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Annual Report

2000

Resource Centre

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About INSEC

Founded in 1988 as an independent, non-profit and non-partisan human rights organisation, INSEC aims to cater human rights education and awareness to the grassroots people. Headquartered in Kathmandu, it has 5 regional offices and 50 local networks to reach out to the grassroots.

Protection and promotion of human rights through advocacy, lobby, training, education, information campaigns and projects at national, regional and grassroots level.

RESEARCH—ACTION—ORGANISATION (RAO) is an INSEC model to foster its mission—the advancement of human rights and social justice around the country.

INSEC has developed working relations with various government, inter-governmental, non-governmental as well as mass-based public organisations. Governmental Organisations include Jails, Local Administration, Police, Courts and Parliament within the country and DANIDA, NORAD, SIDA etc. as foreign government agencies. Inter-governmental Organisations, particularly UN Agencies, include ILO, UNICEF, Committee on the Arbitrary Detention, Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, etc.

Numerous Non-governmental Organisations including Amnesty International, Asian Forum on Human Rights and Development (Forum Asia), International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination (IMADR), Anti-Slavery International, South Asian Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR), South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SAACS), Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education (ASPBAE) and so on.

And, mass-based public organisations include peasants' organisation, trade unions, journalists' federation, women's organisation, and so on.

INSEC stands to be transparent in all its executions and dealings, it is accountable to the people, its network—working partners, and funding partners.

INSEC draws its framework of reference primarily from—

- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
- the Kathmandu Declaration, 1997 (adopted by the First National Human Rights Conference organised by INSEC), and
- the Pasang Lhamu Pledge, 1996 (adopted by INSEC—held First National Women's Conference).

Preface

After 12 years of founding, INSEC has built into a national movement as a specialised non-government organisation in human rights monitoring, grassroots advocacy and an advocate of marginalized issues and groups of peoples. As a result of untiring efforts made individually as well as in cooperation with other like-minded friends and organisations, INSEC has been able to make the government fix a minimum wage for the agricultural labourers. It is thanks to the minimum wage provisions that the kamaiyas in the far west of Nepal rose up to fight injustices imposed upon them in lack of any provisions regulating the wages for their work. As in the past, human rights monitoring, human rights education, including the radio programme, strengthening documentation, women empowerment, consolidation of child-to-child programmes and so on formed a key part of INSEC programmes. A few new initiatives have also been made.

In the reporting period, INSEC held its fourth General Assembly, which elected an 11-member Executive Committee headed by a chairman. In the Committee are 4 women, 1 dalit and 1 Muslim representatives. The General Assembly, upon hearing from INSEC Council, which constitutes INSEC Staff, INSEC Network representatives and General Members, adopted programmes and policies for five years. The Executive Committee has formulated guidelines for the policy implementation and has asked me, as General Secretary, to implement them through various Programme Centres. This is how INSEC decisions are made and implemented. Let me also report you of our financial modality. We have a double-entry bookkeeping system. All records are internally audited on a regular basis before registered chartered accountants audit them. The final copy then is sent to the concerned, including the concerned government authority.

You know that Nepal is, at present, in a particular kind of violence and unrest that surrounds the CPN (Maoist) sponsored 'People's War'. Ordinary people are caught in the quagmire of crisis: they are killed, tortured, disappeared and are forced to migrate in search of safe areas. On the other front, our socio-cultural traditions and patrimonial legacies are no less responsible for human rights violations. A decade of democratic governance has not yet been able to print a rosy picture. Amidst this all, we would like to report you whatever achievements have been made.

I would like to thank you all—our well-wishers, working partners, donors and everybody else—for your cooperation and encouragement to fight injustices and empower the grassroots people to do so. I should not let this opportunity pass without expressing my sincere thanks to the dalits, kamaiyas, women, child leaders and others who rose to lead the respective movements to free their fellowmen and women from the tyranny imposed upon them.

Subodh Raj Pyakurel
General Secretary

Programme Assessment

Informal Sector Service Centre was born at the close of the repressive regime known as the Panchayat. However, it grew up in a democratic atmosphere, which was achieved after the 1990 People's Movement for Democracy toppled down the Panchayat, toddling hand in hand with a number of human rights and social justice movements that rose up challenging the remnants of authoritarianism and aiming at consolidating democracy in the country. Throughout the nineties, INSEC invested a huge amount of its energy to achieve its motto: human rights for social justice and people's empowerment. The decade has given us a mixed result.

At the opening of the decade authoritarianism was replaced by democracy. A new constitution was drawn vesting sovereignty on the people, declaring plurality as a way of life and honouring the will of people as a guiding principle of the nation. Non-government organisations and a large number of professional and other pressure groups strengthened the civil society. Multi-party elections were held and people's representatives formed governments. The other side of the coin is not that much encouraging, however. Democratic governments in the last decade nearly-completely failed to live with the essence of democracy and plurality, particularly to respect the

Celebrating
the
declaration
of Kamaiya
freedom



opposition to their methods of governance. This denial has produced a number of unwanted results: corruption, abuse of authority, mismanagement, socio-economic stagnation and, as a combined effect of all this, the consolidation of the 'People's War'. Therefore, the closing of the nineties became more violent, chaotic and dreadful as compared to its opening.

