

**RETHINKING CIVIL SOCIETY ROLE
IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
PERSPECTIVE FROM ASIA**

Editors

**HARKA GURUNG
GANESH GURUNG**

**ASIAN NETWORK FOR ALTERNATIVE COOPERATION
Kathmandu, Nepal**

**RETHINKING CIVIL SOCIETY ROLE
IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
PERSPECTIVE FROM ASIA**

Editors

**HARKA GURUNG
GANESH GURUNG**

ASIAN NETWORK FOR ALTERNATIVE COOPERATION
Kathmandu, Nepal

Published by :
Asian Network for Alternative Cooperation (ANAC)
Kathmandu, Nepal

Designed and Layout by:
Rabindra Roy

First Published in December 2001

©ANAC

Price : NRs 100
(US \$ 5 including postal charge)

Printed at :
Nepal Association of the Blind (NAB) Offset Printing Press
Maharajgunj, Kathmandu, Nepal

CONTENTS

Abbreviations

<i>Introduction / Harka Gurung</i>	1
1. Importance of Active and Good NGOs for Environment and Development / Arvid Solheim	6
2. Sustainable Development and Livelihood Security: Best Practices from Nepal / Jagannath Adhikari & Ganesh Gurung	12
3. Sustainable Development in the 21 st Century: Nepal's Experiences and Opportunities / Hum Bahadur Gurung	23
4. Sustainable Development: Sri Lanka's Story / Suranjan Kodithuwakku	30
5. Rethinking Values in Development / Varun Vidyarthi	36
6. Participation as a Measure of Good Governance: SEARICE's Experience / Corazan Zesus	43
7. "Civil Will" in Sustainable Development: Some Thoughts for Discussion /SEARICE	56
8. The Philippines' Compliance to Sustainable Development Commitments : Long in Promises, Short in Deeds / SEARICE	66

Abbreviations

ANGOC	Asian NGO Coalition
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BAFPS	Committee on Food Safety and Standards, Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards
BFAD	Bureau of Food and Drugs
BISAD	Bohol Initiators for Sustainable Agriculture Development)
CART	Center for Alternative Rural Technology
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBDC-Bohol	Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation Program – Bohol Project
CONSERVE	Community-based Native Seeds Research Centre
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EPC	Environmental Protection Council
GATT	General Agreement on Tariff and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMO	Genetically Modified Organisms
GNP	Gross National Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IACBGR	Inter-Agency Committee on Biological and Genetic Resources
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPB	Institute of Plant Breeding
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
ISCBGR	Inter-Agency Committee on Biological and Genetic Resources
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
LGU	Local Government Unit
MASIPAG	Farmer-Scientist Partnership in Agricultural Research
NCBP	National Committee on Bio-Safety of the Philippines
NEDA	National Economic Development Authority

NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIDS	Nepal Institute of Development Studies
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSSD	National Strategy for Sustainable Development
PA 21	Philippine Agenda 21
PBE	Philippine Business for the Environment
PBSP-LDAP	The Philippines Business for Social Progress Local Development Assistance
PCSD	Philippine Council for Sustainable Development
PGR	Plant Genetic Resource
PHES	Potentially Hazardous Exotic Species
Phi Rice	Philippine Rice Research Institute
PITAHC	Philippine Institute for Traditional and Alternative Health Care
PO	People's Organisation
PPDC	Provincial Planning and Development Council
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PVP	Plant Variety Protection
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
SCDP	Sustainable Community Development Program
SDAN	Sustainable Development Agenda for Nepal
SEARICE	Southeast Asia Regional Institute for Community Education
TRIPS	Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights
UNCED	The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCSD	United Nations Council on Sustainable Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programmes
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNTAP	United Nations Technical Assistance Program
UPLB	University of the Philippines in Los Banos
WB	World Bank
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

INTRODUCTION

*Harka Gurung**

In recent years, the phrase "sustainable development" (SD) has become so pervasive as to acquire the status of the cliché or jargon. But what is SD, as it seems "an article of faith, a shibboleth; often used, but little explained". The interpretations of SD vary so widely that some call it a "contradiction in terms" or "another development truism". Most equate SD with environmentally-sound development. Sometimes it is assumed to be "sustained growth", "successful development" or even to have a social connotation. In fact, the phrase "sustainable society" was used as early as 1974 in the report of an Ecumenical Conference on Science & Technology for Human Development convened by the World Council of Churches¹.

The central idea of SD had an environmental basis as defined by IUCN: "the overall aim of achieving sustainable development through conservation of living resources"². It addressed only the issue of ecological sustainability rather than sustainable development. Since then, SD has acquired a broader connotation as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs³.

* Former Minister of Nepal (1975-78) and Chairman of Board of Directors, New ERA Consultants, Kathmandu.

¹ Dowdeswall, Elizabeth, 1994. "A global view", in Partnerships in Practice, London: Dept. of Environment, pp.143-146..

² IUCN, 1980. World Conservation Strategy : Living Resources Conservation for Sustainable Development, Gland.

³ WCED, 1987. Our Common Future., New York.

The WCED report stressed the inter-generational nature of sustainability along with exploitation of resources as a key aspect and institutional change involving the people. However, the mainstream formulation of SD still suffers from incomplete understanding of the links between poverty and environmental degradation, conceptual vagueness relating to the role of economic growth, and lack of clarity between conservation of natural resources and sustainability of development⁴. SD can be seen as the logical conclusion of the paradigmatic progression from frontier economics to deep ecology through resource management and eco-development⁵.

The concept of sustainability has multiple dimensions – economic, environmental and social. Thus, a holistic view is a *sine qua non* for sustainability. And it is futile to talk of sustainability without addressing the problem of poverty⁶. Poverty is at the root of environmental degradation as poor people are forced to overuse their habitat in order to survive. Therefore, poverty alleviation seems essential for environmental sustainability. The original meaning of the word "development", derived from the Old French is to envelop or unfold more fully. Sustainability is, therefore, about the survival of people through the unfolding of their potentials for development.

Asia Network for Alternative Cooperation organized a Regional Workshop on Sustainable Development in Pokhara on 29th November 2001. The event was sponsored by the Development Fund, an INGO based in Norway. The Workshop papers compiled here represent case studies from India, Nepal, The Philippines and Sri Lanka, It is symptomatic of vibrant NGO movement in the Philippines that majority of the papers pertain to that country.

⁴ Lele, S.M., 1991. "Sustainable development : A critical review, "World Development, Vol. XIX, pp. 607-621.

⁵ Franks, T.R., 1996. "Managing Sustainable Development" Sustainable Development, Vol. IV, No. 2, August, pp. 53-60.

⁶ Samad, S.R.; Watanabe, T. & Kim, S.J. (Editors), 1995. People's Initiatives for Sustainable Development : Lessons of Experience. Kuala Lumpur : APDC.

The first paper by Arvid Solheim dwells on the views of an INGO with long experience of working with NGO's in Asia. The emphasis is on capacity building of local civil societies that are engaged in the inter-section between economic growth and environment conservation.

The second paper by Ganesh Gurung and Jagannath Adhikari attempts to provide Nepalese perspective on sustainable development. They subscribe to the view of Robert Chamber, that is, to give primacy to the livelihood security of the poor. The four issues raised are preservation/promotion of bio-diversity, value addition on export of natural resource products, flexibility in labor mobility, and transfer of surplus energy from developed to developing countries.

The third paper by Hum Gurung is a review of initiatives taken by Nepal towards the agenda of sustainable development. These include creation of National Park (1973), prioritizing poverty alleviation since the Ninth Plan (1997-2002), formulation of National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) and implementation of Sustainable Community Development Program (SCDP). The eight major stakeholders identified to pursue Agenda 21 are women, children and youth, indigenous/marginalized people, NGOs, local government, business and industry, scientific/technological community, and finally, farmers.

The fourth paper by S. Kodithuwakku exemplifies two success stories of small-scale enterprises from Sri Lanka. One is in natural farming and another in alternative energy. This short presentation commences with a radical stance but concludes with a humanist optimism.

The fifth paper by Varun Vidyarthi presents the Indian case regarding HRD and monitoring mechanisms. The emphasis is on grass-roots approach and the need for rethinking of values in development process. The paper concludes with specimen

responses of five trainees that evidence widening of their understanding.

The last three papers are based on the experiences of the Southeast Asia Regional Institutes for Community Education (SEARICE). This regional NGO focusing on plant genetic resource conservation has pilot programmes in Bhutan, The Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Despite being Filipina outputs, each of the papers addresses different aspects of much wider relevance.

The sixth paper by Corazan Zesus posits questions on the definition and measures of good governance and goes on to examine the extent of NGO participation in environment policy dialogues. Despite elaboration of typologies on partnership (consultative, coordinative, complimentary, collaborative, critical), there seems to be no specific modality to guide the relationship between the government and NGOs.

The seventh paper by SEARICE is on the evidence of increasing clout of civil society with the weakening of the State power since 1990's. This is reflected in their involvement in policy discussions and advocacy role through pressure groups. The important aspect of the paper are some relevant questions on what constitutes "civil will", the nature of civil society role, including their accountability and transparency.

The eighth and final paper, also by SEARICE, is a specific Philippine case presentation. And its conclusion, "long in promises, short in deeds", is certainly valid for most developing countries. The Philippines did take early initiatives in ratifying major environmental conventions, yet there were obvious implementation problems. In the case of other countries that endorsed global conventions as a ritual, compliance to sustainable development commitments have been disappointing.

Yet, there should be no room for despondency. The evidence of the journey towards sustainable development from Stockholm (1972) to Rio de Janeiro (1992) and thereafter has been one of

progressive narrowing of the gap between aspiration and achievement. This has been both due to increasing environmental concern at the State level and concerted pressure of the civil societies. As noted in one of the SEARICE papers (p. 57):

There is no denying the fact that civil society has become a major player in policy discussions at different levels and no government, even the most repressive ones, can ignore this reality.

It would be too unrealistic to expect consensus and conclusions from regional consultations as this one. The main objective of the Workshop was to reflect on experiences, probe further questions and refine concepts and methodologies on sustainable development. Asia Network for Alternative Cooperation is pleased to share these discussion papers with a wider audience through this publication.

1

Importance of Active and Good NGOs for Environment and Development

*Arvid Solheim**

Civil society as a whole is important for the protection and sustainable management of the environment in the South. This means a free press, an informed and committed population, grassroots organizations, "expert" organizations, democratic institutions, free trade-union movement, and a private business sector looking beyond profit.

The situation faced by civil society in many poor countries is an uphill struggle. Public sector institutions and legislation tend to be inadequate. There is no regular funding system, security concerns may apply, and political or social polarization may seriously impede the formation of broad-based organizations and alliances. With regard to the environment, the knowledge of international regulation such as the Biodiversity Convention and the Desertification Convention is often very deficient.

National entities meant to supervise these rules are under heavy pressure from private interests in pursuit of dam building, logging concessions, emission permits or other kinds of natural-resource exploitation without regard to sustainability. Neither the authorities nor the organizations are able to obtain significant support from multilateral organizations such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Council on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) or the Conventions' secretariats.

Other civil society actors often have little capacity, shortage of funding and professionals. Likewise, a heavy responsibility rests

*Director, The Development Fund, Norway

upon environmentally aware people who can be found both in the urban elite and in the countryside among those who see their basis of natural resources being threatened or ravaged by external forces. Organizations such as Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and consumer rights organizations are doing a great job in the North but similar outfits are found wanting in many countries in the South.

So, what is the role of international environment and development NGOs? The international NGOs' job is first and foremost to strengthen civil society. In many cases and situations, it is also appropriate to work directly towards local self-management, for instance, by raising qualifications in the public sector, offering advisory services, etc. Several major tasks can be classified and prioritized in the following order:

- Funding the work of NGOs in the South. It is often most useful and cost-effective to provide so-called core funding which allows the recipient organization to build its own capacity to be operational in the field and to carry out professional and political work with relative financial stability and predictability.
- Capacity-building in areas such as administration and planning, organization-building, management, fund-raising and outcome analysis.
- Creating contacts and producing information including South-South exchange and documentation.
- Contributing to the debate and point out potential threats involving partners from the South in professional and political discussions and in work with international or North-South perspectives.
- Speaking up for forces in the South who want and need international support (say, if transnational corporations exert pressure on national authorities to allow for example, overexploitation of natural resources or other environmentally harmful steps).

- Engaging actively in policy-making and lobbying in the country as well as in international forums in order to generate greater understanding of the views of partners in the South and put the spotlight on, for instance, adverse impact on poor people's living conditions caused by increasing liberalization of world trade. This covers the intense endeavor to stop the spread of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and oppose international regulations allowing patents on life.
- International NGOs should be gradually stepping back from operational role in projects in the South and from service delivery. The exception is relief aid and action in special crisis situations.

