

Poverty, Power and Politics

Poverty, power and politics are closely associated with each other in countries like ours where socio-economic conditions are backward and exploitative relations in the society exist both visibly and invisibly. The exploitative land relations and landlessness of the people hurdle the peoples participation in democratic processes and thus inhumane power equations exist in the rural areas, which still dominate the whole scenario of the streets of power causing unfair games in politics. Horse-trading not only of the voters but also of the elected representatives has been observed in past and during various special circumstances. Existing feudal relations in the society, adverse effects of speedy globalization and power snatching triangular battle among Royal Palace, ultra left Maoists and pro-people Centrist forces are the contemporary realities of the nation.

Situation

- 38 % of the population under poverty line according to official statistics - 23% urban and 44% rural
- Displacement of families and migration towards District Headquarters and Capital in addition to out-migration towards India
- Political instability based on arm conflict between Royal Security force and Maoists force; in between the extraordinary situation King has tried to snatch more power and offended the democracy of the country through unconstitutional moves.
- No representation and participation of people at present in ruling
- Major political parties are in a united movement for peace and democracy
- Human Rights and workers rights are at extreme difficulties
- Disinvestments is taking place and establishments are in closure

- Employment is being curtailed
- Minimum wages are not revised and the tripartite committee formed for the purpose has been made passive by the government itself
- Every segment of the people in lower middle class and below poverty line are in livelihood difficulties
- Gender issues have become more pertinent

Experiences

- Experiences of 9 five year plans
- 10th Five year Plan is designed in the form of Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan
- Large number of amount exhausted in the form of foreign aids
- Large number of amount is the current external debt

Issues of Concern at present

- Effective implementation of legislations
- Minimum wages and social protection
- Effective implementation of programmes
- How to minimize widespread corruption in the country
- Reestablishment of democratic bodies like Parliament and VDCs/MNCPs/DDCs

Our priorities

- Implementation of labour laws
- Effective implementation of poverty reduction strategy and plans-programmes
- Effective implementation of women focused programmes
- Revision and correction of legislation in a gender-friendly framework
- Skill training and right based training for self employed & home-based women workers
- Establishment of social protection system for workers in the formal sector as well as informal economy
- Effective implementation of minimum wages
- Land reform and decentralization of activities
- Improvement in working & living conditions

- Productivity movement
- Employment generation
- Diplomatic protection of Nepali workers abroad

What are we doing?

Broadly speaking, activities concerning poverty reduction, political stabilization & democracy and policy intervention may be mentioned as follows:

- Unionizing-organizing the working people under right based approach in trade unions under GEFONT Umbrella
- Organising women and peasant in mass organizations like ANWA and ANPA
- Intervention in national policies through all possible forums with a pro worker approach
- Working on the issues of social concern in cooperation with genuine NGOs & Human right organizations
- Supporting political parties for regaining peace and democracy and for political stabilization of the country for sound industrial & economic development
- Efforts for single unionism in the country and to develop a single umbrella for all working population
- Efforts for sound coordination and to build up a sound system of social dialogue with employers and business class.

(Prepared by Umesh Upadhyaya for SAAPE Meeting Colombo, Sri Lanka, 2003)