Against this backdrop, the report out-lines some of INSEC achievements made in the last decade. The mention is based on the programme objectives INSEC had developed while planning for its programmes. In this sense, this report is an overall analysis of the achievements made by those who participated in the launch of the programmes. This is a soul-searching exercise, the expression of gains and losses and the analysis of promising as well as bleak possibilities in the future. The exercise, it is hoped, helps everyone see the future, and chart the future course of actions, in light of the lessons learned and experiences gathered.

Impacts of INSEC Programmes

On the outset, it is to be mentioned that as most of INSEC programmes aim at awareness raising, it is not easy to see an immediate impact in behavioural terms. However, the increasing number of participants, particularly the women, in the programmes, and a few historical events that have occurred as a result of the programmes, launched individually as well as in cooperation with other organizations, confide to make claims of successes.



A. At the Grassroots Level

Increasing participation of women in human rights education and awareness programmes: This hints that the patrimonial ties are coming loose, women are becoming aware of their rights and against traditional, conservative and men-dominated mores.

- a. 11'180 women took part in Human Rights Education (through literacy) programmes.
- b. 60'837 women participated in a number of activities organized to heighten human rights awareness, the concept of social justice, and the way it can be realized in practice.
- c. 1'677 women participated in a number of programmes organized to hold UDHR discussions in 13 local languages spoken in Nepal.

Increasing participation of children in child rights promotion activities: Child Rights Awareness Groups (CRAGs) have been formed in 47 (of 75) administrative districts in the participation of school children. A total of 836 CRAGs are now actively involved in promoting child-rights based school activities. They held various extra-curricular activities regularly, share the message of child rights with the out-of-school children and encourage their parents to send these children to



school. CRAGs have been influential in raising public awareness in the rural areas.

- a. A total of 836 Child Rights Awareness Groups have been coordinating 5719 children, including 3186 girls. They have held 1865 activities (school activities) so far.

Localising the message of UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights does carry the voices of the people, although the words are those of the government, or those who claim to be the representatives of the people. The stark reality is just opposite: UDHR has not reached the people, intentionally or not. With this realisation, INSEC resolved to take the message down to the people. UDHR was translated into as many as 13 languages and discussions and debates were held with the concerned community at the grassroots. The response was amazing.

- a. A total of 4202 persons, including 1677 women, benefited from the UDHR dialogue that was held in 13 communities with the translated booklet of UDHR.

Empowerment of bonded labourers (kamaiyas): Human rights education (non-formal) programme for kamaiyas has had significant



Kamaiyas participating in sit-ins and other programmes

contribution. Kamaiyas have led a liberation campaign, freeing them of debt-trap, successfully. This gives INSEC room to claim that its programmes have significant bearing on the movement. INSEC programmes for kamaiya children have also been rated with due importance and significance.

- a. A total of 3012, including 1774 women, kamaiyas benefited from the education programme.
- b. Kamaiya Child Non-formal Education prepared 3547 kamaiya children for enrolment in formal schooling. This includes 1969 girl children.
- c. Of the 3547 kamaiya children (refer no. b. above), 3217 have been enrolled in formal classes; 108 of the rest, aged 14 plus, have been provided with vocational programmes. This figure includes 61 females.

Radio Programme for Grassroots Awareness: Catering message of empowerment and social justice becomes a difficult job in an uneven topography like that of Nepal where communication and transportation networks have yet to expand. INSEC has had an encouraging experience on this situation. Radio can be the best means to reach out to those who otherwise cannot be addressed. For over 3 years now, INSEC is imparting human rights education through Radio



Nepal, the only national broadcast. To promote the programmes in an institutional manner, Radio Listeners' Clubs have been encouraged. The response is amazingly positive. Radio Listeners' Clubs have been a movement on their own at the grassroots. Recently they held a national conference and elected an executive committee.

- a. A total of 288 Radio Listeners' Clubs have been actively participating in the listening, commenting and communicating the radio programme on human rights education nation-wide. The prisoners have formed around 60 of the Clubs in Jails. This way the radio programme has been owned by the prisoners as their means of education about their rights.

B. At the National Level

A minimum wage for agricultural workers was fixed as a result of INSEC-driven grassroots campaign months nation-wide. INSEC initiated the campaign at the local level in cooperation with Village Development Committees (VDCs), the lowest administrative unit that is further divided into Wadas, to follow the national development implementing structure. As the VDC-level wage fixation campaign mounted, the state was forced to respond it, and did so fixing a minimum wage for agricultural workers.