Role of national-level NGOs in the South

They must be watchdogs! For a host of reasons, as briefly referred to above, there is a great pressure on the authorities and communities in the South caused by various commercial interests which do not necessarily adhere to democratic rules. Civil society, i.e. organizations of the local population must pay attention to what is going on and what is being planned, making their objections heard whenever required. They must engage in:

- Acquiring and maintaining professional capacity on environmental issues in the overall context of influencing poverty trends in the country.
- Active pursuit of policy-making and lobbying at the national and international forums concerning environmental as well as socio-economic issues.
- Maintaining international contacts and providing inspiration, information and tools.
- Mobilizing the local and national population around issues related to national (re) construction, sustainable management

of natural resources, local participation in national decision-making processes, just to mention a few. It will always be necessary to build broad-based membership organizations with dynamic internal discussions. It should be remembered that NGOs are composed of voters.

- Mobilizing international and national funding for environmental-management measures, lobbying and environmental education.

Interaction or conflict between international and national NGOs?

The most frequent divide is between organizations with different fields of interest or objectives. National NGOs with poverty relief as their primary mission may clash with the interests of “Northern” NGOs dedicated mainly to worldwide nature conservation. This area has undergone substantial progress, partly by means of international environmental organizations adopting a more holistic approach to issues of the environment and nature in the South, and not least as today's “Northern” organizations are working much more than previously through local/national organizations which have a better understanding of the national environment and resource management issues.

Development NGOs in the South have also taken on a more holistic outlook in many cases. Economic development is no longer the sole objective as long-term sustainability and natural resource management are coming increasingly to the fore. The transnational corporations are posing a threat by influencing NGOs and POs (people's organizations) through massive (dis) information campaign in areas where international representatives/NGOs with different views, counter information or alternative solutions fail to make their mark due to outright obstruction by (corrupt) national authorities invoking respect for national integrity/sovereignty.

The guarantee for

- a lively and healthy environment;

- conservation of, and access to, nature for the present and future generations; and
- sustainable economic development for the benefit of the entire population

The best channel of civil society strengthening in the South goes through contact with, and support from, like-minded foreign civil society organizations, both in the North as well as South, which have the capacity and competence still missing in a number of countries, especially in poor countries characterized by poor governance and limited popular participation in the decision-making processes. The Development Fund aims at contributing to sustainable development in the inter-section between economic growth and conservation of the environment and nature. This will always be done in cooperation with local partners with relationships spanning many years. The objectives are based upon the aforementioned principles fleshed out in close dialogue with the partners.

Examples from Tigray

Relief Society of Tigray (REST) has received support from international aid organizations since the civil war in the 1980s. Today, they are carrying out important work throughout the region in the following areas:

- Rehabilitation of natural resources and environment on a vast scale. Thousands of acres have been recovered from a seriously advanced state of erosion and soil degradation.
- Food security has been enhanced by setting up a network of local seed banks, agricultural guidance, improved breeding material for large livestock, small-scale irrigation, etc.
- Local democracy has been strengthened mainly in close cooperation with so-called *baito* system, an advanced yet traditional system of decision-making and representation in the Tigray region.

Green Movement of Sri Lanka

A relatively young organization with more than 60 member organizations brings together practically all entities working for the country's environment and development. Its main functions are:

- Launching campaigns in order to influence the authorities on environmental issues such as dam building, thermal power stations, motorways, etc.
- Capacity building of member organizations.
- Intense activities of policy formulation and advocacy both nationally and internationally in areas such as patents on life, food security and establishment of national parks.
- Design and implement courses and programs for authorities aimed at capacity-building among local and regional environmental officers.

2

Sustainable Development and Livelihood Security Nepal Viewpoint

*Jagannath Adhikari * and Ganesh Gurung ***

Discussions over the problems of environmental crisis in both developed and developing countries are now couched in terms of 'sustainable development'. This presupposes that we first define the term. Unfortunately, there is no definition of the term that is agreeable to all global and local actors of sustainable development. The "golden age" of economic development in the Western countries in the 1960s led to environmental crisis, as this period saw a dramatic increase in the 'consumerism' culture. The problem of environment had been recognized since the 1970s that brought into focus environmental and health problems which hitherto were overlooked. An alternative course of development was felt necessary to maintain people's existing standard of living and consumption but in a way that would make the environment less stressful. By the mid 1980's, such an alternative called 'sustainable development' had emerged. The term was first coined in the World Conservation Strategy of the IUCN, UNEP and WWF in 1980's, and then in a book Building a Sustainable Society by Lester R. Brown of the World Watch Institute (1981).

The Brundtland Report titled Our Common Future (1987) popularized the term 'sustainable development'. It defined 'sustainable development' as the one which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This report defined the main global

* Freelance Social Scientist, Nepal

** Sociologist, Nepal Institute of Development Studies

environmental problems, indicating how one must look at them, and outlined some general recommendations on how to deal with them. It recognized two concepts – the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor to which overriding priority should be given, and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environmental ability to meet present and future needs.

Evidently, it makes no distinctions among the countries and the consumption patterns of different wealth groups. It does not differentiate between the needs of developing countries in the Third World and the developed countries of the First World. Similarly, there is no distinction between human needs and the consumer wants towards which the First World is aiming for. This has led to formulation of different definitions of 'sustainable development' but the contradictions inherent in these definitions is again the relationship of 'sustainable development' to 'economic growth' measured in most cases as the growth in Gross National Product (GNP).

The Brundtland Report has tried to link these two different aspects calling for economic growth that is forceful and, at the same time, socially and environmentally sustainable. There is now a controversy as to whether attempts to combine “environment protection” and “economic growth” is possible as the two elements are mostly at odds or incompatible. For example, in order for an economic activity to be environmentally sustainable, certain conditions are to be rigorously adhered to with regard to preventive measures related to ozone layer depletion, maintenance of biological diversity, renewal of resources, minimum use of non-renewable resources, control of air, water and soil pollution, and life-threatening waste or use of resources like nuclear waste. No target was fixed nor action plan developed for all these environmental protection measures. Moreover, these targets should be different for the developing countries.

There is also confusion over the term 'development' and its relationship to economic growth. In a materially deprived condition, growth may somewhat translate into development. Similarly growth may be of different nature, and depending on its nature, it can be linked to development. Therefore, distinctions needs be made between production growth (GNP/GDP), environmental growth and growth in welfare. As development is related to the quality of living, it is more closely related to the growth in welfare. The GNP growth may or may not lead to development. It is questioned as to how much growth is possible without compromising the welfare, especially in industrialized countries where the production has led to pollution of various kinds and their negative impact on the people and the society.

One of the main achievements of the Brundtland Report was that the concept of 'sustainable development' became a politically acceptable alternative to international community and led to a broad coalition across the countries. It was a compromise solution to the environmental lobbying of the First World and the development lobbying of the Third World. It is not aimed at conserving the environment which in turn would help us in securing the survival requirements of this living world, both human and nonhuman nature. This perspective questions the 'consumerist culture' of the West, calls upon it to reduce the consumption of energy and give priority to survival requirements of all human beings. The worldview that progressive materialism can be maintained has been questioned by the concept of sustainable development. Until sustainable, the basic consumption that can be increased stands challenged.

The UN organized a similar conference (United Nation's Conference on Environment and Development – UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, popularly known as the Earth Summit (1992). The main aim of the conference was to produce an Earth Charter as a series of principles to govern the relationship of people and nations with each other and with the Earth. This Charter was similar to the

Stockholm Declaration (1972) but without a consensus. As a result, a different version of Rio Declaration came into existence, which basically gave a message that "better take care of mother Earth in the future". The Rio Declaration clearly reaffirms the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted in Stockholm on 16 June 1972 and seeks to build upon it. Its goal was the establishment of a new and equitable global partnership through creation of new levels of co-operation among the states, key actors of society and people. It adopted 27 principles aimed at recognizing the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth.

The UNCED prepared what is known as Agenda 21, a program of action for implementing the principles enunciated in the Earth Charter. Agenda 21 is solely devoted to 'sustainable development'.

The conference also estimated funds to implement the action program specified in Agenda 21 regarding environmental development, poverty reduction through capacity building and technology transfer. The UNDP was given the responsibility for implementing it. It was considered as a blueprint of action for global sustainable development into the 21st century. It aimed at addressing pressing problems of today and preparing the world for the challenges in the next century. Strategies, policies, programs and implementation procedures were outlined in Agenda 21.

The successful implementation of the programs is the responsibility of the governments. There are some legally and non-legally binding areas. The United Nations and other international, regional and sub-regional organizations are called upon to assist the governments to contribute to the implementation process. Estimation of the financial flow required for the developing countries had also been included.

Even though the Earth Summit was continuation of the Stockholm Conference, it emphasized the participation of non-governmental sectors like NGOs and civil societies in solving the problems

related to environment and development. The UNCED constituency was built by getting NGOs and NGO coalitions to strongly support UNCED. Similarly, it identified some NGOs and independent leaders to be associated in global management of environment and development.

The clash of interests of the First and the Third Worlds was clearly visible at the Earth Summit. The main interest of the First World was protection of the environment globally while the interest of the Third World was the 'rights to development'. Therefore, the conference had to respond to crisis of justice as claimed by Third World committed to develop but this would jeopardize the environmental protection programs emphasized by the First World.

The First World was not prepared to reduce its living standard and adopt measures that would cut its industrial production. For example, the United States refused to sign 'bio-diversity agreement' and 'green house control programs'. Like the Stockholm Conference, the Earth Summit at Rio in 1992 ended as a political compromise that aimed at strongly applying the concept of sustainable development and it was able to mobilize the state as well as non-governmental agencies.

The Poor, Globalized World and Sustainability

Even after the popularity of the concept of sustainable development, the developing countries have faced an external environment where the goal of sustainable development has become increasingly difficult to attain. Strong emphasis on structural adjustment program, greater adoption of liberal policies with regard to market forces, and greater globalization has increased the problems of the poor. The food security of large proportion of population is in danger. The sustainable production systems of developing societies have been undermined by the globalization process. The results are increasing poverty, depletion of resources and bio-diversity, and use of resources for the purpose other than the livelihood requirements of people. The globalization process has also

weakened the ownership or control of developing societies on their resources. Even though Earth Summit aimed at sustainable development, other developments have worked to reduce the positive developments at environmental conferences.

What has been experienced in the international arena from the 1970s until the 1990s is that environmental threats have been posed mainly by globally powerful institutions such as multinational corporations and development banks like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with an extensive network of operations. The last two summits have led to a number of measures aimed at averting serious threats to local environmental initiatives that have been main basis of livelihood systems. Once the agenda of environment has become global as a result of these international agreements, diverse aspects of environmental management at the grassroots level have been reduced to a few priority areas. These aspects are highlighted as and when the supporting agencies (both state and external interventions through various means) like multilateral banks and development agencies are concerned about them.

Sustainable Livelihood

It is clearly recognized that development cannot be sustainable if the poor are excluded in the process of meeting their aspirations. Robert Chamber in his book Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last (1997) has influenced this debate, saying “the environment and development are for the poor, not people for environment and development”. The poor are mainly concerned with meeting their own immediate needs. From their perspective, the rights of the future generation do not exist as they themselves struggle for survival. As the time horizon of the poor people is shorter, they put less value on the future than on the present. Therefore, it is mainly the wealthy who can afford the luxury of maintaining sustainability. Chamber, therefore, proposes “sustainable livelihood thinking”, which helps connect development and environment with livelihoods. Better livelihood is the central aim of the development

process and use of environment by the poor people. Here livelihood means the capacity of the people to improve their assets (physical, social, economic, environmental, and political) to help enhance their human capacity and ability to reduce the impact of vulnerability.

Considering the fact that poverty is increasing in the Third World, it is important to recognize that unless poverty problem is addressed, sustainable development can never be achieved. Therefore, it is most urgent that livelihood of the poor be secured. This is almost a precondition for the achievement of sustainable development. But the question is how this priority should be pursued at the local level while effects of international development, as discussed above, systematically marginalizes them by undermining their access or control over resources that are so vital for their livelihoods.

Problems faced by Nepal are generally similar to those faced by other developing nations. Proportion of population under poverty has been extremely high; nearly half of the population of 23 million is below the poverty line. Under the internationally defined criteria of US\$ 150 per capita income, almost 75 percent of Nepalis are living under poverty. The agriculture system has not been able to meet the food security of the households. In most cases, it has remained subsistence, unable to meet food requirements for three to six months in a year. Most farmers are switching over to more lucrative cash crop production, which has a significant implication for Nepal's food security system. Not surprisingly, the country has moved from net exporter of food grains to net importer.

A large majority of households combine different strategies for fulfilling the basic subsistence requirements. Poor people also depend heavily on forest and other natural resources for their subsistence needs. Conservation of these resources and genetic and biological diversity are vital for their livelihoods, underpinning the farming system and maintain its ecological sustainability. But unfortunately, the globalization process and provisions inherent in this process like recognition of patent rights under Trade Related

Intellectual Property Rights is paving the way to declining biodiversity, undermining indigenous ecological system and local resource-based livelihood system. The Third World, rich in biological diversity and genetic resources should be able to get due benefits from their use by the developed countries. This has not happened mainly because of unfair terms of trade which grossly undervalues the genetic and ecological resources of Third World.

