



SHRDC Conducted Training Course on "Strengthening SAARC Capacity to Facilitate the Implementation of the Agreement on SAFTA"

The SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC) under the SAARC-UNDP Partnership Programme (SUPP) conducted a one week training course on "Strengthening SAARC Capacity to Facilitate the Implementation of the Agreement on SAFTA" from 22-26 May 2006. The course was attended by 25 participants from all the SAARC Member States i.e. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The course was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Pushkar Man Singh Rajbhandari, Nepalese Ambassador in Pakistan. Dr. Manual Montes, UNDP, Regional Programme Coordinator, Asia and Pacific Regional Centre, Colombo, Sri Lanka and Mr. Zubair A. Malik Vice President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries were also guests to the inaugural ceremony.

H.E. Mr. Pushkar Man Singh Rajbhandari, in his inaugural address emphasised that South Asia remains one of the least integrated regions in the world. Intra-regional trade as a percentage of GDP at less than 2 percent of the GDP, is low compared to more than 20 percent for East Asia.

He said that it is indeed a great satisfaction that SAARC is strengthening its institutional capacity under its umbrella such as the "Human Resource Development Centre". The Centre is playing a key role in bringing the people closer to think on common problems on human resource development and find pragmatic solutions, based on practical experiences.

Mr. Rajbhandari said that regional blocs have been accepted as a

framework that enables countries to forge closer economic cooperation with their trading partners and a sound mechanism to integrate into the global trading system. The successful implementation of SAFTA will be the key to achieving benefits from



H.E. Mr. Pushkar Man Singh Rajbhandari, Nepalese Ambassador in Pakistan Speaking at the Inaugural Ceremony

regional cooperation and integration. At the same time it is important for the stakeholders in the region to be fully aware of various arrangements and mechanism of intra-regional as well as inter-regional.

Dr. Manual Montes, said that creating capacities of developing countries is essential to compete in the international markets through trade facilitation and industrial diversification. Monitoring and



Dr. Manual Montes, UNDP's Regional Programme Coordinator, Asia Pacific Regional Centre, Sri Lanka Speaking at the Inaugural Ceremony

INSIDE

- 1 SHRDC Conducted Training Course on SAFTA
- 2 HRD Institution: Central Agricultural Training Centre, Nepal
- 3 SAFTA will Help Strengthen Business and Trade Relations India - The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005
- 4 Increasing Employment Opportunities in Maldives
- 5 SHRDC Conducted Training Course on "Labour Intensive Youth Employment Programmes"
- 6 Bhutan - The State of the Nation is Healthy
- 6 Asian Development Bank Delegation Visits SHRDC
- 6 Success Story: Pakistan Employment Generation Policies
- 7 Research Study on "Foreign Direct Investment and Human Resource Development: A Case Study for South Asia" in Process
- 7 SHRDC to Conduct Training Course on "Management of Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes"
- 7 Director SAARC Energy Centre Visits SHRDC
- 7 Bangladesh - Exports of Manpower and Commodities Increased
- 8 SHRDC Commissions a Research Study on "Network of Centers of Higher Learning, Training and Skill Development Institutes (SDIs) in South Asia"
- 8 Second Meeting of Technical Committee on HRD

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evaluation of multilateral, regional, and bilateral trade treaties is important to identify negotiating positions that protect their economic development prospects. Much greater opportunities will have to be created in South Asia. The total external trade of the region amounts to less than one percent of the world exports and 1.3 percent of world imports. While intra-regional exchanges represent only 4 percent of regional trade 5.3 percent (exports) and 4.8 percent (imports). There has been a recent increase in intra-regional trade in South Asia from 2.4 percent in 1990 to 4.9 percent in 2004. Discussing the challenges, he said that SAFTA should ensure that the provisions of the agreement permit the member countries to take full advantage available in the intra-regional trade.

Mr. Zubair A. Malik, in his speech said that enhanced regional cooperation is essential to strengthen competitive position of South Asian economies globally. It is, therefore, necessary to be able to integrate, enlarge and unify the markets by removing barriers to trade. Talking about constraints for competing in world trade, Mr. Malik said that South Asia is energy deficient, but much can be done to overcome this with good regional cooperation and policy. South Asian Customs Unions need to be set up as the next step, where Member States should agree on a single tariff for imports from non-members. FPCCI foresees SAFTA as a catalyst to improve intra regional investment,



Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, Vice President, FPCCI
Pakistan delivering lecture at the training course

technological cooperation, human resource development, tourism promotion and greater people to people contacts. It is estimated that the implementation of SAFTA would not only raise the current level of intra-regional trade from \$6 billion to \$14 billion, but implementation is expected to result in greater people-to-people contacts, improvement



