

## A Priority Agenda for SAARC

### Actions against Trafficking of Women and Children

by Farida Akhter

*Trafficking of women and children cannot be stopped without understanding how capitalist patriarchy, the phenomenon of modernisation, concept of nation-state, militarisation, concept of development, growth model, etc., which are contributing to the increase in this trade.*

from October 9 to 10, 1996. This workshop was organised by UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Organisation). Participants from five South Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh discussed this alarming situation and came up with accounts of their country-specific situations. During the two days of intensive discussions and interactions among the journalists, lawyers, social activists and members of women's groups, concrete plans and strategies were formulated that was feasible for the group to undertake.

The participants in the workshop are actively involved in their respective countries in preventing and resisting trafficking as well as are directly working with the victims to help them legally and socially to return to their countries and homes. It is now acknowledged by everybody that there is a significant increase in trafficking in women and children in all the countries of South Asia. The broad economic, social, political, religious and cultural conditions along with the globalisation process has significantly contributed to the process. As a broad scenario, trafficking of women and children cannot be stopped without understanding how capitalist patriarchy, the phenomenon of modernisation, concept of nation-state, militarisation, concept of development, growth model, etc., which are contributing to the increase in this trade. At the political level, there seems to be no commitment.

On the one hand, although lot of attention is being paid to the issue of trafficking these days, it is found that the language and attitude towards

women and children who are trafficked are not positive. On the other hand, the caste system and various religious manipulations in some parts of the region are also seen as a contributing factor to the phenomenon of trafficking. The status of women, the discriminatory laws against women and children, denial of property rights have created a condition of women to be seen as a burden to each of the family, thereby, leading to be more vulnerable as a prey to the flesh traders.

As the situation is very complicated, the SAARC meeting is very important where we are expecting that certain regional and bilateral issues could be raised to eradicate this criminal trade from the region. South Asia must not demonstrate itself as an unprotected area for human flesh trade. On the basis of the discussion at the workshop held in October last, it may be useful to indicate some key issues which must be emphasised and kept in mind before any meaningful strategies and actions against "trafficking" are undertaken. These are:

a) Globally, trafficking of women and children today is more profitable and horrendous than that of arms or drugs smuggling. It is criminal act and is taking place in the countries of South Asia at an increasing rate. Our women and children are not safe, they are now commodities to be sold. However, in order to explain the situation trafficking in women and children cannot be reduced simply to a matter of "criminal incidents". It is directly related to the social and economic realities of the society and contributed mostly by the so-called "liberalisation" and "free market" economy. Disintegration of

the rural communities and the grim reality of the poor and the marginal people, mainly women and children, is one of main causes of trafficking. Globalisation has severed the traditional socio-economic relation and has made women and children vulnerable. They are increasingly becoming a commodity to be sold in the "world market". Without questioning the macro-economic policies of the government the problem of trafficking cannot be addressed adequately.

b) From law and order as well as from the legal point of view, it is important that "traffickers" remain to the centre of attention. At present, we only look at the "victims" of trafficking. Nevertheless, the layers of beneficiaries does not only include trafficking syndicates and organised crime-circle. The recruiting agencies, promoters, transport agencies, airlines, money changers, hotel owners and even the families gain from the massive trafficking of women and children.

c) The overall patriarchal relation and culture operating within the culture of greed and oppression in the era of "globalisation" have made women extremely vulnerable despite the rhetoric of women's empowerment and the series of intellectualisations such as GAD (Gender and Development), WID (Women in Development), WAD (Women and Development), etc. It is time to say that donors and development agencies do not address this issue enough when they talk about empowerment of women.

d) Trafficking is a question that raises a broader question of "migration", nationality and question of applicability of fundamental human rights to children and any individual,

irrespective of religion, race, class, gender, colour or nationality. It is not acceptable that trafficked women and children are ending up in jails and police custodies of alien countries as well as in their own country. Trafficking becomes more unbearable for a "victim" even after they are "rescued" by the law enforcing agency.