Common throughout South Asia, including Nepal, is the practice of earning off-farm or non-farm income for livelihoods in the villages and towns. The process of globalization in this sense is very much linked with the livelihood of households. In a way, it has facilitated in bringing remittance for their livelihood. Despite opportunities for labor migration in industrialized or newly industrialized world, it has not happened in a true global village spirit. The level playing field is still a far cry in the globalization process. Even though capital, technology and other commodities can (or allowed to) move freely across national boundaries, labor is not. Developing countries have surplus labor which should be allowed to move freely like other goods, services and commodities produced by developed countries.

The Road to World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg 2002

Achievements made at the Earth Summit in 1992 and the developments since then should be analyzed in order to decide the course of action for achieving the goal of sustainable development. It is now a well recognized fact that one of the main achievements of the Earth Summit was the greater awareness of not only governments but also of NGOs, civil societies and individuals on the need for a sustainable development. The South is now aware of the importance in recognizing the value of environment and quality of life. This perception will certainly help reduce stress on the environment. But the increase in poverty is the main problem requiring livelihood security of the poor people.

Despite the growing awareness on sustainable development, the international environment, especially the globalization process under the World Trade Organization (WTO) regime, has been undermining benefits obtained from various small measures aimed at sustainable development. How this is happening has already been discussed. This poses challenges in fulfilling the Agenda 21 commitments. On the other hand, commitments from First World to help implement sustainable development through development aid and technology transfer have not been fulfilled.

The problem of sustainable livelihoods and reducing poverty should be the main focus from the perspective of developing countries like Nepal. The problem can only be solved through a multi-pronged approach. Sustainable livelihoods are capacities requiring minimum capital investment to create income, both cash and kind, and provide meaning and dignity to the people with the least pressure on the environment. The goods and services created or produced are the basic needs of the people. They are in no way geared to conspicuous consumption.

Creation of sustainable livelihoods requires some fundamental changes in the choice of technology, financial system, governance and functioning of market system. The local or community control on resources could be enhanced through decentralization. The decision-making power of the people should also be enhanced, so that people can decide on how to use the resources in a sustainable manner. The growing awareness generated among NGOs and civil societies should be tapped to strengthen the community on managing their resources in a way that helps secure the livelihoods of people.

Issues that need to be addressed from Nepal's perspectives

1. Enhance more value addition on natural resource products for exports. Herbs and other commodities grown in difficult or harsh climate are precious from ecological and health points of view.

- 2. Nepal's bio-diversity and genetic resources should be preserved and promoted.**
- 3. Ensure greater flexibility for labor mobility across the world. The First World should allow the people from developing countries to compete in a free market so that they can take advantage of comparative income. In a way, it is like including labor as products for resource exchange. Unless this is done, market mechanism will not be free.**
- 4. Production and consumption in developed countries should be sustainable and a part of the surplus energy generated from this process (sustainability also implies that energy consumption will be reduced) should be transferred to developing countries. This will help increase financial support for 'sustainable development' in developing countries. If this does not happen, livelihood insecurity will continue to compel people to consume more resources even at the cost of their immediate future.**
- 5. Free market and globalization process have pushed local production system on the verge of disintegration. As global corporate houses consolidate their grip on the resources of developing countries, local control of resources and its use for sustainable livelihoods have been undermined. The motive of profit has led the ecosystem devastation while also influencing the political system. This has, in turn, adversely impacted the local livelihood system. The provisions in TRIP under WTO regime and development of a technology that makes people dependent on multinational corporations (like seeds with terminator genes and other required inputs) have accelerated this process of degradation of resources. On the other hand, indigenous people who have been controlling and preserving bio-diversity and genetic resources for generations have not been able to reap benefits even as multinational corporations exploit these resources.**

Unless these problems are addressed in developing countries, the cherished hope of sustainable development will remain a dream.

Conclusion

Ten years after the Earth Summit, there has been greater awareness among the developing countries including Nepal in creating an environment in which development can take place in a sustainable manner without degrading the resources while at the same time ensuring a better quality of life. The major problem that has to be addressed is poverty reduction by helping the poor with improved access to sustainable livelihood opportunities. Sustainable livelihoods are processes of creating assets for poor people through which they can meet basic needs and reduce their vulnerability to various shocks and stresses. Without such opportunities they will succumb to stresses inherent in the market forces. Conservation of local resources, particularly the common resources, is one of the main ways by which poor people can improve their livelihoods. Global forces that developed in the 1980s and the 1990s have undermined various measures taken to strengthen livelihood security. Opportunities created by such forces have gone into the hands of the well-off people, leaving out the poor people. At the international level, the globalization process has adversely affected developing countries' abilities for sustainable development. At Johannesburg, the globalization process should be addressed from such perspective to ensure benefits for developing countries and poor people.

3

Sustainable Development in the 21st Century Nepal's Experiences and Opportunities

*Hum Bahadur Gurung **

Background

Nepal is endowed with rich natural and cultural diversity. From the plains of the Terai to the lofty Himalayan peaks, the varied geographic setting brings both complexity and opportunity for sustainable development. In addition to geographic challenges, Nepal must also contend with extensive poverty. The UNDP Human Development Report 2001 ranked Nepal 129th in the list of 162 countries in the global Human Development Index (HDI).

This paper highlights evolution of the concept of sustainable development from international and national perspectives especially since the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment in 1972. It analyses the changing perception of global community toward the linkage between people and their environment, and interrelationships and interdependencies of good ecology and good economics. The roots of sustainable development originally initiated in the developed countries are important for developing countries where the nexus between poverty and environment call for a balanced approach to develop a 'win-win' strategy.

Evolution of Sustainable Development: National and International Perspectives

Over the past three decades, Nepal's economy has been growing at an average of about 4 percent marginally exceeding the 2.37 percent population growth. The growth rate in the agricultural

* National Program Manager, Sustainable Community Development Programmes, NPC/UNDP, Kathmandu, Nepal

sector over the same period was less than 2.5 percent which had shown inconsistent behavior over the years. Slower rate of agricultural growth is largely responsible for the high poverty incidence and its severity in the rural areas.

Environmental conservation and development issues are not new to Nepal, which has taken positive initiatives in reducing poverty. The Fifth Plan (1975- 1980) introduced the concept of ecological balance and economic development with emphasis on conservation and development of watersheds in the hills. Nepal also joined the international community in addressing the global environmental concerns. It was the 1972 Stockholm Conference that brought the global community and world leaders together for the first time to address the environmental issues. It focused international attention on issues, especially relating to environmental degradation and trans-boundary pollution.

After the 1972 Conference, His Majesty's Government of Nepal established the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and set-up the first protected area namely Royal Chitwan National Park in 1973. At present, protected areas covers about 18 percent of Nepal's total area. It also prepared and endorsed the National Conservation Strategy in 1988.

Sustainable development is a continuous process. The Brundtland Commission Report (1987) entitled, Our Common Future defines sustainable development as a "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." In this context, sustainable development requires: first, the conservation and enhancement of the resources base; second, the elimination of poverty and deprivation; third, a broadening of the concept of development so that it covers not only economic growth but social and cultural development and fourth, the unification of economics and environment in the decision-making processes.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, in 1992 broadened the concept of sustainable development. It recognized that integrating and balancing economic, social and environmental concerns was a must to continue human life on the planet. The concept of sustainable development was recognized in Nepal's development process since the historic Earth Summit; a major outcome of which was adoption of Agenda 21 (see Box 1 for other significant outcomes of the Summit).

Box 1: UNCED Outcomes

- Agenda 21 – a blueprint for Sustainable Development
- Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. A set of 27 principles of environmental and economic responsibility.
- Convention on Climate Change- legally binding agreement for stabilization of greenhouse gas concentration
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Statement of Forest Principles

Ten Years after Rio

There have been several changes in the world since the 1992 Summit. The United Nations Council on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) was created to ensure effective follow-up of UNCED and to monitor and report on implementation of the agreement. It is engaged in effective implementation of Agenda 21. It has organized several dialogues with global community including the Rio +5, which was held in 1997 to review the progress in implementing Agenda 21.

Nepal established the Environmental Protection Council in 1992 in response to fulfill the international commitment for implementing Agenda 21.

Priority Issues for Sustainable Development

The overriding objective of development efforts in Nepal is poverty alleviation. Despite some achievements over the past decade much remains to be done in order to achieve the target of reducing poverty. The country is committed to reduce poverty by focusing and prioritizing policies and programs on poverty alleviation. The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) for the first time attempted to define the long-term targets for several poverty-related indicators and strategies in achieving those targets. One of the priority issues was to link various policy measures explicitly with poverty reduction efforts.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) has prepared the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). It provides a general framework for poverty reduction strategy within which all the stakeholders have to act. Some of the major activities are targeted towards resource and bio-diversity conservation, eco-tourism, forest-based micro-enterprises, community-based watershed management and gender specific activities to uplift the socio-economic and environmental well being of the rural poor.

The needs and issues of sustainable development have been addressed through periodic national development plans. The National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) dialogue and formulation of the Sustainable Development Agenda for Nepal (SDAN) have been instrumental for reviewing and identifying policy issues to promote sustainable development.

Integrated and holistic approach to promote environmental, social and economic dimensions is essential for effective sustainable development. Nepal's current practice in sectoral planning under the existing planning system addresses these three dimensions of sustainable development. However, more coordination is required to strengthen the integration process. The Ninth and Tenth Plans encompass principles of sustainable resource management.

The NPC has implemented the Sustainable Community Development Program (SCDP) also known as Nepal's Capacity 21, as a pilot project. The SCDP promotes the integration of environmental, social and economic dimensions of development

with participation of and information recognized as the successful model of sustainable development in Nepal. Replication of the model is gradually taking place beyond the pilot program districts (see Box 2).

Box 2: Integration of environmental, social and economic dimensions through SCDP initiative

- Promote sustainable development at the grass roots through capacity building exercises and empowerment of local population;
- Integrate environmental management, social development and economic development to facilitate local institutions; and
- Enable communities to identify problems in their communities formulate and implement plans to solve those problems and manage their resources.

The government recognizes three fundamental components of sustainable development through social mobilization process:

- Building and strengthening local institutions at the grass roots for sustainable development;
- Mobilization of human, technical and financial resources, both external and internal to implement program activities; and
- Increasing capacities of local communities and other stakeholders to efficiently and equitably manage their conservation and sustainable efforts.

Role of Major Groups

Agenda 21 emphasized the role of major stakeholders to achieve the goal of sustainable development in the 21st century. It highlights the role of major groups and stresses on capacity building of these groups.

1. Women

- Achieve equality and equity based on harmonious partnership between men and women, and enable women to realize their full potential.
- Ensure enhanced contribution of women to sustainable development through their full involvement in all aspects of social, economic and environmental activities.

- Avert ongoing rapid environmental and economic degradation that affects the lives of rural women.
- Ensure all women are adequately educated to meet their basic needs and exercise human rights.

2. Children and Youth

- Reduce infant mortality and child mortality by 2020.
- Reduce severe and moderate malnutrition among children.
- Provide universal primary education and improved secondary education.
- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against and improve the welfare of the girl child.
- Avert environmental and economic degradation that affects the livelihoods of rural children and youth.
- Create conditions for youth to actively participate in economic and social life to be educated and self-reliant, and adopt the best traits of humanity.
- Implement programs designed to increase employment and income of youth.
- Anti-drug education, awareness and advocacy involving youth to protect, maintain and restore the environment, forests and settlements.

3. Indigenous and Marginalized People

- Avert ongoing rapid environmental degradation that affects the lives of indigenous and marginalized people.
- Create conditions to assist indigenous people to become major player in promoting sustainable development.
- Promote economic enterprises based on skills, knowledge and capabilities inherent in indigenous and marginalized communities.

4. NGOs

- Create condition to promote, facilitate and strengthen responsible and effective partnership role of NGOs in implementing SD agenda.

5. Local Government

- Strengthen the role of local governments in preservation of justification rights and social safety of workers.

- **Create condition that promotes, facilitates and strengthens responsible and effective partnership role of workers and labor unions in implementing SD agenda.**
- **Ensure occupational health and safety of workers.**

6. Business and Industry

- **Increase efficient of resource utilization, reduce waste and promote recycling and re-use of industrial residues.**
- **Create condition that promotes, facilitates and strengthens responsible and effective partnership role of business community in implementing SD agenda.**

7. Scientific and Technological Community

- **Strengthen research and technological capabilities.**
- **Create condition that encourages and strengthens technological community in the decision-making on issues related to environment and development.**

8. Farmers

- **Create conditions to assist farming community to become a major player in promoting sustainable development.**

The WSSD will discuss the impact of the revolutions in technology, biology and communications that have changed most of the world since 1992. It will give another clear mandate on how the global communities need to respond to achieve sustainable development in the years to come.

Bibliography

HMG/NPC, 1998. The Ninth Plan (1997-2002), Kathmandu.

HMG/NPC, 2001. Annual Report, Sustainable Community Development Program, Kathmandu.