Dr. Muhammad Aslam, Director, SHRDC briefing about training & SHRDC Activities

in the quality and availability of the products and services, and increased interaction between the officials of the member countries of the SAARC at high level.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Muhammad Aslam Khan, Director, SHRDC said that participants from all the seven Member States would be benefited from the course. The



Group Exercise in Progress

training course would strengthen the understanding of regional trade integration: theory, application and its limitations. The course would emphasize upon understanding of the existing regional trade agreements in the world and the lessons that could be learned for South Asia. The focus of the course is on creating knowledge on other forms of trade agreements and mechanisms of regional economic integration. The participants will also be exposed to operational exercise to improve trade linkages within SAARC region by using various techniques.

HRD Institution: Central Agricultural Training Centre, Nepal

Central Agricultural Training Centre, Nepal a government organisation was established in 10 December 1987. The centre aims at organising advanced level short courses, trainings and human resource development on latest issues of agriculture in the country.

The centre also conducts research on human resource development issues including agriculture extension, training effectiveness studies, and socio-economic development.

SAFTA will Help Strengthen Business and Trade Relations

“SAFTA will help strengthen close business and trade relations between SAARC Member States” Mr. Nasim Qureshi, Additional Secretary, Commerce Division, Government of Pakistan said. He was speaking at the closing ceremony of the training course on July 26, 2006 conducted by SHRDC under the SAARC-UNDP Partnership Programme (SUPP). Mr. Qureshi said that the implementation of SAFTA agreement will promote regional trade integration. He also acknowledged SAARC and UNDP efforts to develop capacities on SAFTA through knowledge and skill development on trade issues. Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Ratnakar Adhikari, Programme Specialist, UNDP Regional Centre, Colombo,



Mr. Nasim Qureshi, Chief Guest addressing the concluding session

India - The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (NREGA) guarantees 100 days of employment in a financial year to any rural household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual work. The Act will come into force initially in 200 districts, and will be extended gradually to other areas notified by the Central Government. It will cover the whole country within five years.

The Act was prepared through a wide range of consultation with people's organizations. It addresses chiefly to working people and their fundamental right to live with dignity. This Act is an important step towards the realization of the right to work. It is also expected to enhance people's livelihoods on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. The choice of work seeks to address the causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion. Effectively implemented, the employment generated under the Act has the potential of transforming the geography of poverty.

NREGA calls for the formulation of a Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (REGS) by each State Governments within six months of the date of commencement of the Act. Basic implementation principles for the effective implementation of REGS are based on:

Collaborative Partnership and Public Accountability:

The Act envisages a collaborative partnership between the Central Government, the State Governments, the Panchayats and the local community. Broadly, the main implementation activities are at the village and Block levels, while coordination activities are mainly at the Block and District levels. Planning, supervision and monitoring take place at all levels (village, Block, District and State). At each level, the concerned authorities are accountable to the community.

Community Participation: The Gram Sabha is the statutorily mandated institutional mechanism for community participation. In addition, other methods of community participation could be evolved; local Vigilance and Monitoring Committees, workers' associations, local beneficiary committees, self-help groups, user groups and other grass-roots structures. Active community participation is particularly important for ensuring transparency and public accountability.

Role of Panchayats: The Panchayats at each level will be the 'Principal Authorities for planning and implementation of the Schemes under the Act'. Where Part Nine of the Constitution does not apply, local councils/authorities as mandated by the *Stated* concerned will be invested with corresponding responsibilities.

District Programme Coordinator and Programme Officer:

The overall responsibility for ensuring that the Scheme is implemented according to the Act belongs to the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) at the District level, and to the Programme Officer (PO) at the Block level.

Coordination among Agencies:

The Panchayats at different levels will need to coordinate with each other for the effective implementation of the Act. Similarly, the Panchayats and the District/Block administration will have to work together. Each REGS must stipulate clearly the institutional mechanisms for effective coordination, appropriate to the context.

Resource Support:

The Central and the State Governments will facilitate the implementation of the Act through timely and adequate resource support.

Sri Lanka, appreciated SHRDC for organizing the training courses. He also showed UNDP interest to conduct more training courses on trade and HRD issues in the future in collaboration with SHRDC.

Dr. Muhammad Aslam Khan, Director SHRDC in his remarks welcomed SAARC-UNDP initiative. He highlighted the importance of such collaborative efforts to develop required capacities on trade, poverty and similar issues in the region.

