

Poverty and Development

(Preview and Review)

*Note: These notes were written before and after 19th SID International Conference to indicate the issues involved and to broadly summarize the sense of the proceedings. These notes were originally published as Editorial notes by S.P.Ahuja, as Editor of the SID Dialogue, published by SID, Delhi Chapter.**

Preview

Poverty persists. Perhaps, in some parts of the world, inches forward. The vulnerable and the weak are increasingly left to themselves. Sacrifice, inter country or intra-people is at great discount. So is statesmanship, as politicians take over. Economic inequities are compounded by social indignities, especially against women and children. Development takes a back seat as "defence" takes priority. Nature looks on mutely as man destroys his own environment and deserts enlarge. More arms get sold as barriers are raised against goods that ought to be traded. Democracy weeps as few attempt to appropriate to themselves rights and powers that belong to many. Humanism cries as ethnicism, fanaticism and terrorism increase. Where do we go from here?

To deliberate on these and allied issues thinkers and practitioners of development from several countries of the world are assembling in New Delhi in March 1988 in the 19th SID World Conference with the theme "Poverty, Development, and Collective Survival: Public, Private and Social Responsibilities". They meet with full knowledge that globally technologies and capabilities exist to meet reasonable needs of all, present and prospective. The difference between the capabilities and the actualities is an index of the failure of the national and international development system as it has come to exist. This system, therefore, needs mending. Where, when, how and how much are the questions posed?

Where do we see hope for the future. In structural change in economic equations and social configurations brought about by foresight of those

responsible for accelerated and equitable development. In rekindled hearts of the people. In voluntary work. In peoples love for nature.

In human charity. And in interfacing and intermingling of these basic urges and needs with the working of the main, rather soulless actors, the Governments of the day. For these tasks ahead we need men and women of goodwill, both in and outside the Governments and in the U.N. System who can carry people and policies with them in areas which involve well being of many and a perspective for the future. To all such men and women of goodwill who are assembling at New Delhi in March, 1988, Delhi Chapter of SID extends a warm welcome, on its own behalf and on behalf of the SID Chapters in India and South Asia.

Review

If revolutions are the locomotives of history and if these are made in the minds of people; a beginning for a new revolution and a new turn of history has been made at New Delhi, with SID International conference in March, 1988. Thinkers and practitioners of Development from about 70 countries, met together to discover reasons for poverty that persists and devote their energies and capabilities to change the spectrum of possibilities for the poor, thus raising the hopes for a better and a brighter future.

In the emerging development paradigm they saw no other options: Development was pro-elite as was capital, management and technology. All had nearly reached their level of excellence and plateaued. Playing with these tools of development was unlikely to be rewarding enough so as to change the fate of humanity which was the concern of the global conference on "Poverty, Development and collective survival". Struggle for greater control on these tools

was seen as a means for mutual struggle & collective destruction, the very anti-thesis of collective survival.

Development, however, was seen as essential to progress, even of the poor. But it was observed that it tends to stay and stick where it already is. In this situation it created very little employment or income opportunities for those who were outside its nexus. Further, in economies where the existing circuit of development was relatively small, accelerated growth within this circuit was not sufficient to meet needs and aspirations of many outside it, even though a Government sponsored redistribution system. Thus the system based on truncated development was observed to be moving gradually but surely towards a non-sustainable situation.

Extending the Frontiers of Development

The paradigm that it rightly discovered and recommended was one of mobilization of the poor, thus extending the frontiers of development beyond those who had already arrived. The poor provided the energies, and assured larger returns on meagre investments. In the process development could become a mass movement and help further even in the development of the already developed. Collectively, it provided the scope, or perhaps the only route, to accelerated growth consistent with economic and social survival of all instead of a limited few.

Interestingly, the linkage that was seen at the national level between development of the poor and those already developed was also seen in the global context of inter-country relations between the developed minority and the developing majority. A more responsive international system linking the present

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needs of the developing to the future possibilities of the developed was identified as the need of the hour.

This approach also ensured a more sustainable development and collective survival as against unconscious drift towards collective destruction based on one up-manship as between countries, people, households and individuals through more and more exclusive control of means of production and development in the hands of favoured few, be these countries, societies or individuals.

Revolt against pervasive and persistent poverty then provided basic link to a large variety of development thinking at this conference and towards the end, a global SID launched a global movement to meet the challenges of "Poverty, Development and Collective survival", working at the forums that provide the intellectual leadership, down to the forums that are engaged in delivery of development, in its various facets, at the grassroots level.

Joining in this effort shall be women who separately met at the Conference to identify ways and means to amend the wrongs - history & society has done to them and continues to do.

NGO's meeting at the conference expressed the hope for a new brave world where society will meet large part of its needs, especially in the context of the poor, through self & voluntary effort with Governments performing role of an enabler. And a North South dialogue suggested what may be done to reutilize a sagging internationalism.

We, the Chapters of South Asia region, who with the direct support of the Delhi Chapter, had the unique opportunity to play host to the 1988 World Conference of SID wish to reaffirm our commitment, alongwith other Chapters

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and the SID International in our joint efforts to inform all men of goodwill, and Governments of the day of rational sustainable paths of development and seeking action thereupon, so that this generation can justly say that it bequeathed to its children a better and a safer world than what it inherited.

* S.P. Ahuja
Hony. Director-CERPA