UNDP, 2004. Human Development Report, Oxford University Press, New York.

WCED, 1987. Our Common Future, Oxford University Press.

4

Sustainable Development: Sri Lanka's Story

*Suranjan Kodithuwakku **

*L*ong before the word "sustainable" entered the development dictionary, the concept was an integral part of not just the economic processes related to improving life chances but the very matter of living and engaging with both the natural and social worlds. This is true of most societies and Sri Lanka is no exception. "Sustainability" was never foreign to our people. It was plundered from us several centuries into the era where development was effectively divorced from our general life practices and turned into a project. Those who authorized and justified the plunder of our resources and who sought to destroy our way of life are seeking to recycle the idea back to us, and this in a form that has been shredded of all substance.

Such is the politics of domination. Idea and concept hijacking is often an effective way of suppressing the alternative. It allows the hijacker to re-articulate the pernicious project in politically correct terms and posit him/her in a positive and progressive light. It is not by accident that brochures, mission/vision statements, and project rationales of most organizations (multilateral, non-governmental, bilateral and state-related) are suffused with such terminology. So much so that it would seem that none of these agencies could ever dream of proposing anything that could harm the environment. The truth, however, is never completely hidden. It lies just beneath the smattering of sugar-coated terms which are hardly sufficient to cover it all.

* Coordinator and Journalist, Green Movement of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

In preparation for the Johannesburg Summit, the Sri Lankan government came out with a “country report” of sorts, ostensibly to record the state-of-the-art, so to speak, of sustainable development. It said a lot about policy, but was poverty stricken when it came to actual practices as well as in terms of comprehensive vision for a different paradigm of development. More troubling is the fact that even these policies are completely at odds with the government's principal development strategy articulated in its main policy document “Regaining Sri Lanka”.

Sri Lanka has countless state development agencies whose rhetoric always includes the idea of sustainability. However, the key projects being implemented and those whose implementation is envisaged in the near future are manifestly blind to the substance that makes up the word. Where environmental protection is concerned, policies at best tend towards eco-tourism. Where mega projects are involved, neither environmental issues nor the critically important issue of human displacement nor, consequently, the severe compromising of the sustainability of livelihoods, cultures and communities seem to have been taken into account either at the planning or implementing stages. Typically, in the play of power and powerlessness, in the conflict between the powerful and the powerless, development leaves a trail of destruction, both of nature and of the human being. Sustainability, against this backdrop, if it is a goal, is both a practice at the micro level and a relentless political contestation of the dominant paradigm of development at the macro level, policy forums included.

Sri Lanka is fortunate that there is commitment, energy and relevant philosophical foundation among a critical number of people to this multiple elements of the sustainability issue. While the violence caused to communities and nature through “development”, creating thousands of development refugees over the past two decades, is acknowledged, it is heartening to note that people have not been passive recipients of policies and practices that have a direct and corrosive impact on their lives, lifestyles and indeed who they are.

In the matter of agitation, ordinary people have demonstrated that the notion that national campaigns cannot be won is patently false. In the case of protests against the proposed sale of the Eppawala Phosphate Deposits, which would have led to a massive environmental disaster and a tragic fracturing of a community, the people of Eppawala took on the challenge and with the support of numerous environmental organizations, intellectuals, academics and other organizations, emerged victorious, thereby setting an example and a historic precedent.

With respect to other mega projects such as the express highways proposed in the “Regaining Sri Lanka” document and elsewhere, communities have come together to fight for their lives, livelihoods and cultures. They have scored victories and suffered losses, but importantly, have not lost sight either of their objectives or their enthusiasm and commitment for the causes they espouse. Indeed, the current privatization fever of policy-makers who are beholden to organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, United States Agency for International Development etc., for funds and indeed ideas (mostly detrimental to the country and the people), has seen an increased awareness being built regarding the threats to the nation, its resources and its people. As a result, there has been an increased focus in national campaigns. Politics in this regard is increasingly falling out of the framework of power games played by political parties and issues of sustainability are becoming increasingly intertwined with those pertaining to democracy and human rights.

Throughout history, perhaps it is the example at the micro level more than the earth-shattering events that are the hallmark of power politics that eventually acts as a catalyst for meaningful transformation. In Sri Lanka, there are many “small” people who have carved out niches for themselves and their alternatives outside or within the dominant paradigm of development. There are people who have taken the word “sustainable” out of the ideological debate and scientific forum and planted it where it can

truly take root: in their consciousness and in the earth that is their ultimate and only mother. Whether it is agriculture, industry, alternative energy, resource conservation, restoration and management, thrift and credit cooperatives, health, biodiversity protection or the safeguarding of the seas and inland water bodies, there are places where “sustainability” is kept alive and made to thrive by honorable people who have or have acquired an intimate understanding of interrelatedness of things, in particular the natural cycles and the particular location of human being in this multi-faceted, multi-species world.

According to the newspapers, we offer the story of a farmer named Kularatne and a baker named Ekanayake. Both these enterprising and humble men, each in their own way, have overcome the challenge of living decent, honorable and contented lives in a world globalised with idiocy and intent on self-destruction. Nourished by an understanding of their cultures, their identities and their location in the universe, their lives exemplify courage and determination, qualities which can always be acquired by willingness and which, for this reason, are foundations upon which the mansions of hope for a different world and a better engagement with nature and one another can and will be built.

Kularatne: Organic farmer, patriot, unobtrusive and sentient being

After almost two unsuccessful decades of trying to find a piece of land to build his life, Kularatne decided in 1986 to encroach on state land in the remote Dambana, along with a few other farming families. In time they were able to secure legal title to the land, which, as events proved, was not for defilement in the pursuit of profit but for the blossoming of a symbiotic relationship with the earth and her many creatures. These pioneer farmers, led by Kularatne, diverted the streams that ran through the area, constructed earth dams to collect rainwater, prepared the earth and cultivated rice. Kularatne, after attending a workshop on organic farming, changed things dramatically on his plot and in the community in general.

I learnt about compost, nurseries, preparing beds and more than all this the fruits of working in harmony with and not against natural processes. I used natural rock formations to set up a stall for my cattle and to gather and divert the cow dung into a biogas unit. We really didn't know that every plant was valuable or the worth of forests. There is a section that I have allowed to go to jungle.

Today his family owns 10 cows which yield all the milk they need and a surplus that can be sold. His relatively small plot of land yields all the vegetables, fruits, leafy greens, yams, grains and medicinal plants they need. His front garden is a riot of color. Little hedges and flowerbeds make a tastefully designed garden. "Flowers are beautiful and moreover they attract birds," he said. They have used biogas for cooking and lighting for 10 years now. Since he does not use kerosene oil, he is directly helping the country save valuable foreign exchange and since he uses biogas, he is saving trees and contributing to the general health of the planet. In all these things, Kularatne and his family engage in a spiritually wholesome manner. All traditional customs and rituals are observed at key points of the cultivation cycle as well as in their diurnal activities. They are merely living but by doing so they are helping preserve all life and, as important, a way of life.

The rice husk kiln: environment friendly, affordable and efficient

Gunaratne Banda Ekanayake started life as a worker in a bakery near his home in Divulgane. After about six years, he moved to Dehiattakandiya where he set-up a traditional bakery using firewood. Believing that there has to be a more efficient and less time consuming method to fire his kiln, he spent about three years of experiment using paddy husk as an alternative to firewood. Today he has affected a full switch over to paddy husk.

This method is extremely efficient. Earlier I had to spend a lot of time collecting firewood, which was becoming increasingly difficult to find. Furthermore the firewood needs to be chopped and stacked neatly. Not I save both time and money. In fact the mills that supply me paddy husk pay me for helping them deal with what they consider to be waste material. All I have to do is to feed the kiln with the paddy husk through a pipe constructed for this purpose.

In 1999 his paddy husk kiln won a Presidential Award for the best innovation of the year. In 2002, he received a special award from the Energy Forum, a Colombo-based group promoting alternative energy sources for his contributions. Ever the innovator, Ekanayake is currently exploring the possibility of firing clay bricks using paddy husk. His entrepreneurship is complemented by a commitment to transferring the technology to other communities. He has conducted several workshops to explain his model and has helped convert firewood kilns into paddy husk ones. He is a conservationist and a human being who knows the value of community. He knows what sustainable livelihoods means. He is truly a friend of the earth.

A sustainable world can never be a target. It is necessarily a process, a journey made up of people, places, events and ideas. It is a journey that may or may not contain landmarks and such signs as there may exist would be visible only to those who have realized something of the unity of things. Sri Lanka is a land that is not without such men and women of vision, know-how, and energy. Success is not around the corner, certainly. But then again, neither is it beyond the horizon.

5

Rethinking Values in Development

*Varun Vidyarthi **

Several years ago while addressing a class of about 200 students at a university on the West Coast of the United States, I asked an open question to the gathering as to what they understood by development. The response was slow but the nature of response was surprising. Most students, several in the age group beyond 40, started giving textbook definitions. I, then, had to clarify my question stating that I wanted to know what it meant to them in their lives. There was a complete silence.

I got a similar sense of disillusionment very recently when I had opportunity to observe the process and behavior of Social Work graduates at village level. They were full of energy and were showing a sense of urgency and efficiency. Yet they were treating poor women with patronizing arrogance, a sense of pity and a feeling that the ignorant lot needs their knowledge and skills.

As development professionals, we are often insensitive to the real issues and problems facing society and are happy to do some routine work, making development a livelihood for ourselves. At another level, we tend to get arrogant due to our positions or knowledge, alienating ourselves from people and reality altogether. Both are situations that do more harm than good to the change process or the people. I shall illustrate with some examples.

Experiential learning is participatory in nature and often calls for reflection as well as brainstorming on basic issues. For the last

* Director, Manabodaya, Lucknow, India

several years, I have been exploring responses from development professionals attending training courses as to “Whether we as individuals are victims of circumstances or we have the capacity to mould circumstances?”

While the responses have been expectedly varied, the proportions do not portray a happy situation. Many persons respond by saying that circumstances are overriding and one has to make adjustments. Thus an officer signing a check that he knows is going to be misused confesses that he does so because, he feels that he has to play safe to keep his service or his bones intact. Some say that decent living, education of children and arrangements for their marriage makes it necessary for people to go beyond an honest income. A common stand taken by persons in middle hierarchy is ‘As an individual, I have no power to take decisions in a system where everything is dictated from top’ or ‘I have a family to take care of and I do not want to become a Gandhi’ or that ‘Living with principles not possible in today’s world’. Certainly not argues another group of people who believe that it is only our weakness that leads to such thinking. Giving their own life as an example, they believe that no one could bring them any real harm if they did their job honestly and efficiently. This group of people feels that they are not a victim of circumstances and are clear in their opinion. ‘We blame others for our own weaknesses. If we do not commit wrongs, then we need not fear anyone’.

There is sometimes a tendency to justify our professional actions by making a distinction between personal values and professional values. Are these two really different? I believe it is important that these issues are not brushed under the carpet and are openly discussed and debated. Otherwise we shall continue to hear about misappropriation of funds or only a tiny percentage of allocated funds reaching the so-called beneficiary.

Another area where development professionals tend to slip is the tendency to work more with books or reports rather than people.

The famous Lao Tzu had mentioned more than seven hundred years before Christ 'Go to people, live with them, love them, build on what they have, start from what they know and yet when the job is done, people should say that they have done it themselves'. In today's parlance, office meetings tend to be more important than village meetings. Night stays are ruled out. One is happy to make short visits for prescribing rather than learning. Our knowledge base both at the level of practitioners as well as the academicians continues to be predominantly theoretical. The resulting behavior is almost inevitably arrogant. 'I know' and 'I know better' continues to be the paradigm of the development professional, often causing great harm to the process. Our position in hierarchy, social status, even gender becomes a barrier to the process of communication as a result of which learning is almost stopped. This is disastrous from the perspective of true development which cannot but be based on dialogue with the local population.

As a consultant to UNICEF in a programme called 'Community Based Convergence Services', I was once coordinating a programme on participatory methods for a group of government officials, an all-male group numbering about ten. I chose to move away from the classroom and facilitate an exercise in the field. The subject was 'Local planning based on priorities identified by poor women.' As we left the block headquarters and reached the village, I was surprised to see a neat row of tables with chairs for speakers, a mike (public address system) and some chairs for the audience too. A few men and children were gathered there. Some of us were garlanded and were expected to give a speech. I was both amused and amazed at the ignorance of officials. I had to tell the group that such a formal arrangement can hardly lead to a dialogue with poor women. I requested one of our group members to give a suitable speech and asked the remaining participants to move on.

The group soon found a double storied brick house with a big, neat courtyard, belonging presumably to one of the elites of the

village. The group entered the courtyard and one of the group members said aloud "Go, get them here." Even before they could settle, I had to intervene and tell the group members that there can be no communication with poor women in such a house and that we need to find another place.