Mr. Nasim Qureshi also distributed certificates to the participants of the training course.



Participants of Training Course with the Chief Guest



Increasing Employment Opportunities in Maldives

Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom, President of Maldives said that increasing employment opportunities is among one of the principal objectives behind the efforts to develop the business sector in the country. He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of Women's Trade Fair 2006. The Fair was organised by the Women Entrepreneur's Council. The President called on the Women Entrepreneur's Council and all other local organisations committed to developing the country's business sector to provide more jobs for the people.

The President said that a modern showroom would be opened in the country shortly to encourage local productivity and creativity of Maldivian craftsmen. He also said that the new showroom would broaden the

publicity for original Maldivian products, and guarantee that products would bring high prices for the craftsmen. He also added that work is ongoing to establish a permanent centre to house the showroom.

Mr. Gayyoom announced that the Government is also working on establishing a Small and Medium Enterprises Development Board (SMEDB), and that this Board would also be created during 2006. The Board would provide technical assistance on launching small and medium scale business ventures by conducting studies on different sectors. The Board would also act as a valuable source of information for established businessmen, as well as those aspiring to launch new business ventures.

SHRDC Conducted Training Course on “Labour Intensive Youth Employment Programmes”

The SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC) conducted a three week training course on “Labour Intensive Youth Employment Programme” from



H. E. General C. S. Weerasooriya, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka speaking at Inaugural Ceremony

10-30 April 2006. The course was attended by participants from SAARC Member States. The training course was inaugurated by H. E. General C. S. Weerasooriya, High



Participants of Training Course with the Chief Guest

Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Pakistan.

Inaugurating the training course on “Labour Intensive Youth Employment Programmes” H. E. General C. S. Weerasooriya, said that of the total population in South Asia, 20 percent are youth and among youth population 14.6 percent are unemployed. Youth unemployment is 3 to 4 times higher than non-youth unemployment. He said that



Dr. Muhammad Aslam welcoming the Chief Guest and participant of the course

almost all the South Asian countries facing the problem of youth unemployment, have taken various measures to address the problem of youth employment through entrepreneurial training, micro credit schemes, vocational training and career guidance, youth leadership training, labour intensive programmes targeted at youth, and information and communication technology skills training.

General Weerasooriy said that problem of youth unemployment in the region has to be addressed through favourable policies and programme interventions. He stressed that added attention should be given to increase the employment opportunities particularly youth employment.

Dr. Muhammad Aslam Khan, Director, SAARC Human Resource Development Centre briefed the guests about the activities of SHRDC and objectives of the training course.



Participants visited Vocational Training Unit at of Sultana Foundation He said that course would enhance participants ability to plan, formulate and implement policies and programmes to promote youth employment in general and labour intensive youth employment programmes in particular. Dr. Khan said that resource person selected for training course would update the participants with the latest strategies, and best practices in generating youth employment in the region ranging from labour market interventions implemented by the governments to public-private sector partnership and to self-help and self-employment initiatives.

The participant of the training course visited Sialkot and interacted with various agencies including M/s Grays Cambride (Pak) Ltd, Leather Products Development Institute, Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Medical Devices (Pvt.) Ltd, ILO/IPEC Project Office and Buniyad Micro Credit Project, Hundal. At Buniyad Micro Credit Project, Hundal, the participants met with the community and the beneficiaries of the project.

Bhutan - The State of the Nation is Healthy

Mr. Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, Prime Minister of Bhutan speaking at session of the National Assembly said that the government has fulfilled most of its commitments and the state of the nation is healthy. Briefing about education sector Mr. Ngedup said that school enrolment in 2005-06 increased by 4 percent. The national literacy rate is 60 percent and the gross primary school enrolment rate 96 percent. Computers facility was provided in 100 primary schools in different parts of the country and number of teachers from all the schools was trained to operate and maintain them.

Speaking about health sector of Bhutan, Prime Minister said that the under-five mortality rate has been reduced from 84 per 1000 live in year 2000 to less than 60 in year 2006. Infant mortality rate has been reduced from 60.5 per 1000 live births in 2000 to less than 40.1 in 2006. Currently over 85 percent of the country's population has access to safe drinking water and about 90 percent to basic sanitation facilities.

Informing the session about agriculture sector, he said that export of potato, apple, mandarin, mushroom and cordyceps worth Nu.415 million was made. The volume of export increased by 184 percent during the first three years of the 9th Plan, recording a 13.5 percent increase in the monetary value of export. A total of 15 new varieties of horticulture crops, one new field crop, and four varieties of feed and fodder crops were endorsed by National Seed Board for release.

