

Lokniti Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

Welcome again to a new edition of the Lokniti newsletter!

This issue includes updates on the SDSA project and events organised by Lokniti. Some summaries of the case studies that have been commissioned have also been included. For detailed information on Lokniti and the projects mentioned here, kindly log on to our website www.lokniti.org.

With best wishes,
Edzia Carvalho.



‘STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN SOUTH ASIA’

An **ethnographic study** is in progress to understand the impact of the tsunami on the institutions of the state, society and the international community involved in the process of rebuilding the affected areas. This effort has been launched assuming that a thorough and extensive study of few places in particular would help capture the dynamics of other places in general as well. The group conducting the study is under the leadership of Dr. G. Koteswara Prasad, the Lokniti State Co-ordinator of Tamil Nadu. The study examines three aspects of the impact of the disaster: Response, Relief and Rehabilitation. Some of the issues that the study seeks to highlight are: (i) the State – its approach and response to the situation, the methods it uses to decide who gets what relief, the role of the administration especially the District Magistrate and the effectiveness of local government in their response to the disaster; (ii) Society – social profile of the villages studied and the people affected by the disaster, their responses to rebuilding the village physically and socially, responses of civil society to this situation, and the dynamics of the whole process; (iii) International NGOs – which NGOs were involved, their functioning and their co-ordination with the State.

A similar study has been undertaken in Sri Lanka under the guidance of Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda and the Social Scientists Association, Colombo. The team is working with four communities in Sri Lanka’s Southern, Eastern, Northern coastal regions, in the villages of the SSA’s research staff attached to the SDSA project that have been affected by the disaster. In addition to aiding the relief and rehabilitation effort in these communities, the team has also tried to highlight the following: the demographic characteristics of the population displaced, problems confronting the survivors, the structure and working of the institutions providing relief and the type of relief and rehabilitation undertaken in the areas.

For Further Information

On the study undertaken in Sri Lanka, please visit the website of the Social Scientists Association at www.ssalanka.org.

The Second Regional Plenary Meeting of the Ford Grantees who are a part of the ‘Ford Project on Non-Traditional Security in Asia’ was held from 3 - 4 December 2004 in Singapore. The grantees and institutes that have been receiving funding from Ford for various projects were represented. The progress of the various studies undertaken was reported. It was proposed that an **Asian Consortium on Human Security** be set up. Prof. Amitav Acharya, Deputy Director, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), Singapore initiated the proposal. We would appreciate your comments and feedback on this proposal.

Cross-national Survey

The fieldwork for the attitudinal survey in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India has been completed and data checking and entry is in progress. The fieldwork for the survey in Bangladesh is almost complete.

Qualitative Assessment

A draft paper on the Qualitative Assessment has been received from Sri Lanka. This is on the ‘Working of Democracy’ by Ambika Sathkunathan.



Case Studies

A brief summary of three case studies that have been commissioned under the SDSA project follows:

- Dr. Vimala Ramachandran, India: *Democracy and Compulsory Education in India*
This study highlights the fact that India is the only major democracy in the world that has not made primary education compulsory. It seeks to comprehend the reasons that have resulted in this situation, among which are: a lapse of a well-meaning democracy, the failure of poor policies, the inbuilt limitations of a parliamentary form of government, or the deliberate strategy of the elites to provide themselves with a continuous army of manual labour. It also discusses the implications that a lack of education could have for the practice of full and effective citizenship.
- Mr. Suresh Dhakal and Sanjeev Pokharel, Nepal: *Local Movements, Political Processes and Transformation of Bhaktapur: A Case Study of Bhaktapur Municipality*
The case study looks at how the local government in Bhaktapur has transformed the city from a neglected urban space into one of the most attractive urban centres in Nepal. It is the story of how, with political will, good governance is possible even in a polity that is undergoing a significant governability crisis and an erosion of political institutions.
- Ms. Shandana Khan Mohmand, Pakistan: *Decentralisation in Pakistan: For or Against Democracy?*
Decentralization has become a favoured pathway for the modernizing elites of South Asia since they see it as the innovative response to the failures of a centralized state to bring about development and address the rising expectations of the people. This study endeavours to look at the feasibility of introducing decentralization in Pakistan in terms of two main issues: (i) the extent of decentralization – political, administrative or fiscal and (ii) the current drivers of decentralization – should they be the concern with promoting development or with extending democracy?