This time the group understood and they went straight into the locality where the very poor lived. It was untidy around and there was no proper place for 10 people to be seated. A curious crowd had gathered around us. A group member asked in a loud voice. "Could you get some chairs please?" I was double amazed, because I knew that there would be no chairs in their homes.

There was a cot lying around. I told the group members that cots are good enough for our purpose. We quickly arranged a few cots in a circle and sat down on the cots with some villagers. There were still no women around. Our group members were clueless as to how to talk to them. Some members started chatting among themselves. One smartly dressed member took out a cigarette packet from his shirt pocket, stylishly tapped a cigarette on the packet and asked 'Match please'. It was so evident that the official haughtiness and arrogance would not elude them. Some members of the group challenged me saying that women would never come out to meet us. One person even remarked "Why should they, this is why our country is being ruined". I then had to calm down the group saying that it is part of local tradition that women do not come out in front of their family elders like father-in-laws or elder brother-in-laws. I requested the village elders to move to another place for a separate discussion with them. They understood and responded. The place was soon full of women who were talking with full knowledge and understanding of local issues. At the end of a long discussion, their priority was identified. I could have never guessed it. It was children's education. A government school was located on the other side of a busy road. So many families were not sending their children to school. They wanted a school on this side of the road as their first priority.

The entire experience left a sad impression on me. The dominant values of the whole group that boasted of almost 20 years experience in development were lack of interest even in establishing true communication, official arrogance and gender apathy or insensitivity. How can we expect any difference in the conditions of the poor, even with increased allocations or project aid for poverty alleviation? Programs for development have acquired the nature of routine jobs, which are mechanical in nature. True connection with people that provides richness not only in the work but also in the life of development professionals is undermined in the race to achieve unrealistic paper targets that brings neither joy nor satisfaction to anyone.

It is indeed important, therefore, that introduction of new professional values is considered basic to the process of development. As a trainer to several thousand development professionals, I believe that significant progress can be made in this direction by adopting new policies and methods in the Human Resources Development (HRD) as well as in the monitoring of the process of change. Some remarks given below, made by development professionals in the government after going through an intensive HRD programme, are indicative of the potential of such programs.

...We have been awakened from sleep. It is indeed creditable that our thinking has been transformed in such a short period. I promise that it will be my endeavor to practice in life everything learnt here verbatim. Whatever I did so far was under pressure to achieve a target and always used wrong means to fulfill my responsibilities. I worked on the formula of 'saving my skin'. But no longer now, from today onward, I will make every possible attempt to do every thing with honesty and devotion.

-Shashikant Singh, Junior Engineer

...I have no words to praise the immense learning obtained in a short time. My thinking has changed significantly by the guidance received at your institution. I have realized that if we can transform our way of thinking then we can change the thinking of people too and then we can perform with ease the most difficult tasks too. I shall try to use the guidance given in my fieldwork exactly as you told. I shall also try to change the thinking of people in the area so that they are able to shape their lives themselves.

-Anil Kumar Shukla, Hargaon, Sitapur

...We can say that we are going back as knowledgeable persons. There has been a fundamental change in our way of thinking (samskara) through prayer and reflection. We can create an environment of participation and end social evils for society's better future. Through introspection, self-reflection and a sense of sacrifice we can bow successfully communicate and coordinate different programmes of development. The transformation in us lies in being able to sit with the poor with a new thinking and share in their sorrows.

-Raj Kumar Tiwari, Kamasin, Banda

...Our work was more like a burden earlier. After this training we feel that it is more like a moral responsibility. By doing so, we shall be able to bring about social development so everyone must engage in it seriously. This training has produced a lot of happiness and brought about a change in my thinking too. We should not have a vested interested in doing such work.

-Suraj Pal Singh, Tindwari, Banda

...Before coming here, I had never thought about myself. After coming here I realized my responsibility towards my own self, towards society and the country. It is true that my earlier notions were based on an arrogance that whatever I am doing is right. Not any more, I realize that I know so little. I can learn from an honest caring attitude towards one another.

-Praveer Dubey, Nawabganj, Unnao

I believe that government, donor agencies and all those interested in the process of poverty alleviation should seriously rethink about priorities in development. Without proper means (unclear vision, methods or motivation among development workers and professionals) how can we think of achieving meaningful ends. The issue of values that has been shunned in professional discussions and debates need to be brought center stage with appropriate HRD and monitoring mechanisms.

6

Participation as a Measure of Good Governance SEARICE's Experience

Corazan Zesus*

In an era of fast developing technologies and merging of corporations and compression of time and space, it is a wonder how governments manage to keep in touch with its constituents. Though technologies and advancements are somewhat inevitable, especially for receptive nations, it is still important to note that the human factor is still favored. When the human factor is still deemed important in running a nation, it can be safely assumed that governments are not all cold-blooded. In fact, governments are brushing up their "images" to comply with demands of the changing world, especially in their struggle for development and peace.

Of Definitions and Measures: Governance and all its Good

Several literatures define Governance. The United Nations Development Program defines governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development." In its policy document *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, UNDP further states that, "it comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences."

In May 1999, Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette of the United Nations in his address to the World Conference on Governance in Manila, discussed governance as "the way in which nation and by extension, the community of nations manages its

* Program Officer, SEARICE, The Philippines

affairs. It is the product of many complex relationships not only among different institutions of State, but also among all stakeholders, from the most powerful titans of industry to the poorest and most vulnerable people on society's margins. It is not something that the state does to society, but the way society itself, and the individuals who compose it, regulate all the different aspects of their collective life."

The above definitions do not refer to governance as a simple condition or situation, and it is a web of various mechanisms and relationships in which many actors take part. But in those defined above and perhaps other literature describe governance in a manner that whatever course it takes will be affecting our affairs, development of our society, and influence aspects of life as we deem it. Governance is, therefore, relative to state of a nation at which it is being practiced. It could take on different forms, perhaps depending on the history of that nation and culture of its people. It is thus a reality that good governance is not an achievable state overnight.

But what defines good governance? Are there characteristics or elements to describe such? The UNDP policy paper further enumerated characteristics of good governance – participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision – are "mutually reinforcing and cannot stand alone." In other literatures, elements of good governance are accountability, participation, transparency, predictability, efficiency, social development orientation, sound economic management, competitiveness, results focus and empowerment.

To measure each nation's status of governance using these elements/conditions would employ a wide stretch of tools and experts. The measure of participation alone, a "mantra" of most, if not all, development organizations and even governments, may take more than a series of field appraisals and actions researches.

In the Philippines, for instance, participation as an element to describe good governance will have to be measured in varying levels of partnership or engagements. There are three variables to be considered in participation, These are (1) the organizational ability of an NGO/PO to pursue its objectives and programs; (2) opportunities for participation provided by the government; and (3) receptiveness of local government officials to NGO/PO participation in governance. Indicators in effective participation include: (1) adoption of NGO/PO program by LGUs; (2) a more responsive and accountable government; and (3) increased political legitimacy of NGOs and POs.

This paper will try to assess participation as an essential measure of good governance. More specifically, it looks into the Southeast Asia Regional Institute for Community Education (SEARICE) participation as a non-government organization in the different levels and branches of government. The paper will try to bring forth samples of "partnership" that SEARICE has drawn in engaging with government officials and agencies. It does not, however, aim to conclude that participation is the end-all of good governance. It is but essential to point out that participation as a measure of good governance is just part of a whole gamut of measures and elements that describe good governance. Further, it will have to take a whole stretch of research not only on SEARICE's involvement but as well as of other NGOs and POs if assessment and analysis of participation for good governance were to be measured.

Thus, in presenting this paper, it is hoped that it could provide views on the current Philippine government system, and the efforts that it is taking to comply with the characteristics of good governance. In the same manner, it is also through this paper that SEARICE hopes to further analyze its engagement with governments, especially in bringing into the government program the SEARICE agenda in Plant Genetic Resource (PGR) conservation and development and farmer empowerment. To elaborate on the context in which SEARICE works within the

Philippine governance, it is necessary to provide a brief background on the Philippine government system, specifically on certain areas of national and local government in which SEARICE has been involved with.

Local Government Code of the Philippines: A radical take on the central government

Prior to 1991, the Philippine national government was highly centralized. All powers were centralized in the national government concentrated in Manila. Deeply rooted in history of being tied to a higher imperial power, much as the local governments units would want to break away from the central government for them to respond better to local situations, this "culture" of being attached to a higher power remains. The central government, on the other hand, enjoys the structure of having someone below it and having the powers concentrated within. Having an archipelago nation did not really help in responding fully to the needs of the smaller and lower units of the government. The Corazon Aquino administration, however, articulated the need for local autonomy as stated in the 1987 Constitution:

Article II (Declaration of Principles and State Policies), Section 25: The State shall ensure the autonomy of local governments.

Article X (Local Government), Section 3: The Congress shall enact a local government code which shall provide for a more responsive and accountable local government structure instituted through a system of decentralization with effective mechanism of recall, initiative and referendum, allocate among the different local governments their powers, responsibilities and resources, and provide for the qualification, election, appointment and removal, term, salaries, powers and functions and duties of local officials and all other matters relating to the organization and operation of the local units.

Thus, the Local Government Code of 1991 was born. The Congress

enacted Republic Act No. 7160, signed into law by President Aquino on October 10, 1991, and took effect on January 1, 1992. The main principle involved in the Code is decentralization, where LGUs shall enjoy genuine and meaningful local autonomy to enable them to attain their fullest involvement as self-reliant communities and make them more effective partners in attaining national goals (Galang, 1992). The United Nations Technical Assistance Program (UNTAP) describes four approaches to operationalize decentralization: deconcentration, devolution, privatization, and debureaucratization. Of the four, analysts of the Code describe devolution as the most radical. As defined in Section 17 (e) of the Code, devolution is "the act by which the national government confers power and authority upon the various local government units to perform specific functions and responsibilities."

NGO and PO participation: amidst politics and intrigue

NGOs and POs never engaged with the government. During the Marcos regime, these organizations evolved out of the need to respond critically to the dictatorship. It has been closely associated with the birth of the Communist Party, thus being branded as anti-government. These organizations have been treated as "outsiders" or elements of radical movements, and thus would only try to disempower those in position. Proud activists of the nation, NGOs and POs are always critical of the government's every move, its every legislation and dealings, both within and outside the country.

The civil society played a major role in the downfall of the Marcos regime, proof that CSOs can effect change in the political leadership. During the Aquino administration, there was a more receptive atmosphere towards CSOs that even underground organizations began to emerge and work legally and follow the mainstream. By the time the Local Government Code was adopted in 1991 at the last part of the Aquino government, NGOs were already very active in development work.

The Local Government Code was not created simply to cope with the difficulties of governing an archipelagic nation. It is not due to the Code why NGOs are being enlisted in their support to government projects and activities. It was simply the reality that these organizations were effective in providing the needed efficiency and sincerity and effectiveness of work that is lacking in government agencies. The Code is clearly a result of the reality that the Philippines have strong CSOs that could contribute substantially to effective governance. It is also best to mention that the Code was in response to the concrete socio-political realities of those times.

The Code mandates that the local government units enlist the support of POs and NGOs in the formulation and implementation of development policies and program. Various venues of participation provided are on: (1) representation in local special bodies; (2) sectoral representation in local legislative councils; (3) mandatory consultations for national projects; (4) accountability mechanisms of recall; (5) financial assistance from LGUs for socio-economic development undertakings; (6) joint ventures and privatization of local government enterprise; and (7) local initiative and referendum.

There are still other types of partnerships to examine various levels of participation of NGOs in government. An example is the focus on the nature and quality of partnerships as elaborated in the Philippines Business for Social Progress Local Development Assistance (PBSP-LDAP 1994). The five types originated from a UNDP and Asian NGO Coalition workshop on people's participation in rural development are:

1. Consultative Partnership (information sharing and exchange)
2. Coordinative Partnership (synchronization of separate initiatives to avoid duplication)
3. Complementary Partnership (parallel initiatives with a common vision)

4. Collaborative Partnership (common vision, objectives and programs)
5. Critical (or Strategic) Partnership (long-term, high impact collaboration)

There seems to be no elaborate guidelines or rules listing how CSOs/NGOs/POs are to relate and engage with the national government. Jennifer M. Coston's in her "A Model and Typology of Government-NGO relationships" (1998), lists eight types of government-NGO relationships: Repression, Rivalry, Competition, Contracting, Third Party Government, Cooperation, Complementary, and Collaboration. In the Philippines, an increasing number of NGOs/CSOs are being involved with the government, be it at the national or local level. They take on varying levels of participation yet there are still those who are wary of directly engaging with the government because of years of distrust and misrepresentation. Given these types of relationships and venues at which NGOs are to participate with the government, how does SEARICE fare in participation with the actors of state?

