Productive Employment

Jobless Growth and the Right to Work

Jobless Growth

The right to work is a basic human right, recognized by the United Nations as fundamental to the well-being of people and their societies.

Over the past three decades, however, most countries in all parts of the world have been unable to create enough jobs to accommodate the growing numbers of people entering the workforce. Instead, they have experienced "jobless growth", with increases in output far exceeding gains in employment.

Of the world's total labour force of 2.8 billion, around 30 per cent are not productively employed, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This includes more than 120 million people who are unemployed and some 700 million who are underemployed. These people constitute the bulk of the world's estimated 1.1 billion absolute poor.

Widening Gap

Trends that have contributed to the widening gap between economic growth and the creation of new jobs include:

- a preference for capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive production methods;
- increased use of labour-saving technologies to counter rising labour costs;
- growing efforts of labour unions to protect the jobs of their members;
- a tendency to reduce the permanent labour force and employ more temporary workers.

Unless steps are taken to counter present trends, unemployment is sure to worsen. In developing countries, the total labour force increased by more than 400 million during 1960-1990. In these countries, it will continue to increase by 2.3 per cent a year in the 1990s, requiring an additional 260 million jobs.

Employment Creation

Policy makers worldwide are searching for strategies that combine a high GDP growth rate with more job opportunities. According to UNDP's Human Development Report 1994, the central elements of an effective national employment strategy are likely to include:

- Education and skills
- An enabling environment
- Access to assets
- Labour-intensive technologies
- Public works programmes
- Disadvantaged groups
- Job sharing

Strategy for the 1990s

Sustainable solutions will require looking at work in relation to a variety of issues countries must confront as they strive to alleviate poverty and achieve sustainable human development.

This implies addressing employment within a broad-gauged human resources development strategy that not only trains people but assesses the employment market, provides good basic education, offers access to credit and builds a strong health-care system that provides jobs even as it prevents disease. Such a strategy requires the cooperation of many partners, including government ministries, the business and NGO communities, other members of civil society and UN and bilateral donor agencies. It may offer the best hope for moving towards the ideals embodied in Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

"Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment."

Employment and the Environment

Each year, science sounds the alarm on a growing list of environmental threats, a list as ominous and diverse as climate change and global warming; the depletion of the Earth's ozone layer; the devastating loss of biodiversity; the depletion of fisheries, forests and productive topsoils; the proliferation of hazardous and toxic wastes; and the proliferation of air, water and other pollution.

In response, an important breakthrough is being made not only in the development of increasingly sophisticated environmental strategies, but also in our underlying perception of environmental issues. When first introduced in the early 1970s, environmental regulations were viewed largely as a necessary but unwelcome public policy objective, imposed by regulators to meet the public's demand for higher environmental quality. Certainly, public demand for tougher action has not wavered, and has grown stronger, in the last twenty years.

However, what is changing is how the relationship between economic and environmental policies is viewed. The dichotomy whereby environmental goals were seen as opposed to core economic priorities is slowly being cast aside, as a false dichotomy. One example: a growing number of companies are reaping economic paybacks by introducing waste reduction, waste minimization, cleaner production, and other strategies intended to avoid environmental pollution before it occurs. A well-known example is that of the "Pollution Prevention Pays" policy of the 3M corporation. Since 1975, more stringent environmental goals have translated into an estimated $550 million in savings to the company. Similar gains, linked with environmental performance, have taken place in operations as diverse as a cement company in Indonesia, a metal treatment factory in Singapore, a cotton factory in India and a lamp manufacturing operation in Poland.

The paybacks of waste reduction are just one facet of a shift in how the relationship between economic and environmental goals is being viewed. Instead of viewing higher environmental performance as acting as a counter weight to profitability, there is a growing recognition that higher environmental standards can have positive economic benefits, by way of advantages in innovation, efficiency, front-runner advantages, and economic spin-offs.

