

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

Sindbad Hotel, Multan 23-24 May, 2006

Report on training workshop for journalists

on

International Trade and Human Development

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

Venue: Sindbad Hotel, 23-24 May 2006

Third in the series, a two-day workshop on “International Trade and Development” was held during 23-24 May 2006 in Multan. Over 28 journalists from across print and electronic media attended the workshop. In the Inaugural Session, JDHR’s local coordinator Amjad Bokhari in his welcome remarks appreciated the UNDP/TIHP and the Ministry of Commerce for supporting media workshop on trade issues. Shafqat Munir introduced the objective of the workshop saying it aims at building capacity of journalists in Multan on trade issues and giving them story ideas so that they can write stories on trade with a human development angle.

Syed Qasim Ali Shah spoke on the Trade Initiative with Human Development Perspective (TIHP) project. Mustafa Talpur, head of trade justice campaign of Actionaid Pakistan, Syed Qasim Ali Shah and Mr Shafqat Munir led technical sessions explaining the trade related issues and their linkages to human development and poverty and hunger.

DAY-I (Tuesday)

On the first day during technical sessions, the experts explicitly told the participants of the workshop that compromising the spirit of the Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO), big trade players during Hong Kong Ministerial tilted the trade rules to benefit rich countries and multilateral corporations at the cost of the developing and the least developed countries (LDCs).

Speaking on this occasion, Mustafa Talpur of Actionaid said the Doha Development Round was started to correct the inequalities in global trade rules to share the gains from global trade and to reduce poverty but after wasting five years, two WTO ministerial conferences have not brought any significant result. He said the current proposals on

table for negotiations to conclude the Doha Round are entirely anti-poor and unacceptable. Rich countries are not offering any substantial cuts in agriculture subsidies, market access barrier for agriculture goods from developing countries is still intact and undemocratic and non-transparency methods of exclusive meetings are being arranged to make a backdoor deal, he added.

Talking about agriculture and food security, Mustafa said the food poverty and hunger is increasing in Pakistan. The goals sets in 1996 food summit and then 2000 millennium summit are far beyond to achieve. The over all per capita availability of cereals has decreased in Pakistan and caloric intake also has a decreasing trend from the period of World Food summit.

According to current estimates by various sources there are 23% people of Pakistan are malnourished while during 1991-92 there were 24% people were malnourished. In fifteen years Pakistan government has been unable to protect the citizens' right to food. In the percentage terms the statistics show one percent reduction but in number there are now 35 million people are malnourished while in 1991-92 this number was 27 million. There are several reasons of food insecurity and inaccessibility in Pakistan. The uneven land distribution, elitist characteristics of state, rising poverty, unemployment and international trade regime are the main causes which are affecting food production, accessibility and distribution.

Giving an overview of the Trade Initiatives from Human Development Perspective (TIHP), Syed Qasim Ali Shah said TIHP is a joint venture of Ministry of Commerce and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). He said the increased poverty, and rising unemployment, has reduced schooling, diminished public services, and increased social stress and fragmentation. One of the UNDP reports comments, "economies are now recovering but human recovery will take longer". The sustainable human development is the ultimate end of the development process, with economic growth simply representing an important means to that end. As quoted by Emerson, "the real wealth of a nation is its people".

And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth.” Sustainable human development (SHD) is not only the core objective of the process of economic growth and development. But it is also a powerful instrument for promoting economic growth, especially when investments in human development are made in the context of a liberal and open economic environment, he added.

Qasim said there should be an interrelationship between three complementary policy spheres: integration into the global economy and the liberalization of markets; the promotion of fast economic growth; and sustainable human development, however human development remain ignored in all the times in countries like ours. The impact of each of these interlocking policy spheres on promoting development needs to be considered, and policy proposals should be devised accordingly. He said the negative consequences of globalization and liberalization should be evaluated, and strategies to mitigate those impacts should be an important constituent located in social and economic policy.

However, the complexity of the overall policy environment confronting policymakers pose a serious question to all of us, and several weaknesses of so-called ‘holistic’ or ‘comprehensive’ development approaches needs to be identified. Realizing these issues, UNDP started a holistic programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce titled ‘Trade Initiatives from Human Development Perspective (TIHP)’ with the aim to assist the Government of Pakistan and other stakeholders to make assessment of impacts of trade policies and WTO trade agreements on poor people.

Shafqat Munir said journalists can play an important role to protect the right to know of the people while tracking and exposing bad deals in the WTO negotiations process. He said media can influence the policy making process by properly taking up the issue in the interests of the people.

DAY-II (Wednesday)

On the second day issues relating to poverty and development were discussed. Syed Qasim Ali Shah in his presentation on 'Poverty, Trade and Development' said while the government has moved away from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to the Medium Term Development Framework (MTDF), the donors are still pushing for the PRSP which is as faulty as was the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and now the government should reject the donors' demands.

He said the MTDF is the only document which is indigenous. He said one of the chief economists of the World Bank himself admitted that 'high demand for opening of markets from the developing countries was not a wise policy adopted by the bank then' and the SAP has been proved to be a total chaos for the developing countries. However donors are again active and work has been started on PRSP as PRSP II, he added.

Qasim said PRSP while specifically mentions investing in human capital and targeting the poor and vulnerable, it fails to draw ways to achieve this objective. The document also advocates provision of essential social and economic services and infrastructure to the poor by the government but in practice basic services such as privatization of basic services including water and health are also being pushed by the World Bank and IMF.

He said to achieve the desired objectives of eradicating poverty and increasing employment can only be achieved if we are able to make national policies biased in favour of the poor. We need to improve pro people governance and employment. We need to link trade with social and poverty related issues of our society. We need to look at the shrinking job markets which are becoming a big element increasing poverty. He said we have to explore avenues to export skilled workers.

He said the UNDP human development report says, "Trade has the potential to be a powerful catalyst for human development. Under the right conditions international trade

could generate a powerful impetus for accelerated progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He further said the problem is that the human development potential inherent in trade is diminished by a combination of unfair rules and structural inequalities within and among different countries'. This means that only national policies alone might not be able to deliver, the international policies and rules must also be considerate of the poor, he added.

In an other presentation on WTO and Pakistan's Trade Policy, Syed Qasim Shah said the last trade policy 2005-06 happens to be innovative in a sense that ministry of commerce has not only organized consultations with exporters and importers but also with other stakeholders. However, much more needs to be done to achieve the trade targets. While there is increase in our exports there is exponential increase in imports at the same time. Interestingly exports have increased in volume terms and increase in terms of value is little.

Hence we need to focus on quality and innovative designing which we lack at present, he added. He said too much protection to some industries is giving rise to inefficiencies. Therefore there should be some mechanism to review the subsidy and incentive regime provided to any industry in trade policy. Capacity building of producers to achieve international standards is also necessary to boost exports, he suggested.

In his presentation on "Role of Media in Mainstreaming Public Interest in Trade Negotiation", Shafqat Munir said media protects the Right to Know of the people to create informed citizenry that influences decision making; ensures transparency, gives informed choices to the people and promotes the concepts of the people's centered governance. The media coverage of the people's concerns on trade issues influences International Trade agendas and forces governments to take pro people decisions.

He said media need to promote the concept of giving rights an explicit legislative basis and highlight the importance of incorporating human angle instead of corporate greed to trade negotiations as the possible outcome of these negotiations would affect the people. He said there is a consensus among the human rights groups that a rights approach could help reduce vulnerability of the communities and the poor.