SEARICE's participation at the local and national government

SEARICE is a NGO doing regional work. Based in the Philippines, SEARICE's technical work focusing on plant genetic resources conservation, development and utilization is being implemented in different South East Asian countries, such as Thailand (CBDC Program), Vietnam (BUCAP and CBDC Program), Laos (BUCAP), Bhutan (BUCAP) and the Philippines (CBDC and SOS Program). Policy advocacy work is also carried on all these projects areas as well as in bringing the issues at the global level. At the same time, it is bringing to the project sites controversial issues involved in plant genetic resources conservation and use. It has a lot of extensive involvement on issues pertaining to access to genetic resources, bio-piracy, genetically modified organisms, and intellectual property rights in the local, national and regional levels. SEARICE had, therefore, substantially promoted its presence

around these issues, particularly in raising the awareness of the general public, building community capacity and pushing relevant policies among different agencies in the government.

There are different means at which SEARICE has been engaging with the government be it at the national level or the local level (Annex 1). Most of the national level involvement of SEARICE is being done by the Policy and Information Unit, directly engaging with the formulation of policies and advocacy of the issues revolving around PGR, access to technology and sustainable development in the legislative and executive branches of government. It also holds strategic positions in agencies that could be influenced to carry the SEARICE agenda. SEARICE is one of the NGO representatives of the Sub-Committee on Biodiversity of the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) – the first tripartite body on sustainable development in Asia composed of the Government, civil societies and business – have been helpful in bringing relevant issues to the Council and to the concentrated agencies. The PCSD was created in 1993 under the Ramos Administration, as part of the country's commitment to implement the principles laid down in Agenda 21. Through the PCSD, the Philippines has been able to effectively monitor and fulfill its commitments to the 1992 Earth Summit and address emerging issues and challenges in sustainable development. The PCSD became SEARICE's main vehicle in becoming part of most official bodies.

Having a seat in the development councils provide a promising opportunity for the program units to push for policies and programs that SEARICE brings. The big work, however, comes in the lobbying and advocacy of issues that are being ripened at the community-level to the local legislative council and supported by advocacy and lobbying at the national level. Recognition and support of these issues when assured at the local legislative could very well be foundations to form development plans.

At the different levels and venues of participation it cannot be said that SEARICE is already at the high-end of participation in its engagement with governments. For instance, its involvement or having a seat in the government at the national or local level is just a consultative forum where information is shared but stress and emphasis is given: it will remain as information. At this end, even the interplay of participation is very vague and hazy; providing no clear mechanism entailing that the information shared is valuable.

SEARICE has been utilizing this element in bringing forth its development issues on the PGR and sustainable agriculture to the attention of both the national and local governments. Participation is its approach/method in strengthening the farming communities to step forward and thus participate in their respective governments to make them heard. There are still vast areas to be explored in terms of NGO involvement in governance. As it was defined, governance is not confined to governments alone but includes the interactions of the actors within. In sum, good governance in all its elements, characteristics and measures will only be present and fulfill the role each has. In the end, when good governance has been achieved, each can pat other's back.

Bibliography

Agra, Alberto & A. Rood Steven. "Reviewing the local government code: Five years after", Journal of Legislative Development. Volume 2. Numbers 1&2. January-December 1997. pp.21-44

Aldaba, Fernando T. "An overview of the research literature on non-government organizations/ people's organizations (NGO/PO) participation in local governance". Journal of Legislative Development. Volume 2. Numbers 1&2 January-December 1997. pp. 71-81

Brillantes, Alex B. Jr. "Best practices in local governance and decentralization: The Philippine Galing Pook experience". Journal of Legislative Development.

Volume 2. Numbers 1&2 January-December 1997. pp.45-52

Buendia, Rizal G. "Decentralization and the local government code: Challenging the limits of empowerment and democracy" Journal of Legislative Development. Volume 2. Numbers 1 & 2 January-December 1997. pp. 7-20

Coston, Jennifer M. "A model and typology of government-NGO relationships" Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly. Volume 27, No.3 September 1998.

Dator, Jessica Asne. Assessing Policy Advocacy Initiatives of the Southeast Asia Regional Institute for Community Education (SEARICE). Unpublished thesis. October 2000.

Evaluation of SEARICE. Internal documents January 2000.

Good Governance Crucial in Global Struggle for Development and Peace. Address by Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette of the United Nations to the World Conference on Governance Manila, Philippines, May 1999.

Governance for Sustainable Human Development. A UNDP policy document (from the internet, balikan ko pa yung webpage for correct citation)

IIRR, LGSP, SANREM CRSP/ Southeast Asia 2001. ENHANCING PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: Experiences from the Philippines. International Institute fo Rural Reconstruction, Philippines-Canada Local Government Support Program and SANREM CRSP/ Southeast Asia 197p.

Measures of Good Governance in the Philippine Public Sector: The Use of an Organizational Excellence Framework. (walang author yung nai-fax sa akin)

Tabunda, Manuel S. & Galang, Mario M. A Guide to the Local Government Code of 1991. Mary Jo Educational Supply 1992.

Annex 1: SEARICE's programs and partners and its involvement/participation in different levels of the Philippine Government

SEARIC PROGRAM/UNIT/PARTNER	LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT	INVOLVEMENT/PARTICIPATION
Policy and Information Unit	National and International ● National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designated by the Philippine government as member of several national delegations to participate in various International negotiations - Co-chair of Sub-Committee on Biodiversity of Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) - Member of the Inter-Agency Committee on Biological and Genetic Resources (IACBGR of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the regulatory body tasked to implement the Executive Order 247, the Country's Framework on Access to Biological and Genetic Resources of the Philippines - Member of the Technical Secretariat of the IACBGR - Member of the Board of Trustees of Philippine Institute for Traditional and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC), Department of Health - Member of the Committee on Food Safety and Standards, Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Standards (BAFPS), Department of Agriculture - Founder and Focal Organization, Network Opposed to GMOs (NO GMOs!)

<p>Anti-Biopiracy Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional (Southeast Asia) • Local (Philippines) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Passage of some local ordinances and laws on the protection of biodiversity (through SEARICE ABP-partners)
<p>Technical Assistance Unit</p>		
<p>Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation Program – Bohol Project (CBDC-Bohol)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial • Municipal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participated in the creation of the Bohol Environment Code in 1998 - Participated in the drafting of Bohol's framework for sustainable agriculture - Collaborated with the Provincial Government in holding a public forum on GMOs - Board Secretariat of BISAD (Bohol Initiators for Sustainable Agriculture Development) - BISAD network in collaboration with the Provincial Government organized the Organic Congress in Bohol, which was participated by different municipal LGUs, NGOs and POs
<p>People's/ Farmers' Organizations (PO) facilitated by CBDC-Bohol</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local/Barangay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involved in the Barangay Development Council - Member of the Local Special Bodies at the Municipal Level

<p>Community-based Native Seeds Research Centre, Incorporated (CONSERVE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provincial ● Municipal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accredited by Municipalities of Pres. Roxas and Kabacan in North Cotabato - Accredited at the Provincial level - Member of the NGO/PO/PS under the Provincial Planning and Development Council (PPDC) in the Provincial Government of Cotabato up to year 2004 - Member of the Local Special Bodies in the Municipality of Pres. Roxas- CONSERVE represents as Health Board pushing its agenda on Alternative Medicine
<p>People's/Farmers' Organizations (PO) facilitated by CONSERVE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Barangay/ Local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member of Municipal Development Council in the Municipality of Pres. Roxas - PO leaders attend sessions in different barabgays (particularly in corn growing areas) and are given a chance to talk on the effects and implications brought about by Genetically Modified Organism (specially Bt Corn) - PO leader debated, argued and provided facts in the municipal council session on the benefits of decomposed rice straw, thus prompting the Municipal Legislative Council to pass an Ordinance Prohibiting the Burning of Rice Straw - PO leaders were the front-liners in a Municipal Forum conducted in the Municipality of Arakan about the Effects of Genetically Modified Organisms in Food and Agriculture, leading to the creation of the Ordinance on the Banning of the Entry of GM foods and crops in the municipality - No GMO movement participated by People's Organization, Church-based NGOs, concerned citizens and NGOs in North Cotabato initiated a GMO caravan, gaining remarkable impact on the Province of Cotabato which led the Provincial Government to proclaim the Province of Cotabato a "GMO-FREE Province"

7

Civil Will in Sustainable Development Some Thoughts for Discussion

SEARICE *

The decade following the Rio Summit in 1992 witnessed the boom in civil society efforts in sustainable development initiatives worldwide. Many of these initiatives, however, started prior to Rio, and pursued by numerous communities, organizations and individuals who were not even able to take part in the Rio Summit or not even fully aware of the commitments that resulted from it. It is interesting to note that some of these efforts are not consciously formulated as sustainable development initiatives nor branded as such. It can be said that the crucial contribution of Rio lies in providing an enabling policy environment for civil society to engage in sustainable development initiatives and to explore new forms of partnership beyond their own milieu. This mandate is clear in the preamble of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development which sets the goal of establishing a new and equitable social partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people.

While States were compelled by the Rio Declaration to adopt policies and mechanisms that pave the way to the sustainable path of development, much of the vision, direction and significant efforts in sustainable development originated outside the formal structure of government and its instrumentalities. From small community-based initiatives in India to utilize traditional irrigation systems to internationally-funded programs in protected area management in the Philippines, key sectors of society outside government have led the way to a sustainable future. Many of

* Southeast Asia Regional Institute for Community Education (SEARICE) is an NGO based in the Philippines

these efforts are initiated by communities and organizations fully independent from government support and participation, while some are undertaken in partnership or with support from government, especially those that came out after the Rio Summit.

The political changes worldwide that happened before and after the Rio Summit also played crucial role in providing an enabling environment for multi-sectoral partnership in sustainable development. The fall of military dictatorships in many developing countries in the 1980s and the crumble of rigid ideological divide in the 1990s have contributed substantially in fostering new forms of partnership among the government, key sectors of society and the people. This trend gave birth to noteworthy efforts in multi-sectoral partnerships like the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) in the Philippines, which would not have been feasible under the Marcos dictatorship.

The notable weakening of the power of the States in the 1990s is another factor that ushered in a development era led by sectors outside of government, particularly civil society. The increased power and control of giant transnational corporations over key resources and utilities have left the States loosening its grip over political and economic power. The pressure exerted on developing countries by a few industrialized countries for the former to adopt rigid international trade rules such as the recent rounds of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) and later the World Trade Organization (WTO) has left States at the mercy of an international trade market ruled by transnational corporations accountable to no one. Compliance with international trade rules has even become a bottom line issue in many negotiations on the environment and sustainable development. This trend was clearly evident in the negotiations on the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Bio-safety Protocol, the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the Kyoto Protocol.

The weakening power of States has brought forward the important

role played by civil society. The 1990s saw the phenomenal rise of organized actions by groups outside governments and business. Civil actions in sustainable development ranged from community-based development efforts to national-scale development programs. What sets the efforts after Rio prominently apart from the earlier ventures of civil society and organized groups into sustainable development is perhaps the active involvement in policy advocacy and the increasing models of partnership with government. Policy involvement of civil society happens from the local level through participation in local development councils by many Philippine organizations to the highly level involvement in international discussions of such groups as the Third World Network. Such involvements are aimed at broad objectives ranging from project formulation and implementation, budget appropriations and monitoring, to mainstreaming of community models, instituting policy changes and formulation of programs and policies. In many cases, the combined approaches of civil society organizations in initiating sustainable development models at the community level and engaging the government in policy initiatives inescapably broaden these interventions to cover the whole range of concerns in governance. Examples of these engagements at policy level abound in the Philippines, especially upon the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991 and the presidential issuances on the PCSD. The key role played by civil society organizations in the formulation of Philippine Agenda 21 is particularly notable.

Civil society involvement in policy discussions is not only limited to participation in government, bodies and critical collaborations but in outright challenge and critique of government's policies as well. Direct pressures are exerted on governments through such forms as demonstrations and actions aimed at raising issues that are often ignored in formal negotiations and official discussions. Civil society actions surrounding the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the various trade negotiations on the WTO which culminated in the Battle in Seattle, are all directly related to civil will on sustainable development. The criticism raised

in these platforms especially on how they contradict the objectives in sustainable development has led governments and multilateral institutions to slow down, re-think their approaches, study the impacts of trade agreements and in some cases, strategize on how to win over the support of civil society. Beyond the pressures exerted by these actions on governments and formal institutions, these greatly contributed in increasing public and media awareness on sustainable development issues which enhanced the enabling environment for these initiatives.

There is no denying the fact that civil society has become a major player in policy discussions at different levels and no government, even the most repressive ones, can ignore this reality. The varying approaches in asserting civil will in sustainable development – from independent initiatives in community development to collaborative implementation of Projects with government, from purely community involvement to participation in policy formulation, from the local level to the international arena – have made all this possible.

While the above discussion provides a rough overview of 'civil will' in sustainable development, there are numerous questions and concerns that need to be collectively discussed in order for civil society to systematically sustain its gains. This paper hopes to contribute in articulating these questions and initiate a discussion on these concerns, especially at the theoretical level. There are ample examples on practical experiences in Asia and the rest of the world demonstrating civil society efforts in sustainable development but much is left for us to discuss in order to have a coherent understanding and analysis of where these efforts will lead to and how we can make these contributions more substantive towards the goal of providing a sustainable future for our children.

