

**Law & Society Trust – Satyodaya Residential Workshop on Trade Justice –
27-28 March 2008**

Workshop Overview

The Satyodaya Residential Workshop on Trade Justice, the first provincial workshop conducted under the Linkages between Trade, Development and Poverty (TDP) project was held on March 27-28, 2008 at Satyodaya Centre for Social Research and Encounter in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

The objective of the workshop was to identify civil society organisations' (CSOs') working on trade justice issues in the Central Province of Sri Lanka and explore the possibility of setting up a network of CSOs in order to collaborate with them in future on the work related to trade justice and relevant issues. The organisation advocacy programmes in the provinces is also key to the final year of the TDP project. This workshop was the first public event at which the TDP campaign kit was launched in Sinhala and Tamil languages.

Kandy was selected as the venue for the first provincial workshop for the reason that there are long standing CSOs with extensive grassroots level organisational networks working on numerous issues in the area. Law & Society Trust (LST), Colombo was chosen to collaborate with Satyodaya, an established community organisation in Kandy with a 35-year history, because of its record of work and institutional reputation in addition to that both organisations are Diakonia (Christian development organisation working together with local partners for a sustainable change for the most vulnerable people of the world) partners.

Thus, the preparatory work of organising workshop was divided between the Youth and Peace Unit of Satyodaya Centre for Social Research and Encounter and LST. While the administrative, logistic and financial responsibilities were taken up by LST, Satyodaya was to nominate potential resource persons and participant organisations/individuals from Kandy and the surrounding areas. *Satyodaya* was also responsible for drafting an agenda for a one-day workshop entailing presentation topics appropriate to the programmes/work of the participant institutions and individuals so as to centre it in on their needs and interests rather than LST's pre-conceptions.

The workshop was held in the *Satyodaya* premises. This decision was reached to give adequate time for most of the potential participants to travel to and from their field offices to attend the workshop. It was also decided to conduct the sessions in Sinhala and Tamil in order to reach a wider target group in the province. Staff from *Satyodaya* and LST provided on-site interpretation of the presentations.

Participant Organisations/Individuals

According to the selection criterion that LST set for both the participating organisations and individuals, the organisations that are already engaged in campaigns on globalisation, trade justice and sustainable development as well as the participants possessing some familiarity with the issues and authority in shaping the work of their organisations in these areas were requested to attend the workshop. LST had a set target of selecting 10 organisations/25 individuals according to the criteria, Satyodaya managed to top this target. LST also provided Satyodaya a list of names of several CSOs and networks such as SETIK, HDO and *Gami Seva Sevana*.

In all, 23 participants from 15 organisations were present on the first day of the workshop. (see Annex 1). They were from institutions working on issues related to plantation workers,

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organic farming, human rights and peace building as well as other local social and economic issues. On the second day, the number of participants increased to 28.

Agenda and Sessions

Satyodaya was given the task of drawing up a draft agenda for the workshop based on the fact that being based in Kandy, the organisation would be aware of the topics and the issues that would be useful to the potential participant organisations. In addition, two interactive activities were incorporated into the agenda. The purpose of one group activity was to find the kind of issues related to trade justice, on which the participants have so far been working. The other group activity was to identify ways and means of doing collaborative work/programmes on concerns related to trade justice (see Annex 2)

Proceeding

B Skanthakumar, Law & Society Trust (LST), Colombo, Sri Lanka

B Skanthakumar introduced the workshop on *Why Trade Justice?* In his presentation, he traced the linkages between trade and development through trade and human society, trade and colonialism, economic structures and export dependency of Sri Lanka. Pointing out the injustices of trade he discussed the development of world trading system as followed by the developed countries for their benefits from the International Trade Organisation (ITO) to World Trade Organisation (WTO) and regional and bilateral trade agreements. He concluded his talk by discussing trade justice. His presentation was in English that was translated into Sinhala by **Sarath Fernando** of Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR) and into Tamil by **Jinandani** of *Satyodaya*.