Another indication in the slow end of the economy-versus-environmental dichotomy lies in the increasing importance of environmental considerations in such core economic policies as international trade, national and international fiscal policies, national income accounting and economic valuation. This integration is urgently needed, for unless the underlying economic causes of environmental degradation are addressed, piecemeal remedial actions, however well intentioned, are not enough to safeguard the environment.

Social Progress through Industrial Development

While developed countries have led the way, rapid industrial growth has also been achieved in many developing countries during the past decades. For example:

- Developing countries' share in world manufacturing value added (MVA) has slowly but steadily increased, rising from 12.6 per cent in 1975 to 16.7 per cent in 1992. These figures do not include China, a country which in recent years has increased its share in world MVA at an extraordinarily rapid pace — from 5.5 per cent in 1985 to 10.5 per cent in 1992.
- By 1990, the share of manufacturing value added in gross domestic product (GDP) exceeded the 20 per cent mark in a number of developing countries, inter alia, Zambia (43 per cent), China (38 per cent), Zimbabwe (30 per cent), Thailand and Brazil (26 per cent each), Philippines (24 per cent), Indonesia and Venezuela (20 per cent each).
- In contrast, the share of manufacturing value added in gross domestic product was below 10 per cent in developing countries such as Ethiopia (10 per cent), Seria Leone (10 per cent), Nepal (5 per cent), Uganda (4 per cent), Guinea (4 per cent) and Niger (1 per cent).

Sharing the benefits: Equitable distribution remains an issue. Although industrial growth has been accompanied by improvements in key indicators of social progress such as literacy, health and standards of living, the fruits of this growth have yet to reach broader segments of the population, especially in rural areas, where the majority of the poor live.

The roots of poverty are often traced to uneven resource endowments and income distribution, disadvantages in location, skewed distribution of physical and social infrastructure and political neglect. The majority of the poor throughout the developing world are concentrated in rural areas and are usually landless and small-scale farmers.

Sustainable social progress requires building up productive industrial capacities, a process of fundamental importance to generating economic growth, determining its distribution and thus supporting social change and transformation in any economy.

It is widely acknowledged today that neither national fiscal adjustments nor external concessional aid flows alone can furnish resources sufficient to solve overriding social problems within an acceptable time frame.

How can industrial development become more "people-oriented", ensuring the overall welfare of society and alleviating poverty? Only through expansion of the productive sectors, largely through the efforts of the countries themselves, can long-term solutions be found, with the private sector increasingly assuming a lead role in development of the manufacturing industry

Overarching Themes

Human Rights and Social Development

Respect for human rights is essential to social and economic progress and development. Yet, in today's world, such fundamental rights as an individual's life, liberty and physical security are continually threateped by forces of repression, ethnic hatred and exploitation.

The current situation is far from perfect. Abuses of various kinds abound, from summary executions and cruel and unusual punishment for seemingly minor crimes to spousal and child abuse and blatant social injustice. In places such as Bosnia, Haiti and Rwanda, blatant violations have led to the disruption of societies and ethnic, religious and other conflicts.

Elsewhere, too, displacement of people causes family disruption, homelessness, increased impoverishment and misery. Though far from exhaustive, the following examples reflect the nature and extent of human rights problems worldwide **which disrupt social development:**