Dialogues

Excerpts from the Report of *The Dialogue on Democracy and People's Futures* held in Imphal, Manipur (India), from 26 to 27 February 2004 submitted to Lokniti by the Dialogue Co-ordinator, Dr. A. Bimol Akoijam:

The dialogue was initiated around the following themes and questions: 'The Promise of Democracy', 'Institutions and Design of Democracy', 'Working and Outcomes', and 'Democracy's Future'. The differential concerns raised during the discussions reveal the salient issues that predominate the discourse in the North East.

Some of the major themes that came up during the *Dialogue* were:

Modern democracy and non-modern or traditional forms of democracy: In terms of the democratic experiences of the people in the region, the last 50-odd years had been marked by a confrontation between the above two forms of institutions and practices. As a result of this confrontation, the ‘arrival of democracy’, i.e., democracy preferred by the Indian Constitution, on the one hand was seen as an ‘imposition’ that has ‘uprooted’ the people from their traditional ways of dealing with relationships and organizing society and their polity. It was seen as having produced a corrupted ethos, something that destroyed the ‘kinship’ matrix, and induced ‘conflicts’ in society. On the other hand, it was also seen as ‘promising’ a way to ‘modernization’, and a means to take the people to the ‘liberal’ modern world order.

Broken promises: Although the liberal democratic promises of the Indian constitution were held in high regard, there was also a feeling that these promises were not implemented or that they were ‘subverted’ both by the insensitive leaders at the Centre and the ‘local elites’. Despite the fundamental rights of individual freedom that had been promised by the constitution, ‘human right violations’ were rampant. This was due to ‘too much concern’ with the ‘security of the state’. In fact, it was expressed that the last fifty-odd years have not been a process of ‘democratization’ but of ‘militarization’ of the region. A ‘feeling of deprivation’, the lack of control over their resources and the underdevelopment of the region were expressed as indicators of the broken promises. Gender biases and discrimination were also highlighted as further evidence of this situation.

New Elites: The nature and role of the local leadership was another theme that surfaced during the discussions. Many discussants felt that these local leaders were the main cause for the subversion of the process of democratization in the region. They were seen as selfish, corrupt and lacking in statesmanship. They were also considered to be compradors of the political masters in Delhi and responsible for the destruction of the basic fabrics of the society in the region.

Demographic and ethnic challenges: The demand for ‘autonomy’ and the assertions of identity have been both a democratic expression of the people of the region as well as the source of conflict there. The participants discussed the role and impact of various institutional mechanisms based on the Indian constitution, particularly the VI Schedule, ‘non-territorial autonomy’ and Panchayati Raj. Some alternatives were also suggested such as the introduction of a second House in the state legislative assemblies. The issues of refugees and the ‘influx’ of immigrants also came up during the discussions.

The Idea of the North East: One major theme that was deliberated upon during the *Dialogue* was the idea of the North East and what it ‘could become’. Some discussants suggested a change in the nomenclature as the name ‘North East’ had ‘colonial’ baggage attached to it. While some participants insisted that the name was acceptable as it had given the people in the region a common platform some others expressed that it could become ‘a structure’ to ‘mediate’ with the region. This ‘mediation’ could have profound



civilisational, cultural, economic and political dimensions. In this context, the idea of a ‘common forum’, a separate ‘parliament’ for the North East was mooted and discussed.

EVENTS AT LOKNITI

Projects Undertaken

A **post-poll survey** will be conducted in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Haryana during the assembly elections being held in the states on 3, 15 and 23 February, 2005. Besides the survey, a study has been planned to monitor poll irregularities on the polling days in these states. While the preliminary findings are likely to be published in *The Hindu*, the academic output resulting from the data generated is likely to be published in the journal of the Indian School of Political Economy.

For Further Information

On the survey, you can contact Mr. Sanjay Kumar at sanjay@lokniti.org or Mr. Dhananjai Joshi at dhananjai@lokniti.org.

Four scholars from Nigeria will be visiting Delhi under the **South South Exchange programme** initiated by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi and the Centre for Democracy and Development, Lagos. The programme aims to encourage intellectual exchange among African and South Asian scholars in the theme of democracy and diversity. The scholars who will be visiting India in the months of February and March are:

- Prof. Eghosa Osaghae, Vice Chancellor of Igbinedion University, Edo, who, during his time in India, will deliver a lecture on ‘Ethnicity and Federalism: The Nigeria Experience’.
- Prof. Attahiru Jega, Director of the Centre for Democratic Research and Training, Mambayya House, Bayero University, Kano, who will deliver a talk on ‘Transition to Democracy in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects’ or ‘The Nigeria Federal System: Problems and Prospects’.
- Dr. Said Adejumobi, Department of Political Science, Lagos State University, Lagos.
- Dr. Momoh Abubakar, Department of Political Science, Lagos State University, Lagos.

