



An eNewsletter from SUPRO, Bangladesh

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## People's SAARC 2008 in Srilanka **SUPRO Raised Voice for Debt Cancellation**



Sri Lanka hosted the 2008 SAARC summit in Colombo between 27 July and 03 August. People's SAARC is an annual regional convergence of people's organizations and movements in parallel to the annual summit of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). For security and logistical reasons Peoples SAARC 2008 has taken place on 18, 19 and 20 July at Colombo, Sri Lanka.

SUPRO has been organizing mobilization activity within South Asian Region for last couple of years. In this link, SUPRO Chairperson Abdul Awal, Vice Chairperson Mustafizur Rahman Khan and Chief Executive Officer Prodip Kumar Roy attended the People's SAARC 2008.

The opening ceremony for this event is held at the New Town Hall just adjacent to the Viharamahadevi park where the People's SAARC has taken place. About 500 delegates from different regions and thousands of Sri Lankan participate in the events. Dr. Kazi Kholiquzzaman, Chairperson of Bangladesh Orthodoxy Samity represented Bangladesh at the opening ceremony.

On 19 July 2008, a discussion on Debt Cancellations was held which was jointly organized by SUPRO, SAAPE and VAK where SUPRO Chairperson Abdul Awal, Lidy Necphilfrom of Jubilee South spoke while SAAPE CEO Dr. Sarba Raj Khadka moderated the session. Dr. Kholiquzzaman attended the discussion and he convinces to take part in the debt cancellation campaign based on debt sustainability debate.

SUPRO also actively participated in discussion on right to food, livelihood and education thematic areas. A mass rally for peace and justice in South Asia was also held. The event ended with adopting a 17-point People's SAARC Declaration. SUPRO Vice Chairperson Mustafizur Rahman Khan attends INSA planning meeting at Candy after ending the People's SAARC 2008.

SUPRO has distributed its 3 thematic paper on Climate Change, Food Sovereignty and SAARC Development Goals at the inauguration ceremony. After the opening ceremony discussion on thematic issues was held by different civil society organizations. The main theme of Peoples SAARC 2008 is "Towards A South Asian Union" while the sub-themes include women's rights, demilitarization, denuclearization and democracy; right to food livelihood, health, education and social security in



the context of alternatives to neoliberalism; environmental justice and natural resource rights; and South Asian solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles worldwide.

## Regional Conference on Food Sovereignty demanded **Reform Agrarian Policies to Fight against Poverty and Hunger**



Peasant leaders from different countries of South Asia participating in South Asian Regional Conference on Food Sovereignty, Agrarian Reform and Peasants' Rights have concluded that without Scientific Reform, there are remote chances of achieving sustained economic revolution in the countries of the region where agriculture is the mainstay of the majority people living in rural areas. Therefore, they urged the governments of the South Asia region to devise policies for scientific agrarian

reform to fight against poverty and hunger and assure fundamental rights of all citizens to food, energy, health and education, including other economic, social and cultural rights. The conference was held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 8-9 July 2008.

As the country focal organization of Food Sovereignty, Livelihood and Employment thematic group of South Asian Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), SUPRO National Council Members - Motiur Rahman, Daisy Amed, Shamima Akhter Moon Moon and Chief Executive Officer Prodig Kumar Roy attended this regional conference. In this two-days conference, Shamima Akhter Moon Moon and Prodig Kumar Roy moderated two sessions respectively on behalf of Bangladesh delegation. The speakers of the conference also demanded for immediate actions to stop and annul the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) by forcing farmers to evict from their lands that they nurtured for centuries, which are the tenets of corporate globalization. Lamenting intolerable price hike in agricultural inputs including energy, the peasant leaders demanded for subsidies and support prices to cope with the unfavorable impacts of weather conditions in agricultural production as a consequence of climate change phenomena under the aegis of global warming to which the group of G8 countries and the IFIs are largely responsible. The other issues that need to be addressed without further delay are stopping of the increased cases of farmers' suicidal due to continuously reducing farm production and piling up of increased debt burden, forcing the farmers unable to pay back their loans, rather adding more for maintaining their families' survival. The increased feminization of poverty had further added the sufferings of already victimized women farmers; hence poverty needs to be eradicated as the top most priority of the region. The delegates also reaffirmed their commitment to continue the struggles for reinstating people's sovereign rights on food and make the states accountable to solve the current crises of food and energy in the region.

Speaking as Chief Guest of the concluding ceremony of the conference, the Chairman of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal (aka Prachanda) committed for the implementation of food sovereignty, education, health and employment which are included as the fundamental rights in the interim constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. He further said, however, if they failed to implement these principles into practice, the provision alone in the constitution will remain as another lie, and a mere repetition of inaction of the previous governments.

Similarly, Mr. Jhala Nath Khanal, the General Secretary of Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist and Leninist) lauded the roles played by the ordinary people, specifically the peasants that played mammoth role during the People's Movement –II in Nepal, in asserting the sovereign rights of the people and forcing the autocratic king's regime to kneel down. He further said, "The issues of right to food and food sovereignty are closely linked with the institutionalization of scientific agrarian reform for the peasants' occupational, professional and communal rights, therefore, our party is committed for

constitutional protection and promotion of the rights of the peasants". This two-day regional conference was organized by All Nepal Peasants' Federation (ANPFa) – the Regional Thematic Focal Point of Food Sovereignty, Livelihood and Employment Theme of South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE) and participated by over 350 delegates from different countries and organizations in the region. Before attending at Regional Conference Motiur Rahman and Daisy Ahmed met the farmers at grassroots level at Nepal.

## MDG Campaign 2008

### A Review workshop is going on at 46 districts.



SUPRO is organizing a review workshop at 46 districts titled "MDG Campaign 200: Where We Are?" as a part of MDG campaign 2008. MDG is the one of main thematic areas of SUPRO. SUPRO is organizing this workshop to create awareness and ignite the initiative of the government to achieve MDGs and ensure transparency and accountability of international development partners.

Initially a draft discussion paper was developed for district level workshop. In the discussion paper, SUPRO has showed the progress and evaluation of MDGs 8 goals up to 2008 and demanded that the donors must fulfill their commitments towards global poverty elimination in order to help the poor countries attain the Millennium Developments Goals. They also demanded that rich countries should cut off the debts of the poor nations to help them overcome the millennium challenges. After the district level workshop, SUPRO will prepare a people position paper and organize a round table discussion in national level, share people's voice among political leader, government official, civil society leader and different professional bodies.

In 2007, SUPRO organized a campaign on the eve of Mid-Term Review of Millennium Development Goals . As a part of the Campaign SUPRO organized 42 round-table meetings at district level, 1 press conference and 1 round table meeting in national level where political leaders, civil society leaders, professional groups, journalists expressed their voices regarding MDG. SUPRO Research Team developed 8 thematic concept papers and two posters on 8 Goals which were launched in the press conference. NTV broadcasted the interview of SUPRO activists on MDGs and a short briefing on Bangladesh's progress published in national Daily Newspapers. SUPRO is going to publish a midterm review report on MDGs.

In 2005, SUPRO organized grassroots mobilization and published a review poster on MDGs titled `Target 2015: where we are in 2005' and distributed national and district level stakeholders including government officials, political leaders, Trade union leaders, journalists and civil society leaders etc.