e) While "repatriation" and "rehabilitation" is extremely important and must be provided to the trafficked persons immediately, but no state should have the right to forcefully return a person who is not willing to return for various reasons. It must also be acknowledged that "repatriation" and "rehabilitation" is extremely complex matter and so far all efforts in "repatriation" has ended up in bitter experiences by the persons who indeed wished to return home. Repatriation is not simply bringing a trafficked person back "home", if no home exists. If the so-called "home" or the society does not accept a trafficked girl, the social stigma becomes unbearable and equally coercive and painful for the person. We must learn to respect people and change our attitudes to "prostitution". It is crucial that we acknowledge the dignity of a human being and understand her survival strategies with respect.

f) Media representation of women reinforces the notion that women are sex objects for the gratification of men. The publication of the picture of women as "victim" also projects this notion implicitly or explicitly. Media must play its responsibility in this regard.

The above issues are pertinent towards the discussion of strategies to eradicate trafficking. We all seem to be committed in combating violence against women. Unfortunately, the discussions at the policy level are not enough to express their commitment against this heinous trade. If SAARC is really meant for regional cooperation, then commitment for actions against trafficking must be on the priority agenda of the Heads of the States meeting.

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### Shanty Dwellers Build Themselves a Better Future

FOR A SIX-YEAR-OLD Michael Nkupi is a happy man. He and his family have just acquired a three-bedroom house — a luxury compared with the one-room shanty home they had been living in.

"I feel great owning this house," says Nkupi. He is a beneficiary of a new Low-Cost Housing Project set up in Lusaka and three other Zambian cities to provide poor families with decent accommodation.

Nkupi built his new home with his wife, Catherine, who is proud of her newly-acquired construction skills. "There are more women than men involved in the project," she points out.

In fact, about 70 per cent of the people registered with the project's residents' development committee are female — many of them single women who are not in formal employment. Most of the men participating in the scheme are also without steady work.

Run as a partnership between Zambian authorities, the French government and two United Nations agencies, the project operates on simple yet effective self-help lines.

Participants are taught basic skills in bricklaying and producing building components such as bricks (made from laterite clay), roofing sheets, air vents and floor tiles — using local raw materials.

They are given on-the-job training from experts such as Eric Bigot, a French architect. They are not paid any money, nor do they pay their trainers, but share what they produce with the housing project.

The incoming residents use their share to build their houses, while project organisers sell off the remainder to buy raw materials, which, in turn, are used by participants to make more components.

Like most developing countries, Zambia faces severe urban housing problems. Now, reports Gemini News Service, a self-help scheme is helping shanty families build more spacious homes for themselves. Venarious Mwansa writes from Lusaka.

#### The urbanisation of the global village



"We pay only in terms of labour," says one beneficiary, Joseph Jere. "If you produce 2,000 bricks, you get, 1,000 of these, and the other 1,000 go to the project."

Project manager Mueyba Chikonde explains: "The emphasis is placed on activities envisaged to improve living conditions of the communities as well as enhance their knowledge and skills."

Housing is a big problem in Zambia, particularly as an increasing number of rural people have migrated to towns and cities in recent years. Sprawling shanties have mushroomed. Councils used to provide cheap housing, but many local

authorities have run into financial difficulties and have stopped building. In addition, a directive from President Frederick Chiluba for council houses to be sold to sitting tenants has reduced their availability.

A decent house costs at least eight million kwacha to build — well out of the reach of many people, particularly the poor, whose monthly income might be only K30,000.

But under the Low-Cost Housing Project, the actual cost of building a 50-square-metre home, comprising three bedrooms, a kitchen, sitting room and bathroom, comes to less than K2 million, says Philippe

de la Bathie, French Ambassador to Lusaka, whose government has put \$500,000 into the scheme.

The money is being spent on paying trainers, acquiring land from councils and buying materials that are not locally available. Wherever possible, local techniques and materials are used. "This reduces costs to a minimum," says the envoy.

In Lusaka's Bauleni shanty district, where the project started last year, 25 houses have already been completed. One problem now is lack of available space. More than 50 people are waiting to build homes.

"We asked the (Lusaka City)

Council for more land adjacent to the cemetery, but we are still waiting for their response," complains architect Bigot.

Such space constraints are not being felt in Kabwe, Central province — where 25 houses have been completed and more land has been allocated for the extension of the project in Nakoli shanty district — or in Mufulira, Copperbelt province, and Mazabuka, Southern province, where similar schemes are under way.