- **Rwanda:** During 1994 alone, between 500,000 and one million people were killed as the result of ethnic conflict between opposing Tutsi and Hutu tribes. As many as two million people have been displaced inside the country. More than 500,000 have sought refuge from violence in neighbouring states.
- **United States:** Women's rights are a prime issue in the United States where a high profile double murder trial has highlighted marital abuse and domestic violence. Based on reported cases only, every 18 minutes a women is battered in the US; that means between 3-4 million battered women each year (Women: Challenges to the Year 2000). Also, there were more than 150,000 reported rapes in 1993 alone (Human Development Report, 1994).
- **Haiti:** In many areas of conflict world-wide, military forces use rape and sexual assault to punish and intimidate women for their real or perceived political beliefs or those of their relatives. In Haiti, between February and July 1994, 74 cases of rape were reported, some victims being as young as eight years old.
- **Former Yugoslavia:** According to the Human Development Report 1994, since 1981 more than 130,000 people have been killed and more than 40,000 women raped in what was shamelessly called "ethnic cleansing". Special UN Rapporteurs on Human Rights report violations by both Serbs and non-Serbs.
- **Australia:** Aboriginal unemployment is five times higher than the national unemployment rate. Even when employed, aboriginal incomes are only half those enjoyed by other Australians.

Establishing International Standards

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Adopted by the United Nations in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the first major international statement of the fundamental rights of all human beings. Defining human rights as inherent in human nature and essential for a truly human existence, it reaf-firms that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. It is designed to serve as "a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations. . ." and reflects the moral authority of the international community.

A selection of rights proclaimed in the Declaration's thirty articles includes:

- The right to life, liberty and security of person;
- Equality before the law;
- Freedom of movement and residence;
- Freedom from torture and cruel, degrading punishment;
- The right to vote and participate in government;
- The rights to education, health protection and to work;
- The right to own property;

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion;

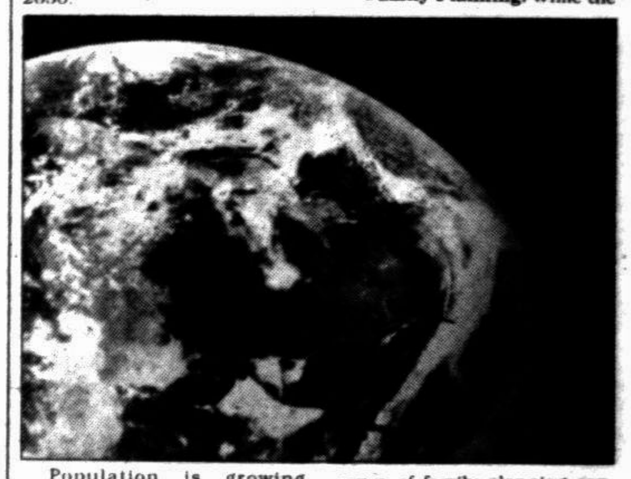
- The right to social security; and
- The right to an adequate standard of living.

Respect for human rights is essential to the success of social development initiatives. For, as Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali said in his opening address to the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna on 14 June 1993: "One thing is certain: there can be no sustainable development without promoting democracy and, thus, without respect for human rights. We all know that, on occasion, undemocratic practices and authoritarian policies have marked the first steps taken by some countries along the road to development. Yet, we also know that if these States do not undertake democratic reform once they have begun to experience economic progress, they will ultimately achieve nothing more than disembodied growth, a source of greater inequity and, eventually, social unrest. Democracy alone can give development true meaning."

Population: Putting People First

World Population Overview

The latest United Nations medium-level projections indicate that world population will reach 8.5 billion by the year 2025 and 10 billion by 2050.



Population is growing fastest in Africa at an annual rate of 2.8 per cent, followed by Latin America (1.8 per cent) and Asia (1.64 per cent). These levels of growth explain the shift of the global distribution of population since the 1950s when Asia accounted for 55 per cent of the world's population, Europe 16 per cent and Africa 9 per cent. By 1993 Asia's population reached 60 per cent of the world's total while Africa replaced Europe in second place.

Poverty: As a result of development efforts, the proportion of people in developing countries living below the level of absolute poverty has declined. In the 55 poorest countries there has been significant progress over the last 25 years, including an increase in life expectancy from 53 to 62 years; lower infant mortality, from 110 to 73 per thousand births; and increasing access to safe water, from 33 to 68 per cent of the population.