Sarath Fernando, MONLAR, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka

Sarath Fernando spoke on *Globalisation and Trade Justice* wherein he provided details of trade issues raised as consequences of globalisation as well as on how trade justice can be taken to grassroots level. He linked the negative results of globalisation with the national economic and trade problems and brought the environmental perspective into light, connecting it with options like carbon trade and stressed for collective counter action from the developing countries. As a person who witnessed the public backlash against WTO in Seattle, his account of this event and the aftermath of the Doha Round emphasised the immediacy of taking counter action. His discussion was translated into Tamil by **Ashok** from *Satyodaya*.



Participants during interactive group activity

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During the discussion, a participant pointed out the importance of gaining information with regard to the global perspective on trade justice, indicating that there is certainly a knowledge gap between the national/local aspects of trade justice and the macro-level picture of the topic.

Lalith Abeysinghe of 16+ Youth Movement, Kandy, Sri Lanka

The second day commenced with a succinct recap of the main points discussed on the first day by **Lalith Abeysinghe**, who suggested that the WTO agreements should be translated into Sinhala and Tamil, so that the public could analyse them thoroughly.

After that, the participants were divided into three groups based on their work for the group discussion. The first group included those who work in the agriculture sector and related issues. The participants who worked with the plantation workers comprised the second group. The third group reflected the institutional aspect. The groups were asked to list the problems regarding the lack of trade justice in their specific work areas and recommend solutions to them. Then they were to report back to other groups. This session was facilitated by **Ashok** and **Lalith Abeysinghe**.

According to Group 1, that worked on the agricultural sector, the negative results caused by the green revolution need to be reversed in order to effectively engage with the issues of trade justice. **Nandi Samarasinghe**, one of the participants, commented on the input of Group 1 saying that the world should go back to the age of buffalo, i.e. local and traditional agriculture to bring it back to the right path.

The Group 2 that works with the plantation sector put across the issues that are related to injustice of trade. They identified that most of the problems are connected to labour rights/right to work, and gave their feedback on counter measures accordingly. Group 3 which consisted of participants who worked in the institutions provided their input with regard to retaining of trade justice, which was based mostly on advocacy and lobbying.

Thus, at the end of the interactive exercise several practical ideas for collaborative work in each sector could be gained. This discussion was important for the participants to understand the links between their work and trade justice and relevant issues, which they considered as an unfamiliar topic.



Workshop discussions

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B Skanthakumar

In his presentation on *Rights Based Approaches in Trade and Development*, **B Skanthakumar**, tried to delineate the significance of the link between trade and human rights giving examples such as the omission of reference to human rights in the WTO agreements and the specific features of Sri Lanka's trade alliance with the European Union (EU). At the end, he asked the participants to get into the same groups that they were in previously and discuss the particular rights which are relevant to their issues and the limits of the rights based approaches in their work in the specific sectors. This presentation was in English, which was translated in to both Sinhala and Tamil. The on-site translation of the presentation consumed much time but it seemed beneficial to the participants. On the other hand, due to the time constraints, the discussion after the session was rather short. The workshop concluded after lunch.

The previous session on a rights-based approach to trade justice paved the way to a lively discussion after lunch on what kind of collaborative work should be carried out to follow up on this workshop. **Lalith Abeysinghe** and **Deepal** from Satyodaya commented on the possibility of conducting another seminar on trade justice. **Abeysinghe** also pointed out that if they cannot plan a programme in trade justice at the institutional level, the participants should still get involved with the work as individuals. During this discussion, the need to acquire more in-depth knowledge on the subject was emphasised. Therefore, activities such as producing a CD with WTO agreements and a Guide, conducting follow-up discussions on trade justice and other thematic issues like consumer rights, food security and access to medicines were proposed.

At the end of the workshop the participants were given an opportunity to evaluate the workshop. Most of them said that the knowledge they gained was very useful for them to work in their respective fields. They also encouraged LST to hold another workshop on the same topic in order to gain more information. An important component of the workshop was that LST was able to meet individuals who have been interested in supporting and working on issues on trade justice in the central province and make new contacts and strengthen the old contacts with them in terms of future work. Since this was their first workshop on trade justice, LST was able to gain much experience in holding workshops in the provinces as well.



