

PROCEEDINGS

Pre-Conference Preparations/ Activities

NGO focal points were selected in each of the eight countries represented in the Forum. These were: ADAB - Bangladesh, AVARD - India, BINA DESA SEKRETARIAT - Indonesia, MINSOC - Malaysia, NGO-CORD - Thailand, NNGOC - Sri Lanka, PhilDHHRA - Philippines, and RDFP - Pakistan. These national NGO networks were responsible for the preparation of country papers and selection of Forum participants.

Country papers were written in consultation with various NGOs. Forum participants included men and women who are either actual practitioners of sustainable agriculture (SA) or have known track records in SA advocacy.

Regional or issue papers were prepared by experts on critical issues which are integral to the theme of the Forum: "Sustainable Agriculture: Towards Food Security and Enhanced Quality of Life". Mr. Nicanor Perlas of CADI, an authority on SA having worked in this field for the last 25 years and set up the commercially successful biodynamic IKAPATI Farm in the Philippines, wrote a treatise on the "Seven Dimensions of Agricultural Sustainability". Ms. Vandana Shiva, author of several books on the ill effects of the Green Revolution, prepared a "Scientific Critique of the Green Revolution and the Emerging Agricultural Biotechnologies". AVARD, with the assistance of Mr. Laxmi Jain, an expert on global political economy, focused on the implications of policies of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB) and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) on SA in the South. ANGOC prepared an outline of NGO initiatives on SA in the region.

Conference Highlights

Informal dinner. On the eve of the five-day

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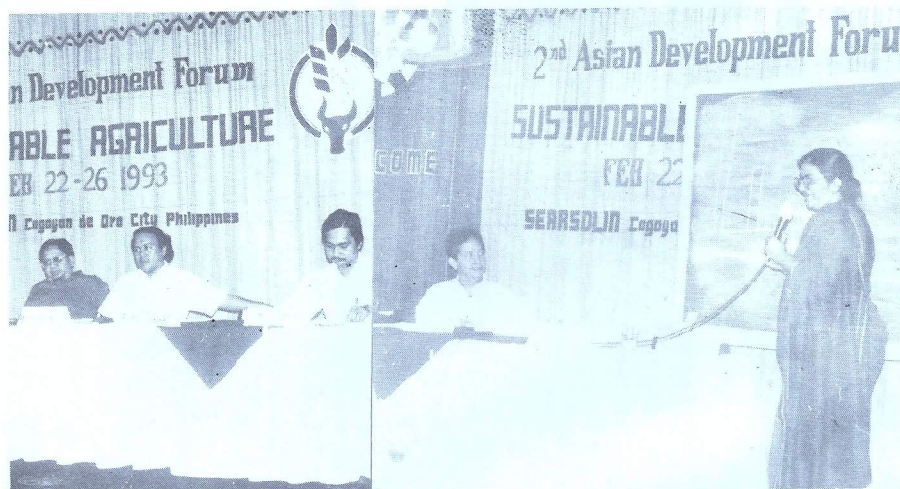
conference, an informal dinner and cultural presentation was held at a local beach resort where the participants had the chance to establish vital initial contacts among themselves.

Welcome ceremonies. The opening ceremonies provided an opportunity for the local hosts to welcome the participants to their city and express their solidarity with the concerns of the Forum. In their welcome remarks, they raised such issues as pollution, food insuffi-

ciency, rapid degradation of agricultural lands, etc.

Issue paper presentation. Three issue papers were presented on the first day and these provided a critical framework on SA and set the theme for the next days' discussion. The speakers were Mr. Perlas, Ms. Shiva and Mr. Tripathi, in behalf of AVARD.

An open forum followed each presentation. This allowed the participants to ask clarificatory questions and share relevant information. A facilitator chosen from among the participants chaired each session and synthesized major points which emerged from the discussion.



The ANGOC regional report, presented on the third day, was a panel discussion where participants from the Pesticide Action Network (PAN), the Southeast Asia Sustainable Agriculture Network (SEASAN), and the Southeast Asia Regional Institute for Community Education (SEARICE), and ANGOC shared their programs of action for SA and alerted the Forum participants to significant regional and international events where NGO advocacy is crucial towards creating a stronger and more favorable policy climate for SA.

Country paper presentation. Country papers were presented on the second and third day of the Forum. The sessions included the 15-minute country report, followed by an open forum and synthesis.

Reflection for the day. Before the start of each day's session, a participant gave a short reflection on the previous day's proceedings, recalling the main points covered and the insights gained.

Sharing on the second day, Mr. Krishnaswamy of India said that the previous day's session reaffirmed to him that life is a unity and in NGO work, one should constantly go back to and learn from the people. In SA, one should even be willing to learn from the animals and plants because they seem to know nature

much more intimately.

On the third day, Fr. Francis Lucas of the Philippines lamented the fact that even as the Forum was raising the issues of agricultural unsustainability, millions of people are being victimized by the problems and solutions given by so-called "experts". SA demands that each and everyone make up for these illusions, see and feel with the farmers, be more concrete and practical, and look beyond the economic blindfold.

On the fourth day, Mr. Bishan Singh of Malaysia focused on the current imperative to view SA as a serious alternative that is community-centered, ecologically sound, promotive of social justice and quality of life, and respectful of indigenous knowledge, bearing in mind the urgent need to settle the issue of land ownership because for SA to succeed, the farmer has to have control of his land.

Field/Exposure Trip. Midway through the Conference, the participants took a break to visit two exposure sites. One group went to the Del Monte Philippines, Inc. (DMPI) pineapple plantation in nearby Bukidnon, while another group visited the Masipag Rice Trial Farm in Balingasag. Both groups stopped by at the DMPI cannery where the participants toured the plant premises and saw the processing of pineapples, done mostly by women employ-

ees, into products sold in supermarket counters all over the world.