Project organisers are optimistic that the programme will proceed smoothly.

National Housing Authority chairman Watson Nqandu describes it as "a way forward in the provision of decent housing for citizens". And Gary Davies, head of the UN Development Programme office, praises the efforts of Zambia's Housing Ministry, adding: "Provision of cheaper housing for the urban poor is critical."

However, life is not a total luxury for the proud new homeowners of Bauleni. They are still waiting for running water and electricity to be provided. The authorities have not been able to keep up with demand as the surrounding shanty has grown, and only communal taps have been installed. Even these often run dry.

The occupants' spirits are not dimmed, though. One points to a small room, saying cheerfully: "This is supposed to be a lavatory, but since there is no water we will turn it into a pantry."

Chikonde assures them that proper utilities will eventually be provided. He points out that their homes are far superior to those they had been living in — one room, even for families with seven or more members.

The writer is a Zambian freelance journalist base in Lusaka.

### The Daily Star Entertainment Guide

**Monday 5th May**  
(All programmes are in local time. There may be changes in the programmes.)

**BTV**

3:00 Opening announcement  
Al-Quran Programme summary  
3:10 News in Bangla 3:15 Patriotic song 3:20 Recitation from the Bible 3:25 Cartoon Film: The Lone Ranger 3:50 Retelcast of selected programmes  
4:45 Educational programme  
5:00 News in Bangla 5:25 Dolan Champa 5:50 Sports programme 6:30 Anu Paramanu  
6:50 Open University 7:00 The News 7:25 Band show 8:00 News in Bangla 8:45 Package Drama 10:00 News in English 10:30 Jansamit 10:50 Comedy series: Seemfield 11:30 News in Bangla 11:35 Tuesday's programme 11:40 Close down.

**BBC**

6:00am BBC World News 6:30 Time Out: Top Gear 7:00 BBC World News in English  
World Business Report/Asia Today/24 Hours  
10:00 BBC World News 10:30 World Focus: Correspondent

11:00 BBC Newsdesk 12:00 BBC Newsdesk 12:30 Hard Talk 1:00 BBC World News 1:30 World Focus: Correspondent 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Clothes Show 3:00 BBC World News 3:30 Hard Talk 4:00 BBC World News 4:30 Time Out: Top Gear 5:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:00 BBC Newsdesk 6:30 World Focus: Correspondent 7:00 BBC World News 7:15 World Business Report 7:30 BBC Newsdesk Asia & Pacific 8:30 Time Out: Film 9:00 BBC World News 9:30 Hard Talk 10:00 BBC World News 10:30 Time Out: Tomorrow's World 11:00 The World Today 12:00 Hard Talk 1:00 BBC World News 1:30 Time Out: Window On Europe 2:00 BBC World News 2:30 Time Out: Cities of the Future 3:00 BBC Newsdesk Inc. World Business Report & 24 Hours 5:00 BBC World News 5:10 BBC Global Report: Japan

**CHANNEL V**

7:00am Rewind VJ Sophiya 8:00 Frame by Frame 11:00 The Vibe VJ Luke 12:00

Rewind VJ Sophiya 1:00 By Demand VJ Trey 2:00 Frame by Frame 2:30 Liberty First Day First Show 3:00 Videocoon Mangla Hai 4:00 Frame by Frame 4:30 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 6:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 7:00 By Demand VJ Trey 8:00 The Vibe 9:00 BPL Oye! 10:00 Liberty First Day First Show 10:30 Launch Pad VJ Samira 11:30 Frame by Frame 12:00 Rewind VJ Sophiya 1:00 Haysah 2:00 BPL Oye 3:00 Big Bang VJ Alessandra 4:00 Channel [V] 1996 Music Awards

**STAR PLUS**

6:00am Nanny and the Professor 6:30 Ninasad 7:30 Good Morning India 9:30 Nine To Five 10:00 Pierre Franey's Cooking in France 10:30 Holiday Special Children Hour G! Joe 11:00 Eski! The Cat 11:30 The Oprah Winfrey Show 12:30 Dynasty 1:30 Santa Barbara 2:30 The Bold & the Beautiful 3:00 Reporter 3:30 Buniyaad 4:00 Jeena Bhi Do Yaaro 4:30 Lost in Space 5:30 New Adventures of Black Beauty 6:00 Charles in Charge 6:30 Pierre