However, because of population growth, the absolute numbers of poor are going up. Some 1.1 billion people, about 30 per cent of the developing world's population, are living on about $1 a day.

Choice: It has been verified in many parts of the world that, if women and men were offered a real choice, they would have fewer children than their parents' generation. In fact, in many areas birth rates are falling because women and men have made the choice to secure their own well-being and that of their children, not for policy or demographic reasons; nevertheless, their decisions reinforce national policy.

Family Planning: While the users of family planning continuously grow in number, it is estimated that 120 million women — approximately 15 per cent of all married women of reproductive age — would use family planning if it were available. Their needs are unmet. This figure does not include the substantial and growing numbers of sexually active unmarried individuals who want and need family planning information and services but do not have access to them. To satisfy this unmet need, reproductive health care services must build upon the solid base of existing family planning programmes.

Education: Education is critical to enipower women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. More than one third of the world's adults — about 960 million people, and most of them women — have no access to printed knowledge, to new skills or to technologies that would improve the quality of their lives and help them adapt to change.

Sustainable Development: Population issues are at the heart of balanced and sustainable human development. Countries are urged to integrate population into their development plans in order to meet the needs of present generations without compromising the potential ability of future generations.

"Taking Care of Children is Good Politics, Good Economics, Good Law ...."

The Daily Star recently had the opportunity to speak to **Anwarul Karim Chowdhury,** the Secretary of UNICEF's Executive Board, about UNICEF and its goals

An Interview by Lamis Hossain

Daily Star (DS): Unicef's report on the State of the World's Children presents quite a depressing picture in many regards. Which areas presented in the report will Unicef choose to concentrate on?

Anwarul Karim Choudhury (AKC): The State of the World Children report presents both sides. The facts are depressing. Children are suffering in various degrees in all countries of the world and despite our pronouncements, children are being neglected. The objective is to present a realistic picture of children throughout the world. With effort and commitment, we can change the situation.

We have been able to achieve lower infant mortality, increase global awareness of children's rights, and obtain commitment to work for children from around the world. There is also regional and sub-regional participation.

The Rights of the Children Convention (CRC) has only been around for the last four years. The convention has provided a really good opportunity for all countries to put rights of the child high on their agenda. The importance of the Convention is an effective way of ensuring rights of children. There are 170 ratifiers to the Convention — the widest ratified in history of any human rights convention. In 1995, we are hoping to have universal ratification. There are only 21 countries left.

Unicef would like to see effective and full-fledged implementation of the Rights of the Child Convention 1990. Bangladesh is, in fact, one of the first 20 ratifiers of this Convention.

DS: How does Unicef monitor compliance with the CRC?

AKC: Within two years of ratification, the country will have to submit a report to the UN committee on Rights of the Child. Thereafter every five years. The most important thing is to implement the law. If it's already in the country's law then it won't cause problems to the government concerned. Where there's no law, you have to create awareness and ask for legal changes.

The best way to implement the CRC is to create Child Watch Groups, advocacy groups (separate from general human rights). A number of countries are coming up with institutional mechanisms. For example, New Zealand has a Commissioner for Children. Norway and Sweden have "Ombudspersons". Nepal has a district child rights officer solely for implementing the CRC. Uganda and Australia have separate institutions to pursue child rights. It is good for each country to develop institutional mechanisms. The best way is to involve the whole society in implementing child rights and also women's rights because the children's welfare is so closely related to the welfare of women. If we take care of the rights of children then the rights of adults are taken care of.

DS: Does Unicef envisage a more coercive approach at all to implement child rights?

AKC: As a UN organisation, Unicef works closely with governments, academic organisations and NGOs. Our approach is situational analysis. To identify problems, to identify the status and area of need and to try to develop programmes in support of meeting those needs in terms of physical areas and programme areas. We develop it with governments and through situation analysis, highlighting areas and advocating for change: more effective long range change, rather than jolting people into action. We want to make people aware that taking care of children is good politics, good economics, good law, good order, and effort and so on. Then, everyone will come forward to help out.

