

**Trade Initiatives from Human Development Perspective  
(TIHP)**

**Margala Motel, Islamabad 31 July- 01 August, 2006**

**Report on training workshop for journalists**

**On**

**International Trade and Human Development**

**Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR)**

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**Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights**  
**Trade Initiatives from Human Development Perspective (TIHP)**

**Venue: Margala Motel, Islamabad, 31 July—1 August 2006**

Fifth and the final in the series, a two-day workshop on “International Trade and Development” was held during 31 July-01 August, 2006 in Islamabad. A total of 36 journalists from across print and electronic media attended the workshop. JDHR’s Secretary General Khalid Jamil from Aaj television conducted the workshop. On behalf of the organization he thanked UNDP/TIHP and the Ministry of Commerce for providing support for the media workshop on trade issues. He said that media can best track trade issues in favour and interest of their audience. He said JDHR organizes such workshop to sharpen skills of journalists and develop story ideas from experts’ presentations.

Shafqat Munir introduced the objectives of the workshop. He said during the last four workshops in Multan, Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi, the resource persons discussed trade issues in the light of the ongoing trade talks under WTO regime while we are conducting the fifth and final such workshop in Islamabad, the context has been changed because of the collapse of the Doha round of talks in Geneva. So, the resource persons during their presentations will focus on the new scenarios emerged out of this situation.

**Day One (Monday)**

The crux of the debate on first day was that the WTO talks are now seen in the context that the ‘operation has been successful but the patient dead’ The experts were of the view that trade and human development are interlinked and the possible fall out of the somewhat ‘stalled’ or ‘collapsed’ trade negotiations under the World Trade Organization (WTO) would largely affect the poor, particularly the farmers in the world. Though in the

rich countries' perspective end of talks can be a successful operation, but the reality is that the patient is dead.

In his presentation, Zubair Faisal Abbasi of TIHP/UNDP said there is a need to see trade in a sustainable human development perspective and develop social policy framework for all policies to be developed which includes trade policy, industrial policies, and the finance bill. The success of any policy must be measured against increase in sectoral employment and increase in household income levels. He emphasized on the importance of coherent and consistent policy framework on signing of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and PTAs is important in this regard.

He said income inequalities need to be addressed. Empowerment in decision making, equity and sustainability are other indicators to see trade in human development perspective. He linked the empowerment, sustainability, equity, and productivity with progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals. According to him the elements would play a critical role in Pakistan's capacity to work effectively on achievements of would be the critical indicators.

While talking about suspension of doha work programme, Dr Abid Suleri said a state of inertia is certainly not in favour of developing economies such as Pakistan. He was of the opinion that major trading powers are conducting trade through bilateral and plurilateral arrangements and hence they can survive without WTO however Pakistan which is not a party to any meaningful FTA/RTA would be at the losing end.

He was critical of what he said the government is still not able to alien with any potential trading blocs in WTO instead it tried to please every bloc, thus losing its bargaining chip. Connecting the current stalled negotiations at WTO with domestic politics of the United States, Brazil and France, he said that nothing concrete would be achieved on Doha work plan in near future. As democratically elected governments in these countries would try to protect interest of their voters and will not show any flexibility to win elections in

these countries. He said media played important role in highlighting trade issues in public interest.

Dr Sajjad Akhtar, director Centre for Research on Poverty Reduction and Income Distribution, said trade needs to be linked to poverty reduction by increasing employment and by ensuring that benefit of trade should be in favour of the consumers, the buyers at lower prices. He said employment generating activities could add to poverty reduction in real sense and it would help improve economic welfare of the poor.

He was of the view that cuts in public spending on welfare and social-sector programmes that can occur due to lost revenues after trade liberalization are among the key costs of greater trade openness. He said the issue of trade and poverty cannot be reduced to the issue of trade liberalization and poverty and sustained poverty reduction occurs through the efficient development and utilization of productive capacities

Dr Sajjad said the relationship between trade and poverty varies with the level of development of a country and the structure of its economy. This relationship is affected by interdependence between trade and international financial and investment flows, between trade and debt and between trade and technology transfer.

Ghulam Mustafa Talpur of Actionaid said several national and international factors are creating hurdles in citizens' right to be free from hunger. Increasing dominant role of transnational corporation involved in food business is draining the wealth from poor communities through high input cost and lower production prices by using unfair and unethical trading practices. There is a severe need to regulate the business of Food Corporation such as Monsanto, ICI, Nestle and others which are controlling seed, pesticide and milk market in Pakistan, he added.

He said in addition to the increasing role of corporations, the unfair trade rules and involvement of international financial institutions in national policy making process is also hampering the efforts to reduce hunger from Pakistan. Reduced agriculture

expenditure, fiscal austerity, rising debt, mono-cropping and increasing role of market are the prescription suggested by IFIs are robbing poor peasants of Pakistan.

Mustafa said to removing the international factors which are undermining the ability of national governments to fulfill the right to food of citizen, the national policies including concentration of land, denying poor people access to and control over natural resources, flawed agriculture development model and inadequate mechanism for controlling inflation and creating employment opportunities are the serious concerns. The progress of Pakistan towards achieving World Food Summit goals as well as MDGs is very slow and data does not support that government is going to meet these goals in 2015 time frame.