Frane's Cooking in France 7:00 Living on the Edge 7:30 Star News (Hindi) 8:00 Small Wonder 8:30 Tu Tu Main Main 9:00 Imithan 9:30 Star News 10:00 Yes Prime Minister 10:30 Chicago Hope 11:30 The Bold & the Beautiful 12:00am Santa Barbara 1:00 Star News 01:30 The X Files 2:30 Star Trek 3:30 Vega 4:30 The Oprah Winfrey Show 5:30 Barnaby Jones

**STAR SPORTS**

6:00am The Asian football Show-18 7:00 World Cup Hall of Fame-2 7:30 English Cricket AXA Life League Warwickshire v Northants 12:30 Volvo World Cup Showjumping '96/97 1:30 World Cup Hall of Fame 2:00 Asia Sport Show 2:30 Asian Football Show 3:30 Sports India 4:00 Live English Cricket 97 Benson & Hedges Cup 7:30 Inside PGA Tour 8:30 English Cricket 97 Benson & Hedges Cup 12:00am Superbike World Championships British Grand Prix From Donington, GB Hts 1:30 Super League Rugby 3:30 The Asian Football Show 4:30 Volvo World Cup Showjumping '96/97 5:30 India Tour West Indies 4th

**STAR MOVIES**

7:30 Classic: Fanny By Gaslight 12 (Hindi Subtitles) 9:30 Romance: The More Things Change 15 (Arabic Subtitles) 11:30 Classic: The Corpse Vanishes (PG) (Hindi Subtitles) 12:00 Documentary: Charlie Chaplin — A Celebration (12) (Hindi Subtitles) 1:30 Adventure: White Wolves — A Cry in the Wild II 12:30 Classic: It's Not Cricket PG (Hindi Subtitles) 5:30 Action: The Mean Season 15 (Hindi Subtitles) 7:30 Comedy: Mr Saturday Night 15 (Arabic Subtitles) 9:30 Comedy: Nobody's Perfect? 12:00 World Cinema: Bashu — The Little Stranger? (English Subtitles) 2:00 Comedy: Blame It On Rio 18 (Hindi Subtitles) 4:00 Thriller: Stepfather II 18 5:30 Classic: Africa Screams PG (Arabic Subtitles)

**ZEE TV**

6:00 Jagran 6:30 ZED-7:30 Helpine 8:00 News 8:30 Ghoosia Aaina 9:00 Disney Hour 10:00 Gaane Anjaane

**One Day Infr Hits**

10:30 Hum Paanch 11:00 Daak Ghar Apna Ghar 11:30 Umead 12:00 Suhana Safar 12:30 Zaika Ka Safar 1:00 Love Stories 1:30 Silsilas 2:00 Hum Paanch 2:30 Kuruksheetra 3:00 Raahat 3:30 Lakme Khoobsurat 4:00 Vakaalat 4:30 Khana Khazana 5:00 Hum Hogue Kamyab 5:30 Zimbo 6:00 Its My Show 6:30 Gaane Anjaane 6:15 Ek Nazar 7:00 Disney Hour 8:00 Paying Guest 8:30 TVS Sa Re Ga Ma 9:15 Jhalak 9:30 Campus 10:00 Parivartan 10:30 News 11:00 Daraz 11:30 Close Up Antakshari 12:00 Roshni

**ZEE CINEMA**

7:30 Ranga Mera Naam 9:30 Khamma Mara Veera 12:15 Taraana 12:30 Rajput (Dhamera, Rajesh Kanna) 3:15 First Take 3:45 Taraana 4:00 Ustad (Vinod Khanna, Jaya Prada) 6:45 Khaitan Ikk Pe Ikk 7:15 Gehra (Horror Film) 10:00 Bajaj Lehara 10:30 Insaan (Vinod Khanna, Jeetendra, Reena Roy) 1:15 Filler 1:45 Patita (Raj Kiran, Shoma Anand) 4:30 Filler 4:45 Zorro (Rekha, Navin Nischol)