A comprehensive Tourism Master Plan and a Nationwide Tourism Resource Inventory was completed. A total of 13,626 tourists visited Bhutan in the past one year bringing in US\$18.50 million. Out of the total 1,443 job seekers registered with the Department of Employment, 669 were placed in the private and corporate sectors. The intake capacity of in-country vocational training institutes was enhanced and created a training space for 1,754 students. A total of 530 ex-country fellowships offer for the private and corporate sectors were processed.

Participants also visited Sultana Foundation, Islamabad and were exposed to different aspects of vocational and professional education.

Dr. Sabur Ghayur, Chairman, Policy Planning Cell, Labour Manpower Division, Government of Pakistan at the concluding ceremony of the training course emphasized that employment is the key issue in South Asia and requires immediate consideration in policy planning. Dr. Ghayur said that the participants of the course are ambassador of their country. He said that efforts to generate additional employment strategies in South Asia are limited due to low foreign direct investment, low savings and less investment opportunities.



Dr. Sabur Ghayur speaking at the Concluding Ceremony



Asian Development Bank Delegation Visits SHRDC

A delegation of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) comprising Mr. Masaaki Nagata, Head of Regional Cooperation Unit, Operations Coordination Division and Mr. P. Abeygunawardena, Principal Project Economist, Energy Division, South Asian Department visited SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC) with Director, SAARC Secretariat (Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial) on 20 April 2006. The delegation showed keen interest in SHRDC activities. Director, SHRDC proposed that ADB may help in organizing a two week training programme on “Social Sector Development and Poverty Alleviation” and a workshop on “Community Participation of Sustainable Development: “Experience of SAARC Member States”.



ADB delegation with Director SHRDC and Director, SAARC Secretariat



Success Story: Pakistan Employment Generation Policies

Employment is one of main priorities of the Government of Pakistan. To create 6.97 million new jobs, a number of policy initiatives have been taken by the government. In agriculture sector, labour intensive crops promotion, promotion of small scale and cottage industry based on local agriculture produced and lining of water courses are being pursued. Special emphasis is laid on the promotion of Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) whose labour intensive nature suited to labour abundant country like Pakistan. Services sector is also given high priority due to its high

employment generation capacity. Government emphasize is also placed on labour intensive informal sector to generate more employment opportunities. To bridge the skill gap and increase the employability and productivity of the labour, special attention is being paid to promote market skills to the labour through technical and vocation education. Micro-credit facility of different financial institutions like Khushhali Bank, SME Bank, Zarai Taraqiati Bank and Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund will play a lead role in creating self-employment opportunities, especially for youth.

Research Study on “Foreign Direct Investment and Human Resource Development: A Case Study for South Asia” in Process

A study on “Foreign Direct Investment and Human Resource Development: A Case Study for South Asia” commissioned by SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC) is in process.

The main objectives of the study are to identify FDI role in socio-economic development and challenges faced by the SAARC region. Study will also analyse trends in FDI inflows in South Asia and assess the role of human resource

development (HRD) in attracting FDI in the region. It will suggest policies to promote foreign direct investment and human resource development in each SAARC Member State. It will also serve as a guideline for policymakers to meet the challenges of globalisation.

The concept paper and Terms of Reference (TORs) of the study are available on the SHRDC's website: www.shrdc-isb.org.pk

SHRDC to Conduct Training Course on “Management of Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes”

SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC) will organise a training course on “Management of Rural Poverty Alleviation Programmes” from 03-16 July 2006. The primary objective of the training programme is to create managerial capacity in the SAARC Member States to manage rural poverty alleviation programmes. The training will allow participants to enhance their managerial skills and capabilities to effectively manage rural poverty alleviation programmes, estimate financing requirements, and

develop monitoring and evaluation mechanism of these programmes. The course will specifically focus on uplifting participants' knowledge and skills, within the framework of project cycle in designing, developing and managing development projects using various approaches that integrate financial, managerial, socio-economic, environmental and good governance contexts. Special emphasis will be given to pro-poor growth development programmes in the rural areas.



Director SAARC Energy Centre Visits SHRDC

Mr. Hilal A. Raza, Director, SAARC Energy Centre (SEC) Islamabad Pakistan visited SHRDC on 9 June 2006. Dr. Muhammad Aslam Khan, Director, SHRDC

briefed the guest about the programme activities of SHRDC. Dr. Raza emphasized a close collaboration between the two SAARC regional centres.