DS: How can Unicef officials in New York, at such a distance from the issue, manage to formulate policies?

AKC: Unicef is mainly a field-oriented organisation with offices throughout the world in 130 developing countries. 85% of our staff is field-based. We have a very good feedback system. We are constantly updated on the situation in the field through improved communications technology and we are almost instantaneously informed of developments in a country. In the decision making process, the perspective of the field is very important. Nothing is decided in the ivory tower of New York. There is an effective mobility between head quarters and field work through staff movement and field visits.

Whatever programme we develop, we do it in very good consultation with government and NGOs. Unicef maintains close links with the country concerned. The countries own the programme as their own. We won't do anything unless the people concerned think its for their own good. This is the other philosophy of Unicef — the importance of country participation. Without this, no programme can be successfully implemented. Unless and until the country comes forward, no programme can succeed. We are not detached though based in New York.

DS: How does Unicef view South Asia and what are its priorities in the region?

AKC : South Asia as a whole, through SAARC has taken a leading role. The second SAARC summit at Bangalore in 1986 was the first time at summit level to speak about children's rights, and ask for the immediate adoption of a Children's Right Convention, which was still being drafted at the time.

The focus in South Asia is on the girl child. We have found that most of the discrimination against women start with the girl child. The whole process starts with the absence of education. The whole development process can only be given a big push through girls' education. We have seen this in many countries.

Violence against women is assuming a very alarming proportion in both industrialised and developing countries. It's an area of concern to Unicef and needs to be looked into. Child trafficking, child labour and children in armed conflicts are emerging areas for Unicef. We are now studying these areas.

We are working closely with national and international organisations for the upcoming conference in Beijing. Hopefully this conference will adopt a platform of action in the coming decade. Bangladesh has played a prominent role globally in relation with activities with women. Beijing will provide an opportunity to highlight its international role with national experience.

In March 1995, there will be a World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. It will be a major gathering of world leaders. The special themes at this summit will be: poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. These are the issues which are of pressing concern in a post cold war era. We have to see how the world has to face these problems many of which are global, such as health, drug trafficking. We are looking forward to this summit. I hope it will be able to focus on women and children. We think that problems like poverty can be solved with this approach.

Bangladesh has shown by its own experiences, like Grameen and Brac that it has real experiences to tell the world. We should be proud to take these programmes to the world forum. We should adopt a clear cut programme to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015.

DS: Do you feel that Bangladesh has a sufficient voice and presence in the UN arena?

AKC: In the UN as a whole, Bangladesh has 60 people. In New York Unicef, there are two. The voice of Bangladesh has been heard in government. Bangladesh is a very active player in economic and social development. In the group of '77, a Bangladeshi was Chairman of developing countries. We have headed many economic and social committees. As a member state, Bangladesh has been very active. In recent times, Bangladesh has played a major role in peacekeeping.

As international civil servants in the UN system, Bangladesh held important positions in the past. We headed ESCAP. We had important positions in WFP, FAO and UNESCO. Though the numerical representation is not many, we have been active in our contributions.

I would encourage our younger generations to be more interested in the UN and to prepare themselves to join the international corps of people who work for the UN. I believe they have the qualities and qualifications for such responsibilities.

Eight Priority Issues for the WSSD : A UNICEF Perspective

THE WSSD comes at a time in world history when it is both possible and imperative to forge a new vision for social development. Just as the recently concluded ICPD marked the turning point in the population paradigm, the WSSD could well come to mark a new post-Cold War effort to meet basic human needs of people everywhere.

While historical conditions permit vast new opportunities, the political will remains to be mobilized. In UNICEF's experience there are a number of key issues that must be further emphasized if this potential is to be realized. The eight points below illustrate these key objectives; clearly, others could be added.