### **Day Two (Tuesday)**

On the second day, the Minister for Textiles Mr Mushtaq Cheema chaired the closing session and awarded certificates to the participating journalists. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that media can play a vital role in protecting rights of the people and the national interests while imparting knowledge based reporting on important issues such as trade and commerce. He said journalists manage information in a way that ensures free flow of information to their audience. He said media is the most important vehicle of organized information. He appreciated JDHR for organizing media trainings on trade issues saying that trainings are essential to sharpen skills of media professionals, particularly in an environment of media expansion with more television channels and newspapers.

The minister called for objective media reporting on WTO processes and other trade agreements so that the people and the governments should know the sensitivities around trade agreements and their impacts on the people. He said trade should be fair and specially after phasing out of quota in textile, the importance of rules based system has been increased to promote fair trade. He said that government of Pakistan has been playing very effective role in multilateral trading system. Employment is the main issue

for developing countries while skilled labor is in demand. He praised the government on producing a balanced budget for growth of the country.

Earlier, Dr Wajid Pirzada in his presentation said Pakistan aims at market plus approach in agriculture trade coupled with ensuring its food security. The U.S. and EU want to protect their agriculture at the cost of the developing countries' agriculture. Developing countries are stick to their demand from the US and the EU to reduce agriculture subsidies and substantially cut their tariffs. Now both are playing a trick to shift blame for collapse of WTO on one another accusing one another not to reduce tariffs and subsidies, whereas fact remains that ball is in their court, he added. He said both the players are creating hurdles by not moving on core issues thus creating deadlock in the WTO negotiations. Market access and trade liberalization certainly benefits developing countries provided the developed countries remove distortions and protection in agriculture. Developing countries should not compromise on their socio-economic priorities under any duress or pressure, he added.

Dr Pirzada said we need to invest in research in agriculture so that we can get real premium of our produce. We also need to improve efficiency level in production & quality of any commodity to sell it to world market. We have to also look at low selling price with good quality. We have to give a serious thought to the declining agricultural production by arresting this process by according priority to this sector and by investing in agricultural R &D. Policy focus on agriculture is being shifted to industrial sector resulting in low investment in agriculture sector. We need to have cushion available under comparative advantage to use it as tool to take our agriculture out from any recession, he added.

Zubair Faisal Abbasi, from TIHP/UNDP while sharing trade related learning from Asia and the Pacific region, pointed out that East Asian 'miracle' economies shared the increased national income with masses by continuously spending on education, infrastructure development, and health thus building potential for innovation and value addition in their economies. With such important human development related efforts, the

‘tigers’ were able to move fast on globalization and open their economies for global competition. Based on the experiences of the economies of Asia Pacific, he said that Pakistan should move as a ‘cautious globalizer’ putting more emphasis on human development stock building, developing social policy framework, and getting institutions right while sequentially opening itself up towards international competition both in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors.

‘To avoid being labeled as an economy of ‘jobless growth’ and food importers, Pakistan needs to focus more on rural development emphasizing employment-income-generating agriculture production with innovation’, he added while speaking about the term ‘jobless growth’ now being used for some East Asian economies. Mr. Abbasi said that in the new quota free era, the region has gained in textile and clothing but most of the gains have been of China leaving many other developing countries with fingers crossed on rapidly changing international markets and consumer preferences. How fast and far Pakistan will succeed in putting in place structures to ensure balanced growth and resultant decline in inequity is still a question, he remarked. ‘However, it needs fast track initiatives to build potential for implementation of growth strategies and meet the challenges of globalization, infrastructure development, poverty, unemployment, and inequity’, he added.

Sajid Kazmi from SDPI said journalists should question various policies of the government regarding poverty, trade and development. They should keep an eye on data jugglery by various government ministries. He explained non-economic dimensions of poverty that include powerlessness, discrimination, and exposure to corruption, fear, and lack of access to justice. He was of the opinion that economic poverty should not be the only target of government policy. Rather people should be provided with equal opportunities to come out of vicious circle of poverty. He stressed that journalists should question various positions taken during the WTO negotiations. He said that journalists should follow up whether parliamentarians, who are people’s representatives, are consulted while taking negotiating positions.

A group of journalists who covered WTO Hong Kong Ministerial shared their experiences with fellow economic reporters at a special session on media coverage of trade issues during the workshop. Economic correspondent Mubarak Zeb while sharing his experience of covering trade issues regretted that the government officials were not generous enough to provide even essential information to media on trade issues. He was critical of the way information is kept secret. He said journalists should seek information from the WTO website as all information even if it is not given by the government officials here in Islamabad.

Khalid Jamil added to these comments saying that the representatives from other countries and groups in WTO provided quick information to media. He suggested that the government official should share information in the best interest of the nation. Haq Nawaz said journalist colleagues need to improve reading on WTO and trade issues due to their technical nature while reporting these issues to create awareness among the people. He said there are a lot of learning opportunities from seminars and international conferences. He said economic reporting is increasing day by day.

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