Bangladesh - Exports of Manpower and Commodities Increased

Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of Bangladesh said that the country's exports have increased to a greater extent during her current tenure. Prime Minister informed that over 12 lakh Bangladeshi workers got overseas employment up to May 2006.

Begum Zia said that Bangladesh Missions abroad are instructed to take measures to fulfill the country's export targets. She added that with a view to increasing manpower exports, the ministries of foreign affairs and the expatriate welfare and overseas employment have taken specific steps.

The Prime Minister further said that manpower exports

to Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Malaysia and South Korea stopped due to some reasons, have started again under the initiative of the present government, she said.

For the first time, Begum Zia said, the opportunity of exporting manpower to Nigeria, Botswana, Afghanistan, Ireland, New Zealand, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Fiji and Italy has been created.

Besides, she said, Bangladesh has reached understandings bilaterally with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to export more manpower from the country.

SHRDC Commissions a Research Study on “Network of Centers of Higher Learning, Training and Skill Development Institutes (SDIs) in South Asia”

SHRDC will commission a research study on “Network of Centers of Higher Learning, Training and Skill Development Institutes (SDIs) in South Asia”. The main objective of the study is to promote and support the initiation and furtherance of HRD programmes within organization of higher learning and skill development at regional level so as to enhance their capacity and competitiveness. It will provide regional perspective on issues and strategic developments in the area of HRD in the SAARC Region. The network will be an important forum

for exchange of information, experiences, expertise and services in the area higher learning, training and skill development. Through network the member states will collaborate and interact for achievement of common goals of HRD in South Asia.

The concept paper and Terms of Reference (TORs) of the study are available on the SHRDC's website: www.shrdc-isb.org.pk



Second Meeting of Technical Committee on HRD

Second meeting of the Technical Committee on Human Resource Development under the Regional Integrated Programme of Action (RIPA) will be held in August 2006 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The meeting will be attended by all SAARC Member States and representative from SAARC Secretariat. The Director, SHRDC will apprise the meeting on SHRDC progress and programmes on Human Resource Development implemented by the Centre.



SHRDC Process Research Study on "Priority Areas of Investment in Vocational Education and Skill Development in South Asia"

The SAARC Human Resource Development Centre will undertake a study on "Priority Areas of Investment in Vocational Education and Skill Development in South Asia". The study aims at assessment of role of vocational education and skill development in national development and over all public and private investment in education sector, particularly in vocational education and skill development in South Asia. It will identify problems faced by the Member States due to lack of market driven skilled labour force. Study will suggest modalities for the promotion of vocational education and skill development in South Asia. It will also suggest short,

Write for Welfare of 1.4 Billion People of SAARC Region

SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC) is engaged in publishing information particularly relevant to the SAARC region and these are being distributed among various user in the region for strengthening awareness and gaining mutual benefits. You can strengthen the process by writing on emerging issues and challenges faced by South Asia region for the HRD Newsletter.

HRD News is one of the widely circulated publications of SHRDC to promote human resource development in the region.

Please send us HRD related articles research reports, monographs, papers and news about meeting, seminars, symposium and workshops with relevant photographs, for publication in HRD News by email or post.

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medium and long term investment policies and programmes. The concept paper, Terms of Reference (TORs) and updates of the study are available on the SHRDC's website: www.shrdc-isb.org.pk



Sri Lanka - Shortage of Manpower in Garments Industry

Shortage of manpower has become the serious problem in the apparel industry of Sri Lanka. The industry has plenty of export orders but they find it difficult to fulfill on time due to the shortage of manpower. General Manager European Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka, Mr. Sujeevan Perera said that there is an average 10-15 per cent shortage of manpower in the 30 apparel companies working with the Chamber and it is the case with majority of the companies. High labour turnover and absenteeism especially after long holidays has delayed work and caused many problems to the industry.

The Government is implementing a system to assess the position of vacant vacancies and develop required manpower by providing training that would help to lessen the unemployment rate and help the industry to be more competitive.

SHRDC Professionals Completed their Tenure

Three professionals of SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC) have completed their tenure. Mr. Najam-us-Saqib completed his tenure on 23 June 2006, Dr. Zahangir Kabir on 5 June 2006 and Mr. Kiran Rupakhetee on 8 May 2006.



Dear Readers,

We hope you find SAARC Human Resource Development Centre (SHRDC)'s, 'HRD News', new issue (Volume 4, Number 2, April - June, 2006) interesting and useful.

Your comments, suggestions, views and observations would be greatly appreciated to keep SHRDC committed to achieve its mission to facilitate the South Asian community to improve their status of social welfare through enhancing Human Resource Development (HRD) in the region.

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