First, we must adopt concrete goals to reduce poverty. If political will is to be mobilized, the Summit commitments must be specific and set within a clear time-frame. This approach is central to creating a sense of accountability and to supporting all groups in society to embrace the goals.

With a well-defined set of time-bound objectives, the WSSD could then consider establishing some broad overarching poverty targets such as the eradication of extreme poverty by a specific year or the halving of absolute poverty by the year 2005.

To be operationally meaningful, these commitments will need to be translated into country-level programmes of action. The global objectives will need national definitions (e.g., the definition of small farmers or access to credit; the definition of absolute poverty or extreme poverty, etc.) and will need to be translated into strategies that are backed by financial commitments.

Second, the commitments to objectives must be matched by commitments of resources. The WSSD should provide a powerful reminder to the world community of the need to achieve the approved UN target of 0.7 per cent of GNP to be devoted to ODA. It can also serve as a practical opportunity to build alliances with those in the developed world who are committed to solving social problems and who often form a key part of national constituencies in support of development assistance.

The 20/20 Initiative can be an important advocacy tool in this effort. This initiative, put forward to the Summit by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, and UNESCO, calls upon donors to allocate at least 20 per cent of their ODA to supporting basic social services (on a global basis) and calls upon developing country Governments to likewise devote 20 per cent of their budget expenditures. The Summit can make it clear that the moral commitment to achieve 20/20 remains within the framework of national sovereignty and the principle that commitments of UN conferences are not to be used as a form of conditionality.

Third, experience with other recent summits has confirmed that we must establish effective mechanisms, sub-nationally, nationally and internationally, to monitor implementation of commitments made at the Summit, guide mid-course corrections, and report on progress achieved. Monitoring may be a misnomer. The effort needs to go beyond passively observing success or failure. The reviews need to be an integral part of the social mobilization effort and a tool to ensure popular involvement and support. With commitments that are specific and time-bound, transparent monitoring can help ensure this type of concerted effort.

Fourth, we must give special attention to the needs of Africa and to least developed countries elsewhere. There is a cruel irony in recent economic trends. Global economic integration has coincided with growing marginalization of the poorest countries and the poorest groups within countries. As a result, and in the last decade in particular, the least developed countries have had to cope with sharp declines in their share of world trade and growing debt burdens while benefitting very little from the recent resumption in North-South capital flows.

Fifth, we need to translate the emerging consensus behind more human oriented adjustment processes into far greater actual practice. There is now broad agreement that adjustment processes must take full account of human and long-term development objectives from the start of the adjustment process. We must now develop mechanisms to ensure that our practice lives up to our ideals.

Heads of State at the WSSD could make a major contribution to improving adjustment processes by agreeing to set up a high-level international commission to review, rethink, and reach specific conclusions on new approaches and international policy actions towards structural adjustment.

Sixth, we must include gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls among our most exalted social values. We must recognize that gender inequality afflicts girls and women throughout their lives, and, at different stages of life, the sources and manifestations of gender bias change.

Seventh, we must bring an end to the epidemic of violence plaguing our societies. Whether it be husbands and fathers abusing their wives and children, or children killing children on the streets of our inner cities, or one ethnic group subjecting another to genocide, "ethnic cleansing" or systematic rape, there is no doubt that violence in all our societies is becoming both more prevalent and more brutal. Ending this epidemic calls for a new shared commitment to reinvigorate the ethics and values that are the common heritage of the human family.

Eighth, the rights and needs of our children and youth must be central to the Summit's deliberations. The Summit is about their future. Children are our 'cutting edge' against poverty: meeting their basic needs is the best long-term investment a society can make. Children who are healthy, well-fed and educated grow up to be productive, innovative workers and responsible adults, who will make lasting and positive contributions to their families, their communities, their countries and the world around them. As the Secretary-General has said, "[O]f all the subjects of development, none has the acceptance or the power to mobilize as does the cause of children." There will always be something more immediate; there will never be anything more important