'Civil Will': Who Are We?

The most fundamental aspect of concerns in discussing civil will in sustainable development is the definition of what constitutes

'civil will'. In the above overview, 'civil will' is referred to interchangeable as the efforts and initiatives of 'civil society', 'organized groups', and 'sectors outside government and its instrumentalities'. The author admits that it is a rough way of defining what 'civil will' which brings us to further question such as what constitutes 'civil society', among others.

Available Asian literatures on civil society, such as the writings of Nicanor Perlas, lead us to an operational understanding of civil society as those sectors and groups involved in the cultural realm of society (i.e., development work, organizing) and working outside the government (political realm) and business (economic realm). Should we then say that what constitute, 'civil will' in sustainable development are those efforts initiated by civil society? What about those civil society organizations involved outside of the cultural realm, such as conveyance (political realm) and economic enterprises (economic realm)? Are their initiatives excluded from 'civil will'? It should be noted that in Nicky Perlas' writings, labor unions and cooperatives are not included in the operational definition of civil society, since the involvement of these groups are largely within the economic realm, in the same sphere as business groups. The question on the nature of 'civil will' also needs to be addressed if we agree that 'civil will' in sustainable development refers to the efforts of sectors outside the government and business, should these be organized or structured efforts? How do we categorize individual or unorganized efforts in sustainable development? When do we consider a community effort 'organized'?

There is also a concern in the rigid divide between government and civil society, between business and civil society, whether such distinctions can stand the rapid changes in development configurations and the multi-faceted models in inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships. We have business-led civil society organizations like the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP) and the Business Agenda 21 initiatives involved in

community-based development initiatives and policy advocacy on sustainable development, respectively. Should their initiatives be excluded from what constitute 'civil will' because these emanate from the business sector? And what about the agriculture and fisheries councils organized by the government, composed of representatives from different sectors and equally involved in varying development and policy initiatives?

Defining Our Roles

The social, political and economic changes that transpired worldwide after Rio have proven that the role of civil society in sustainable development can no longer be relegated to limited, traditional areas. From micro initiatives, civil society involvement in development work has reached the most macro level at the international sphere. The scope has gone from very local approaches to regional and global development initiatives, from specific development concerns and areas to multi-faceted development programs that cut across political boundaries and geographical landscapes. Some of these macro and regional/international approaches are exemplified by the experiences of the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC) in rural development, Southeast Asia Regional Institute for Community Education (SEARICE) in plant genetic resources conservation and various regional networks in Asia on food, security, alternative trade, among others.

At different levels, civil society initiatives have gone beyond limited interventions in sustainable development or limiting their efforts in the so-called cultural sphere. As can be gleaned from the experiences of many groups, sustainable development initiatives even those concerning specific areas as environmental management or biodiversity conservation are inextricably linked to interventions in governance and the political sphere. Most alternative efforts after all are essentially critiques on how governments are performing their duties and responsibilities to

the people. In areas where government has functioned dismally, organized groups have come up with alternative means of managing development and even governance as exemplified by the experience of the Center for Alternative Rural Technology (CART) in northern Mindanao.

Efforts of civil society in sustainable development initiatives which have inescapably brought them into the governance arena, have all contributed in changing our understanding of governance itself. Gone are the days when governance is a strict domain for government and its instrumentalities. Side by side too with the increasing importance of civil involvement in governance is the increasing power of corporations to influence governance directions even if most of these entities do not directly participate in the process of governance.

While we may consider the trends in the growing involvement of civil society organizations in governance a very positive development, there are concerns that we need to face squarely. Up to what extent should civil society organizations participate in matters and processes pertaining to governance? Some may consider this question as purely theoretical since it is largely the political structures that define how much civil society can participate in governance after all. But that is not so in many cases where government and its instrumentalities lack the vision to lead in the area of sustainable development and a high level of trust has been achieved with civil society actors. We have to take note too that government is neither a monolithic nor a homogenous structure. As the experience of the PCSD showed, some sectors and key individuals in government may be fully supportive of civil society leadership in the formulation of the Philippine Agenda 21, other sectors are resentful of it and may even come up with obstacles to make the partnership fall.

We are also faced with questions on how can we effectively enter into collaborative engagement with government and for what end?

How do we ensure that civil society organizations will not be co-opted by the government in the process of being involved in partnership in sustainable development and in governance? How do we safeguard the integrity of civil society commitment to sustainable development from being used by the government as a means to legitimize or "odorize" its failed efforts? These are exactly the questions that were hurled at the civil society counterpart of the PCSD since it was constituted in 1993. To a large extent, the civil society counterpart of the PCSD had failed to adequately address these questions over the years, thus resulting in frustration and disillusionment on the part of many organizations that decided to opt out of the process.

In a similar vein, concerns on how do we engage business in sustainable development arise. Civil society organizations have traditionally avoided and evaded any form of engagement with the business sector other than direct action or critique against the latter. This stems from the traditional view that business' existence is largely defined by its drive for profit, oftentimes at the expense of the people, the consumers, producers and workers. The role of civil society organizations to work for the interest of the people has naturally brought them directly against business, typically referred to in Marxist analysis as the exploiting class. In view of the change in the global socio-political and economic landscape, however, there seems to be an imperative to re-think this traditional analysis. In the years following the Rio Summit, we have seen the emergence of business-led initiatives that go beyond the economic realm and foster such concepts as social responsibility of corporations, corporate environmentalism, among others. Earlier on, we have seen some business groupings bonding together to form semi-independent entities functioning as non-profit foundations involved in extending social services and initiating community development initiatives. While many of these entities were merely used by unscrupulous corporations to evade paying taxes to the government, there are some models that are quite noteworthy such as the PBSP and the Philippine Business for the Environment

(PBE). Should civil society organizations continue avoiding any engagement with the business sector despite the changes in the social, political and economic landscape? How do we tap the balance for the benefit of the people in view of the weakening power of the State and the increasing role of business?

Our Accountability

There are also peripheral issues that we need to consider in the discussion of 'civil will' in sustainable development. These issues surface more prominently in view of the increasing involvement of civil society organizations in governance issues. There is the question on the accountability of civil society organizations. While governments are in many cases accountable to the people who elected them to power and business is accountable to its own board shareholders, the accountability of civil society is much less clear and more difficult to define. Many of us would say that we are accountable to the people and communities we serve and to some of us, our constituency is not very easy to define. This is especially for groups whose main concern is policy advocacy and lobbying. We could defend that civil society organizations are accountable to the broad society that is the reason for our being involved in development work but questions on how do we enforce this accountability and what mechanisms are available for society and the people to demand for our accountability?

And what about transparency? While many civil society organizations criticize governments for the lack of transparency in their operations, can we proudly say that we have been fully transparent in our operations? While many organizations adhere strictly to the process of reporting their operations and financial status to their respective Board of Trustees/Directors and submit these documents to the government, how much of these information are accessible to the public? Should we say that the transparency in our operations is at par with business entities when our involvement concerns society in general? It should be noted at

this juncture that many of the concerns in accountability and transparency of NGOs are being addressed by networks and coalitions with strict accreditation standards, most civil society organizations remain outside of these grouping and are therefore not compelled to comply with set procedures.

These are some of the questions that civil society needs to address in providing some coherence in our efforts and gains in sustainable development. This presentation is nowhere near a systematic discussion of these questions and concerns but is a mere attempt to articulate some thoughts for future discussions. The rich experiences of different groups across Asia and the rest of the world should help us in arriving at a clearer vision on how we should proceed in view of the ever-changing situation globally. It is hoped that the overview and initial articulations of concerns presented in this paper will lead to more productive discussions of 'civil will' in sustainable development which will contribute in enhancing our understanding of sustainable development in general.

8

The Philippines' Compliance to Sustainable Development Commitments Long in Promises, Short in Deeds

SEARICE^{*}

The Philippines was among the first country in Asia that signed the Rio Declaration in 1992 and ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1993. The rhetoric of sustainable development was easily used by the administration of then President Fidel V. Ramos as a platform in luring civil society organizations into critical engagements with the government. A few months after the Rio Summit, the first Presidential issuances signed by Ramos was a memorandum order creating the Philippine Council for Sustainable Development (PSCD) as a trilateral body on sustainable development, composed of government agencies, civil society organizations and business. The body was given more muscle through Ramos' Executive Order 370 signed in 1996, which clarified the partnership and equal treatment among the three sectors in providing sustainable development.

The PSCD boasts as the first such trilateral sustainable development structure in the world and was projected as a symbol of the Philippine government's sincerity in fulfilling its Rio commitments. It is composed of various committees (i.e., major groups, conservation and management of resources) and sub-committees (i.e. soil, biodiversity, media) that reflect the key areas in sustainable development as embodied in the Rio Declaration. A government official and co-chaired by a representative of civil society chairs these sub-bodies, with members from the three major sectors. The governing body of the PSCD is the Council, which has parity

^{*} Southeast Asia Regional Institute for Community Education (SEARICE) is an NGO based in the Philippines

members/representation from the three sectors, and headed by the Director-General of the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), who has the rank of a Cabinet member.

Euphoric from the victories in Rio, the civil society counterpart of the PCSD was able to attract key organizations and personalities representing the major groups. At its peak in 1994, the civil society counterpart had a membership of 164 organizations, many of them national organizations involved in development initiatives. Wracked by personality-oriented politics and marred by the realization that the body is merely being used by the Philippine government to odorize and legitimize its failed commitment in sustainable development, the PCSD's membership has dwindled to a miserable 47 organizations at present.

On paper, the PCSD was created to provide a platform for discussion of issues and trends affecting sustainable development and to advise the government on policies that promote sustainable development. Its major task is to formulate a Philippine Agenda 21 that will embody the country's efforts to translate its commitment in Rio into concrete actions. In reality, however, the PCSD became a platform for political bickering between civil society organizations and government agencies on which one carries the more fancy wisdom on sustainable development and among government agencies which are all asserting their turf over particular development initiatives and sectors. Unfortunately, even for its civil society counterpart, the PCSD largely became a mere platform to launch political aspiration and project self-image of some NGO personalities. None of the actions of the PCSD has ever addressed the fundamental factors that affect the country's attempt for sustainable development such as the debt crisis, unfair international trade rules, or adverse impacts of globalization. Neither did the PCSD ever challenge the national and international powers that pose threats to the countries' sustainable development, nor did it act on issues that tend to shake the fragile relationship between the government, industry and civil society. Thus, the body lived

up to its role of merely odorizing government's miserable failure in meetings its commitments to sustainable development. Many civil society organizations that chose to remain members of the PCSD have remained so to maximize the small opportunities available for policy discussions and critical engagements with specific government agencies concerned with particular developments issues or sectors.

The rest of is paper reviews the policy initiatives of the Philippines government to comply with its commitment in Rio and operationalization of provisions of the Convention on Biodiversity. The review and assessment are focused on developments and policies concerning biological diversity, specifically agricultural biodiversity, which is the area where SEARICE's work in the Philippines are largely concentrated.

Philippine Agenda 21

The efforts to formulate the Philippine Agenda 21 (PA 21) started in 1994 or two years after the establishment of the PCSD. Lack of fund, organizational problems and political bickering delayed the process and characterized the entire length of its formulation. It was the tenacity, leadership and vision of key civil society organizations that made the Philippine Agenda 21 possible in view of the lack of political will on the part of government to see the process through. After a series of consultations, mostly national and leaving out local groups and key stakeholders in the process, the document was presented for Ramos' regime. The government immediately seized the opportunity and claimed the Philippine Agenda 21 as a major triumph for the administrations sincerity in fulfilling its promises in Rio. This was despite the fact that few government agencies are aware of the existence of the document up to now, much less appreciate its value. Again, the document was hailed as another first in the world.

Theoretically, the Philippine Agenda 21 is a good document that embodies the country's effort to translate the Rio commitments

into concrete actions and strategies. It specifically points out the programs and initiatives of government agencies that will lead the way to sustainable development, although quite idealistic in setting goals and deadlines for compliance completely ignoring the government's lack of political will and vision and the current unsustainable development paradigms. For one, it aims to eradicate the use of chemical pesticides by the year 2004 an impossible dream in the current situation where even banned pesticides are marketed openly. The statement of unity that provides framework for the actions plans and strategies in the document is highly commendable in its vision and clarity but seems very odd and too idealistic after taking stock of the development realities in the Philippines. In general, PA 21 was mainly a civil society document and was not surprisingly scorned by many government officials as one of those documents that are doomed to remain on paper from the start.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Philippines was among the first countries to sign and ratify the CBD. Aside from the formulation of the PS 21, which was completed four years after Rio, no other major effort was done to make government programs and policies in tune with the provisions of the CBD. In fact, no organized effort was ever initiated to make government agencies and major groups aware of the provisions of the CBD. This is ironic because in subsequent years the Philippines played a dominant role in key international negotiations leading to the operationalization of major provisions of the CBD such as access and benefit sharing and the Bio-safety Protocol.

