent; similarly, proportionately enhance the allocation of government's budget to health and allied sectors, particularly to the poor.
- 2.3 Review and amend, as appropriate, laws and policies of health and allied sectors to minimize any adverse effect on the health of the poor, and enhance their contribution to health development.
- 2.4 Institutionalize, with adequate financial support, the mechanisms for intercountry co-operation and collaboration in priority disease control programmes and address common health problems.....

## (3) Management and Organization

- 3.1 Develop, in consultation with WHO, time-bound national plans of action for coverage of the entire population by DOTS strategy and extension of malaria control measures to all malaria-endemic areas.
- 3.2 Monitor and evaluate health programmes through the mechanisms of parliamentary and local bodies to ensure that the same are pro-poor in operation and are implemented effectively. To achieve these objectives, establish transparent monitoring mechanisms which should interact with all concerned to ensure multisectoral action for health.
- 3.3 Establish mechanisms to ensure that the recommendations of the standing committees of the parliament on health, family planning, social welfare, education etc., particularly concerning budgetary allocations, and other similar mechanisms at various levels, are properly implemented by the governments and others concerned.
- 3.4 Empower the poor to ensure that health systems are pro-poor and provide quality services, which treat clients with dignity and respect and protect them from unsafe practices and financial exploitation in both

public and private facilities.

- 3.5 Intensify governmental efforts, in partnership with all concerned, to control diseases such as malaria, TB, HIV which affect the poor and inform the people of such actions.
- 3.6 Help build social capital through increased social networks at grass-root levels and strengthen community solidarity and informed decision-making.
- 3.7 Reduce health risks by improving access of the poor to basic public health services including safe and adequate food, safe water and sanitation and protection from violence, natural disasters and displacement.
- 3.8 In addition to influencing pro-poor policy decisions at national level, act as the determining factors at the grass-root level in respective constituencies and motivate and inspire people to deal with issues of diseases and poverty.
- 3.9 Implement disease control programmes through diversified health services of government, NGOs, private practitioners, employers and communities. ....

The full text of the report is available with WHO-SEARO, New Delhi.





## New multi-million dollar partnership between the Netherlands and FAO

**T**he Netherlands and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) had signed an agreement on 22 May 2001 on a new multi-million dollar long-term cooperation. The Netherlands will contribute US\$9 million up to the end of 2002 and intends to develop this into a long-term cooperation, according to FAO.

Under the agreement, the new partnership between the Ministry for Development Cooperation, Netherlands and FAO would focus mainly on food security, agro-biodiversity and forests.

Jan Berteling, Dutch Ambassador to FAO said “I believe that with this agreement the Netherlands and FAO would enter into a new phase in our cooperation. This places the FAO/Netherlands cooperation at the fore of innovation in Dutch multilateral development policy, providing a model to be used with other agencies”.

“The new partnership will provide FAO with much needed additional funding for important inter-regional or global activities related to food and agriculture”, said Henri Carsalade, FAO Assistant Director-General, who heads the Technical Cooperation Department. “For the first time in more than 30 years of cooperation between FAO and the Netherlands, the programme offers both partners the chance for true strategic cooperation”.

The main emphasis of the partnership would be on poverty alleviation, sustainable development, cooperation with other international organizations, gender issues, and capacity building. In particular, the Government of the Netherlands will support FAO’s work on food security, including the trade dimension, the measurement of hunger and malnutrition, the

promotion of forest conservation and sustainable management, forestry and climate change, food safety, and the conservation and management of plant and animal genetic diversity.

Besides this voluntary contribution, the Netherlands pays about US\$10 million to FAO’s biannual regular budget and provides US\$30 million each year to finance FAO projects at country and regional level.



Poverty Alleviation Initiatives (PAI) is published quarterly, as an interagency endeavour to provide United Nations initiatives on poverty alleviation in Asia and the Pacific region. The inputs for the newsletter are provided by the members of the Thematic Working Group on Poverty Alleviation, Rural Development and Food Security.

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For information please contact:

### Mr Kiran Pyakuryal

Chief, Rural Development Section Population and Rural and Urban Development Division (PRUDD)  
ESCAP, United Nations Building  
Rajdamnern Avenue  
Bangkok 10200 Thailand