For Further Information

On hosting a lecture by these scholars, please contact Ms. Edzia Carvalho at edzia@lokniti.org or Ms. Chandni Khanduja at chandni@lokniti.org.

The following Indian scholars will be visiting Nigeria in March under the same programme:

- Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi
- Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed, Ex-Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi
- Prof. Thomas Pantham, Ex-Professor of Political Science, M.S. University of Baroda, Gujarat
- Prof. Gopal Guru, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

Upcoming Events

National Seminar on *Civil Society–State Interface: Implications for Democracy in India*, February 19-20, 2005. For further information please contact Dr. Sanjay Lodha at: kishti2@sancharnet.in



Recent Publications

- DeSouza, Peter Ronald, 'Between Aurora and Maria: Being and Becoming in Goa', *The Book Review*, January 2005, Book Review of Couto, Maria Aurora, *Goa: A Daughter's Story*, Delhi: Penguin, Viking 2004.
- Kumar, Sanjay, 'Nai Jharkhand Rajya ka Gathan: Vaade Kitane Puure Huai?'(in Hindi), *Prabhat Khabar*, January 5, 2005
- Kumar, Sanjay, 'Jharkhand Vidhan Sabha Chunaav 2005'(in Hindi), *Prabhat Khabar*, January 9, 2005
- Kumar, Sanjay, 'Mehanga Par Sakta Hai, Bhaajapa ko, Janta ka Asantohs'(in Hindi), *Prabhat Khabar*, January 11, 2005
- Kumar, Sanjay, 'Bihar Assembly Elections: RJD needs an Alliance for Victory', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XL, No. 3, January 15-21, 2005
- Kumar, Sanjay, 'Jharkhand Ki Chunaavi Daur me Congress-Jhaa Mu Mo Ka Palra Bhari'(in Hindi), *Prabhat Khabar*, January 16, 2005
- Kumar, Sanjay, 'A Smaller Slice of the Cake', *The Telegraph*, January 18, 2005
- Kumar, Sanjay, 'This Game of Poll Arithmetic', *The Indian Express*, January 24, 2005

Suggested Reading

UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004

Fourteen years since they began to be issued annually, the UNDP Human Development Reports have come to be recognised as the foremost indicators of human development and security in the world. The 2004 issue of the Report focuses on the link between culture and human development. It rejects the claim that cultural differences necessarily lead to conflict. Instead it offers suggestions on the means to adopt to build and manage the politics of identity and culture consistent with the principles of human development.

The Report is available online on the UNDP website: <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/>

Presentations

- DeSouza, Peter Ronald, 'Democracy's Marginal Citizens', Theme Paper presented at the *National Seminar on Development and Nationhood – An India Perspective*, organised by FICCI in New Delhi on January 3-4, 2005.
- DeSouza, Peter Ronald, On the Expert Panel on 'Parliamentary Dimension of Democracy for the Establishment of the Framework for Good Practice of Democracy by Parliaments', convened by the Inter Parliamentary Union in Geneva, Switzerland on January 20-21, 2005.
- DeSouza, Peter Ronald, Lecture on 'Democracy's Marginal Citizens: Missing Issues in the Democracy Discourse' in the seminar '*The Third World' and the International System* organised by Prof. Gopalan Balachandran, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva on January 19, 2005.

DISCUSSION

The Inter-Parliamentary Union convened an Expert Panel on 'Parliamentary Dimension of Democracy for the Establishment of the Framework for Good Practice of Democracy by Parliaments' in Geneva, Switzerland on January 20-21, 2005. The panel has decided to produce a manual of good practice for parliaments. The manual is visualized to be a developmental instrument to be used by parliamentarians, civil society groups and concerned citizens in any

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country. The first round of consultations for comments and contributions from network institutions is on. We would appreciate it if could provide us your inputs on the following issues:

- Two or three features of parliamentary practice in your country that you consider good examples of democratic working,
- Recent experiences you have had with parliamentary reform, including the problems you confronted, the solutions devised and the form that the reform process itself took,
- Two or three most pressing problems or challenges that are facing the parliament in your country.

You could send us your comments and suggestions at edzia@csdsdelhi.org

CONTACT US

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of the Lokniti newsletter will be issued in March 2005.

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