Access and Benefit-Sharing

The Philippines scored another first in the world when President Ramos signed Executive Order 247 (EO 247) in May 1995, regulating the prospecting of biological and genetic resources in the country. It was hailed as a pioneering regulation and brought the Philippines at the forefront of the international discussions on

access and benefit sharing as embodied in the provisions of Article 15 of the CBD. The regulation was brainchild of a group of Filipino scientists and academicians who felt short-changed by the reality that foreign researchers who have access to more fund and sophisticated technologies are the ones benefiting from the research on the utilization of the country's biological and genetic resources. The move was fully supported by many civil society organizations.

The Executive Order, however, was only implemented in earnest when the Administrative Order implementing it came in 1996 after a long process of consultations among a handful of government agencies that were tasked to implement it. A number of civil society organizations were actively involved in the consultations as well as implementation of the Executive Order especially through the Inter-Agency Committee on Biological and Genetic Resources (ISCBGR) which worked closely with the PCSD Sub-Committee on Biological Diversity.

EO 247 is considered as a stringent regulatory system for bio-prospecting and was widely scorned by the scientific community and industry worldwide. It is perceived to have a clear bias for local communities whose prior informed consent is a basic requirement for government approval of an application for bio-prospecting whether for academic or commercial purposes. Despite this seemingly progressive requirement, the regulation only recognizes the rights of the state to have the final decision on bio-prospecting applications, in line with the principle of national sovereignty over biological and genetic resources embodied in the CBD. The requirement for prior informed consent is a mere recognition of the reality that the Philippine government cannot ignore the political strength and voice of indigenous and local communities gained over years of political struggle. Much of the later criticism on the regulation, however, focused on the lack of capacity of concerned government agencies to implement the regulation and the very low awareness on the regulations. The

dismal implementation of the regulation was in turn blamed on lack of fund, a convenient excuse for government agencies failures to perform their mandates.

Bio-Safety Protocol

The Philippines played an important role in the five-year negotiations that led to the adoption of the Cartagena Protocol on Bio-safety from Jakarta in November 1995 to Montreal in January 2000. Again, it was among the first countries that signed the Protocol and the ratification process is now underway in the executive and legislative branches. At the national level, the Philippines (again) was the first country in Asia that adopted its own Bio-safety Guidelines in 1990, under the leadership of the then President Corazon Cojuangco-Aquino. The Guidelines was flaunted as stringent and was a direct result of a civil society expose of the unregulated field trials of rice blast fungus by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Banos in 1989. Prior to the formulation of the Bio-safety Guidelines, the President signed Executive Order 340 creating the National Committee on Bio-Safety of the Philippines (NCBP) which was tasked to draft the guidelines, advise the government on matters concerning modern biotechnology, conduct research on bio-safety and initiate consultations among affected sectors. The NCBP is composed of scientists and representatives of key government agencies. But the two community representatives in the Committee are selected on vague merits and unclear guidelines.

In 1998, the NCBP came out with its *Guidelines on Planned Release of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and Potentially Hazardous Exotic Species (PHES)*, which laid down the ground for field trials of GMOs. Civil society organizations attempted to block the regulation by questioning the consultation process in its formulation and critiquing lack of safeguards to protect the rights of the community in the approval process of any field test of GMOs. Questions on the health, environmental, economic and social impacts were also raised but were largely ignored by the NCBP

which subsequently adopted the Guidelines it had formulated.

In 1999, the Guidelines was tested with the first-ever field trial application of then Cargill Philippines (which later became Monsanto) and the Institute of Plant Breeding (IPB) of the University of the Philippines in Los Banos (UPLB) involving genetically engineered *Bt* corn (MON 810) in General Santos City in the south. Civil society organizations actively launched advocacy and lobbying campaigns to stir public interest on the field trial. A large sector of the Catholic Church actively supported the call to stop the field trial and local government officials later joined the move. Despite the issues raised and a court case asking for a temporary restraining order, the NCBP approved the application and the proponents pushed through with the *Bt* corn field trial. Some farmer's group, NGOs, scientists and local government to the Philippines Supreme Court in February 2000, elevated the issue but the petition was dismissed on technical grounds. The same controversy surrounded the subsequent *Bt* corn field trial application by pioneer Hi- Breed and IPB that was approved by the NCBP in 2000 and conducted by the proponents in January 2001. The proponents ignored the local government resolution prohibiting the field trial and the municipal court ruled in favor of Pioneer Hi-Bred when local church-based organizations farmers and local government officials filed a case for temporary restraining order to stop the field testing.

More civil society organizations joined the campaign against field trials of GMOs in the Philippines when the multi-location field trials of *Bt* corn was initiated by Monsanto this year. Again, the NCBP approved the application despite lack of thorough consultations and failure to address the issues raised against the proposed field trial. The controversy was brought to the attention of the President, who instead of instructing the concerned agencies, signed a policy statement promoting the use of modern biotechnology. The height of frustration and dismay of farmers and civil society organizations over the way the government dismally addressed the controversies

in GMOs was expressed in the uprooting of *Bt* corn plants in one of the Monsanto test sites in South Cotabato (southern Philippines) on 29 August when more than 800 individuals stormed the site. As expected, the government and its instrumentalities ran to the defense of the proponents by condemning the direct action as "mob rule" rather than looking at it as people legitimate defense mechanism against the inaction of the government and its clear connivance with corporate interests.

Ignoring the calls of farmers and consumers to stop the entry and field trials of GMOs until the fundamental questions are adequately addressed, the Philippine government continues with its goal of legitimizing the use of GMOs in the country. The Department of Agriculture has recently drafted the *Guidelines on the Importation of Plants and Plant Products Derived from Modern Biotechnology*, which simply put, officially allows the entry of genetically engineered plants and plant products into the Philippine soil. The draft Guidelines is currently undergoing token consultation processes where civil society participation is designed to be marginal. The document will merely legalize the entry of GMOs into the country and into the food chain since these products have been freely imported from GMO-producing countries like the US without any regulation. It claims to adhere to the precautionary approach in the CBD but its provisions explicitly challenge the spirit of the precautionary principle of the Rio Declaration.

While consumer pressure for mandatory labeling of GMO and products containing GMOs has been growing stronger through the past few years, the Philippine government has not shown any interest in legislating such measures. Government agencies like the Bureau of Food and Drugs (BFAD) have already made public announcement that there is no need for labeling of GMOs because of the principles of substantial equivalence and the premise on safety based solely on the experience of the US. There are several bills on mandatory labeling field in the two Houses of Congress but these are not certified as urgent. Neither has the legislature

shown any seriousness in adopting these proposed legislations into laws beyond political posturing.

Agricultural Biodiversity

Concern on agricultural biodiversity conservation is not in the agenda of the Philippine government since Rio. Despite the rhetoric on sustainable agriculture, the Philippine government does not have a single program or support facilities for farmers and organizations involved in organic farming or sustainable agriculture. The single bottom line in all agricultural programs and policies in the past decade has always been in increasing production and yield, often regardless of cost on the environment and social impact. Increased production as the ultimate goal is very clearly exemplified in the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997 (AFMA). It is ironic that while the law's battle cry is modernization of agriculture, the basic problems in the land reform, farm-to-market roads and low prices of agriculture products continue to beset farming communities.

With the transformation of the agriculture and fisheries sectors into a technology-based industry and adoption of a market-driven approach as its main objective, the AFMA has become one major legal justification for the promotion of modern biotechnology in the Philippine agriculture. The AFMA has no explicit objective to promote the conservation and development of agricultural genetic resources at all apart from a provision promoting the distribution and use of modern, high-quality seeds among farmers which are mere semantics for, certified any hybrid seeds. The extension services and facilities and research and development incentives offered by AFMA are particularly targeted at high-value cash crops and not on staple food crops.

The present-day reality in the Philippine agricultural sector remains highly inconsistent with sustainable development practices. Chemical-based farming dominates lowland agriculture, despite increasing concern on the effects of chemical pesticides and

inorganic fertilizers on human health and the environment. The government has banned six of the most hazardous pesticide types in 1992 but monitoring of compliance to the policy has been very weak resulting to the continuous commercialization of some banned pesticides in rural areas. Government agricultural programs continue to endorse the use of chemical inputs to attain higher production with many government extension workers moonlighting as distributors of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Chemical companies also use their resources to advertise their products while promoting government programs as in the case of Monsanto's advertisement of its *Power* herbicide as part of the Department of Agriculture's *Makamasa* (pro-masses) program under the claim of conservation tillage. Farmers remain as victims of the pesticides cycle with lack of legal option for redress or compensation whenever they are adversely affected by hazardous chemicals in their farms. Government and private banks continue to practice its perverse package of requiring farmers to use chemical pesticides, fertilizers and certified seeds as basic requirements for production loans, a scheme which wipes out any illusion of choice among farmers with regard to the farming system that they would like to adopt.

The traditional practice of free sharing and exchange of seeds continues to be the main foundation of agricultural genetic resource conservation and development in the Philippines. Even government statistics admit that only 11 percent of the total seed supply in rice farming originate from the formal system or are certified seeds. The rest still originate from the informal seed supply system or among the farmers themselves. Despite the lack of government support programs, farmers continue to select and breed their seeds on farm. Certified seed originating from research institutions like the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Philippine Rice Research Institute (Phi Rice) are continuously improved by farmers in their farm along with traditional varieties to come up with varieties adapted to their specific needs and conditions. On-farm improvement of seeds is not only prevalent in rice, vegetables and other secondary crops but in some cash

crops as corn where hybrid seeds dominate. The law on seed certification requires uniformity, stability and purity, which automatically marginalize farmer-bred seeds from the certification process. There remains to be no single Philippine law or policy to recognize and reward farmers for their innovation in seeds management and improvement.

A key threat to agricultural genetic resources diversity and the farmers' inherent rights to breed, improve, exchange, share and sell their seeds looming in the horizon is the proposed Plant Variety Protection (PVP) Act, now being deliberated in the Congress. This legislative proposal is part of the Philippine government's compliance with the provisions of Article 27.3 (b) of the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement under the World Trade Organization (WTO) which requires the adoption of the patent system or an effective *sui generis* system for the protection of plant varieties. It should be noted that the deadline for the compliance by developing countries to the said provision of the TRIPS has lapsed on 31 December 1999, and only a handful of countries were able to comply while numerous states in the South are calling for its immediate review.

The proposed PVP system is essentially derived from the 191 version of the UPOV Convention which grants intellectual property rights to breeders of varieties that meet the set criteria of distinctiveness, uniformity, stability and novelty. The only exemption provided in the proposed legislation is embodied in the concept of 'farmers' privilege' which allows farmers to use protected varieties within their own landholdings or only as defined by the government body mandated to implement the law. This concept is a gross departure from the principle of farmers' rights embodied in the recently adopted International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, which the Philippines signed in early November.

Civil Will In Agricultural Biodiversity Conservation

Despite the bleak policy landscape in the agricultural biodiversity and related concern, civil society organizations in the Philippines remained resolute and determined in providing sustainable alternatives. These efforts are particularly notable in the area of community-based farmer-led conservation, improvement and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources. Organizations like MASIPAG (Farmer-Scientist Partnership in Agricultural Research) and SEARICE are actively involved in these initiatives and have demonstrated that the crop and varietal diversity in farmers' fields which evolved through continuous innovation of farming communities remain as the single most important foundation in ensuring food security and genetic diversity. These initiatives have shown that farmers are equal partners in agricultural research and development and are dynamic agents of change. Their organizations have collectively challenged the development agenda and directions set by the government and by agricultural research institutions that are inherently biased against small farmers and are largely based on the narrow goal of increased production.

HARKA GURUNG graduated with B.A. Hons. (1959) from Patna College, Patna; Post Graduated Dip.Geog. (1961) and Ph.D. (1965) from the University of Edinburgh. Academic assignments include Demonstrator, University of Edinburgh (1963-64); Research Fellow, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (1964-66); Lecturer, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu (1966-68), and Visiting Fellow, Population Institute, East-West Center, Honolulu (1984-85). He served Nepal Government as Member and Vice-Chairman, National Planning Commission (1968-78); Minister of State for Education, Industry & Commerce (1975-77); Minister of State for Tourism, and Public Works & Transport (1977-78). He has done consultancy work for HMG/Nepal, ADB, ESCAP, IDRC, IFAD, IUCN, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNRISD, USAID and The World Bank. Dr. Gurung is author of numerous books and papers. Main areas of professional interest include demography, planning, environment, geography and tourism. He has been Board Member of Lumbini Development Trust, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP/UNESCO). His last assignment (1993/98) was as the Director of Asia and Pacific Development Centre, an inter-governmental organization based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He is associated with New ERA consultants, Kathmandu.

GANESH GURUNG, a Sociologist and Researcher, is actively involved in research in Nepal. He was engaged with Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University and New ERA (a private research company). He also served as Visiting Fellow in Harvard University (USA). As a Consultant, he has worked in UN, World Bank, and many other development agencies.

Presently, he is the Executive Chairman of Nepal Institute of Development Studies (NIDS).