Concluding the workshop

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Annex 1

LST – Satyodaya Residential Workshop on Trade Justice on March 27-28, 2008

Attendance List

| | Name | Organisation & Address | Telephone No. | March 27 | March 28 |
|-----|--|--|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. | S Amarapathidevi | Galaha Women's Development Society No.327/14, Gurukele, Nillamba | 0775 -943650 | √ | √ |
| 2. | Priyanthi Wijesinghe | Satyodaya, 30, Pushpadana Mw., Kandy | 081-2222955 | √ | √ |
| 3. | Sheila Ranasinghe | Satyodaya, 30, Pushpadana Mw., Kandy | 081-2222955 | √ | √ |
| 4. | Renuka Sampath | Agriculture Faculty for Youth, Sarasavi gama, Hindagala | 0779895577 | √ | √ |
| 5. | Thushira Deepal de Silva | Satyodaya, 30, Pushpadana Mw., Kandy | 0724141190 | √ | √ |
| 6. | Chandana Thennakoon | Centre for Protecting Human Right, 306/3, Pathiniya, Katugastota | 0716459389 | √ | √ |
| 7. | Nandi Amarasinghe | 90, Pichchamal Watta, Gurudeniya | 0777-152177 | √ | √ |
| 8. | Sarath Amarasinghe | 60/55, Soysa kele, Nawalapitiya | 0775-469018 | √ | √ |
| 9. | MA Patrick Perera | Satyodaya, 30, Pushpadana Mw., Kandy | 0779399731 | √ | √ |
| 10. | HR Madihe Herath | Walgama – Rambukkana | 072- 52950024 | √ | √ |
| 11. | PM Lakshmindra Dasanayake | A 28/2, Seruwagala, Dombemada, Rambukkana | 0777- 964818 | √ | √ |
| 12. | TG Chandima Priyadarshini Jayawardene | Walgama- Rambukkana | 035 -5680301 | √ | √ |
| 13. | MS Veeran | I.S.D., 37, Badiyangana, Mawaththa, Kandy | 0779-064522 081-2202923 | √ | √ |
| 14. | Muhammed Muzzamil | Samadanam, 97, Tekkawatta, Tennekumbura | 081-2240320 0777889947 | √ | √ |
| 15. | Gamini Abeysinghe | 16+ Youth movement, Sinharagama, Thalathuoya | 0777468024 | √ | √ |
| 16. | MW Susiripala | Senarathgama, | 081-22223601 | | |

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| | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| | | Katugastota | | √ | √ |
| 17. | Sanjeeva Ekanayake | Samadanam, 97, Tekkawatta, Tennekumbura | 081-2240320 | √ | √ |
| 18. | AGA Kularatne | Regional Economic Development Institute 2F-CPC Building, Yatinuwara Street, Kandy | 081-2232465 081-2232447 0773554241 | | √ |
| 19. | SR Thilakarathne | Regional Economic Development Institute 2F-CPC Building, Yatinuwara Street, Kandy | 081-2232465 081-2232447 0773232125 | | √ |
| 20. | Lalith Abeysinghe | 16+ Youth movement, Sinharagama, Thalathuoya | 081-2218065 0775465053 | | √ |
| 21. | R Nandana | H.D.O., POB 171, Kandy | 081- 2232217 | | |
| 22. | G Jinandani | Satyodaya, 30, Pushpadana Mw., Kandy | 081-2222955 0723488133 | √ | √ |
| 23. | DM Weerasinghe | H.D.O., POB 171, Kandy | 081- 2232217 | | √ |
| 24. | Emil Dasanayake | Cultural & Traditional Collective, 361/1/A, Warakava, Nawalapitiya | 0773740477 | √ | √ |
| 25. | A Murugan | Satyodaya, 30, Pushpadana Mw., Kandy | 081-2222955 | √ | √ |
| 26. | K Babuji | Eco Land, 85/21, Bahirawa Kanda, Kandy | 0777-253209 | √ | √ |
| 27. | A Dharshini | Social Development Institute, Mulgampola, Kandy | 0602841213 | √ | √ |
| 28. | TR Mohandas | Iron Boat Youth Club, Nawalapitiya. | 0544903042 | √ | √ |