At the DMPI plantation site, a 33,000-ha. monoculture planted solely to pineapples, the participants got a glimpse of how a multinational corporation operates in a developing country, how its policies result, among others, in token benefits for a privileged few and further marginalization of the majority of peasants due to highly skewed tenurial patterns.

At the Masipag Farm, the participants were briefed on the farmer-based approach to seed selection and natural breeding, where the farmers themselves participate in field experiments and varietal selection. They also met the farmers and exchanged notes.

Workshop. On the fourth day, the participants were divided into five groups of about 10 members each, such that a diversity of thinking and experience was represented within each group. The workshop groups had three tasks: (1) identify key issues which reflect the SA framework, (2) set targets and objectives, and (3) formulate action plans.

Each group elected its own chairperson/facilitator and rapporteur. The body decided to re-convene during plenary on the fifth and last day, giving ample time for each group to discuss and strategize future actions.

Regional and Country Level Commitments. After the presentation of the action plans on the fifth day, the different regional networks already represented in the forum (ANGOC, IIRR, PAN, SEARICE, SEASAN, SARRA, APPROTECH ASIA) grouped together to strategize how the action plans can be incorporated into their respective agenda. (This region-wide grouping later evolved into an informal network with the understanding that it will sponsor joint regional activities on SA.) The other participants also regrouped by country to operationalize the SA action agenda at the country level.

Closing ceremonies. The Asian Development Forum concluded in a joint closing ceremony with the 29th batch of the Southeast Asian Rural Social Leadership Institute (SEARSOLIN) graduates.

As a fitting end to the Forum, a representative from each country stated a



commitment to support SA activities and efforts in their respective countries.

Towards an SA Framework

In as much as the Forum was not able to forge a consensus on the framework of SA, Mr. Antonio Quizon of ANGO suggested that the Forum formally adopt the Seven Dimensions of Agricultural Sustainability expounded earlier by Mr. Perlas. This could serve as the criteria for distinguishing the real SA practitioners from those who would merely join the bandwagon. Mr. Rene Salazar of SEASAN seconded the idea but suggested that perhaps it could be adopted as a working framework in progress. Mr. Tripathi of India, however, recommended that the Forum already adopt Mr. Perlas' framework as a basis for unity, making room for diversity as the movement gains momentum. Mr. Ong Boon Keong of Malaysia and Ms. Penny Levin of Thailand, suggested that an eighth dimension on gender be included. Dr. Hadji Hussain of Pakistan, however, stressed that this dimension is already subsumed in the requirement for social equity.

SA Action Plans

The action plans arrived at by consensus during the plenary were the following:

1. *Research.* NGOs should strengthen their capacity in this area specifically to:
 - pilot sustainable agriculture;
 - set up ethical standards for SA practitioners;
 - develop research methodologies on SA for NGOs;
 - produce resource maps of particular areas;
 - conduct research on different ecosystems.
2. *Training.* This is needed by both practitioners and the general public and may be done by:
 - setting up an SA Adult Education Institute;
 - developing and conducting consumer education seminars.
3. *Policy Advocacy.* NGOs and national research institutes should try to influence the policies of governments and international bodies by:
 - initiating a review of the UN system,

the Consultative Group in International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), World Bank (WB), and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT);

- campaigning for a ban on hazardous pesticides;
 - careful study and close monitoring of SA-related policies;
 - undertaking follow-up action on developments concerning intellectual property rights (IPR) and biotechnology.
4. *Information Base and Documentation.* This should include such projects as:
 - developing certification standards for SA products;
 - preparing a directory of SA practitioners and practices;
 - using ANGO newsletters and those of other organizations to disseminate SA-related information.
 5. *Regional Strategy for SA.* NGOs should work synergistically towards:
 - a common SA agenda;
 - consensus on an SA framework;
 - region-wide networking;
 - a regional action plan for biotechnology;
 - an NGO position on botanical pesticides and organic and rapid composting;
 - alternative marketing schemes (e.g. international, regional, and national SA Fairs).
 6. *Mainstreaming SA.* Some effort should be made along the following lines:
 - giving recognition and awards to SA innovators;
 - initiating a review of the UN system, e.g. by making this the theme for the Third Asian Development Forum;
 - lobbying for a "UN Decade for Sustainable Agriculture";
 - deepening the discussion on food security, women, energy and lifestyle transformation as they affect SA.

Country Commitments

Bangladesh. Strengthen NGO capacity in SA and work for policy changes in government related to SA.

India. Increase NGO involvement in SA through fora, newsletters, media and

other modes of exchange; work with government at various levels to effect major policy changes in SA.

Indonesia. Commit both financial and institutional capability to educate the people, mobilize different sectors, advocate policy reforms, and pilot SA.

Japan. Share experiences with other countries and also with Japanese organizations and farmers through the Asian Rural Institute and JANIC.

Malaysia. Translate articulations to concrete action; make a commitment to lifetime practice of SA and strengthen the newly formed Malaysian Organic Farm Network.

Nepal. Gather data on SA developments; promote networking among research and development institutions; represent the NGO position in dialogues with government; initiate steps to solve border problems between Nepal and Northern India in the interest of saving the environment; and influence SA policies.

Pakistan. Strengthen the government's commitment to support SA.

Philippines. Implement the Forum's commitments in the hope that someday the Philippines need no longer import rice (as expressed by Ka Kiko, the only farmer representative).

Sri Lanka. Make a total commitment to SA objectives.

Thailand. Present SA action plans to the Alternative Agriculture Network for subsequent translation and circulation to members, other practitioners and farmers.

Vietnam. Pursue development models based on SA principles.