Annex 2

**Law & Society Trust (LST) - Satyodaya Workshop on Trade Justice
on March 27-28, 2008**

Agenda

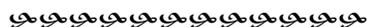
Day One

- 16.00 hr to 16.45 hr - Registration and Introduction of Participants
- 16.45 hr to 17.00 hr - Tea
- 17.00 hr to 19.00 hr - Why Trade Justice? (PWP)
- 19.00 hr to 20.00 hr - Globalisation and Trade Policy

End of Day One

Day Two

- 08.00 hr to 10.00 hr - Recap of Presentation delivered on Day One and Group Work: “Sharing our work on trade justice “
- 10.00 hr to 10.30 hr - Tea
- 10.30 hr to 12.45 hr - Rights Based Approaches in Trade and Development (PWP)
- 12.45 hr to 13.15 hr - Lunch
- 13.15 hr to 15.45 hr - Group Work on Rights Based Approaches in Trade and Development and
Way Forward for Joint Work on Trade Justice
- 15.45 hr to 16.00 hr - Vote of Thanks



Annex 3

Outcome of the Interactive Activity 1

The problems brought about by the green revolution include the following:

- Traditional seeds were discarded and genetically modified seeds were introduced.
- The multinational companies (MNCs) have monopoly on the pesticide and the chemical fertiliser sales.
- Farming equipments, which are unsuitable to Sri Lanka, have been introduced.
- Local farmers are getting distanced from the culture traditional know-how.
- There is a need to familiarising the local farmer to work according to the agenda of the multi national companies (Timeframe).
- There is a increase in the diseases caused by chemicals.
- Non-existence of the fixed prices for agricultural commodities, which led to the trend of the intermediary making a profit.
- Inadequate storage facilities and the declining of production quality.
- Persuading the local farmer to practice unitary cultivation at a time and utilising farmland for industrial purposes.

In order to regain trade justice, Group 1 recommends the following practical action:

- Commencing producing local, traditional varieties of seeds and their preservation;
- Identifying groups, individuals who use the local and traditional know-how in agriculture;
- Identifying farmers/institutions that produce local varieties of seeds;
- Lobbying the government to manufacture agricultural equipment to suit the particular local needs of the agricultural sector;
- Setting up farmer cooperatives in order to promote sale of agricultural goods excluding the intermediary; and
- Conducting awareness programmes for farmers against the problems/issues for establishing trade justice.

Group 2 that works with the plantation sector put across the following issues that are related to injustice of trade:

- At present, the agreements between the Plantation Managements and the Trade Unions are not fair by the workers in terms of daily wages.
- These agreements do not cover the living environment or the living conditions of the plantation workers and their families.
- 'Fair Trade' in the plantation sector is monopolised by the Plantation Management. The decisions they take on 'Fair Trade' are disadvantageous to the plantation workers, e.g. marriage allowance, working on Sundays
- The plantation workers are not provided with adequate safety equipment and accessories such as gloves, masks etc.
- The plantation workers are not entitled to *Samurdhi* concessions. The people who obtain *Samurdhi* rations receive sub-standard food items.
- The issues/problems pertaining to small-scale tea planters are not looked into by the government.

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Feedback on counter measures of Group 2, which include:

- Mobilising target groups at estate levels and conducting awareness programmes on the content of the agreements between the Plantation Managements and the Trade Unions, ensuring workers' right and safety as well as their entitlements such as right to health;
- Setting up a network of target groups;
- Organising peaceful/non-violent demonstrations against the issues relevant to plantation workers; and
- Working on public discussion of these issues nationally and internationally.

Solutions brought forth by Group 3 to the problems related to their field vis-à-vis trade justice include:

- Accumulating data on problems discussed;
- Dissemination of the data;
- Empowering consumers through mobilisation;
- Setting up a network of consumers association;s
- Conducting awareness programmes on relevant issues for small and medium scale producers;
- Conducting awareness programmes on consumer rights and price control of goods and services government and the private sector;
- Lobbying for law reforms ;
- Ensuring effective use of electronic, print and the cyberspace in lobbying and dissemination of information; and
- Creating a market through cooperative strategies and best practices.