Another area in which INSEC has earned fame is human rights monitoring. Human Rights Yearbook, that builds on the result of the monitoring, has been an only reference assessing human rights situation in the country, and, as such, has been cited in such an authentic document as Human Development Report to exemplify Nepal's record on human rights practices (c/f NESAC 1998, pp.152/3).

Important concerns raised in INSEC forums have drawn State attention and action. One of the important points raised in Pasang Lhamu Pledge, for example, regarding women participation in grassroots level political activities has been addressed by making 25% women

On the basis of experiences gained, lessons learned and comments/feedback received from our friends, we have thus made our self assessment. The grading represents our level of satisfaction.

Self-scoring Achievements

Networking	A
Human Rights Monitoring	A
Documentation	A
Campaign	A
Human Rights Education	A
Study Research	B
Lobby/Advocacy	B
Regional/International Participation	B
Workshop/Seminars	C

participation compulsory at the Wada level elections—the Wada being the lowest administrative unit within a VDC.

Former INSEC Chairman Sushil Pyakurel has been appointed as a National Human Rights Commission Member as a result of his nation-wide recognition as INSEC Chairman.

INSEC representatives, particularly those working in the Maoist 'People's War' affected districts have been established as the authentic sources for information on human rights violations. This is exemplified by the fact that the mainstream media, including Gorkhapatra, the only state-owned daily and Kantipur, the most read private daily, are using references from INSEC district representatives. Almost daily, INSEC sources are being quoted for this purpose. INSEC has thus been a reliable institution for human rights monitoring even in the war-zones.

In addition, INSEC representatives at the grassroots have been trusted as a kind of mediator in the context of the 'War'. Recently, in 2 cases Maoist abducted people, including a police inspector, were released through (handed over to) INSEC representatives, and it had very good media coverage.

C. At the Academic Level

Not only that INSEC publications have drawn much public attention, nationally as well as internationally, they are also being referred to for academic studies. For example, Tribhuvan University, Nepal has accepted the Revisit to the Kamaiya System in Nepal (1998) as a reference document for MA Second Year (Sociology) Paper (VII).

Challenges Ahead



Working at the grassroots is not an easy job. It is more difficult in the context like Nepal where traditional values, patrimonial legacies and conservative practices govern every aspect of socio-cultural life. These values are even reflected in the functioning of administrative and law enforcing fronts. Patrimonial values mostly deny the participation of women. It is one of the major challenges ahead.

From February 1996, a new form of crisis has appeared in the Nepalese political scene. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) has been waging the 'People's War' in order to 'replace the existing state



and structure with New Democracy.' Killing, destroying, smashing are the major terminologies being used and implemented ever since. The government too is responding them accordingly identifying them as 'terrorists' rather than political entities. In the crossfire general people have been suffering; lives are under threat; law and order situation has been under farce. The 'People's War' thus has posed a serious challenge for the social workers to undertake their responsibilities.

Illiteracy, poverty, lack of political commitment, increasing corruption, on the part of the rulers, and uneven topography are other hurdles on the way to realize the complete achievement of the objectives.

A Final Note

Despite above, the response INSEC is getting from the public, state and other actors give a promising picture of its future. In this light INSEC is fairly satisfied with what it has done although there is no room for complacency.

Some Events of the Reporting Year

Second National Conference of the Radio Listeners' Clubs

INSEC supported Human Rights Education Radio Listeners' Clubs to hold their Second National Conference on 6-7 September. Radio Listeners' Clubs National Committee Chairman Madan Poudel, presided over a gathering of 264 listeners who represented 64 of 75 districts in Pokhara, the regional headquarters of the Western Developmental Region. The first day, following the Ceremonial Session that was inaugurated by Minister for Information and Communication Jaya Prakash Gupta, a training-interaction was held on human rights, roles of Listeners' Clubs and the power of communication.

The second day opened with a blood-donation. In the afternoon, the activity report of the Clubs was presented, the Club Constitution was discussed and adopted. The Conference adopted a Pokhara Declaration with the Club commitment to working hand-in-hand with INSEC. The Declaration has expressed grave concern over the killing of unarmed civilians in the context of the "People's War." It has asked for an immediate action towards the guarantee of women's equal access to property, and so on.

Minimum Wage Fixation Campaign

As a result of the pressure created by INSEC initiated minimum wage fixation campaign, which started from Naubasta Village Development Committee, Banke on 18 June 1999 and extended up to over 60 VDCs throughout the country, in co-operation with local VDCs, the government of Nepal announced a minimum wage (Rs. 60/-) on 13 January 2000 for agriculture workers. Although the amount is very small, INSEC welcomed it as an outcome of its campaign at the grassroots and has resolved to work further to ensure that the amount is revised to meet the basic necessity of a worker.

Protest against Lahan Incident

On 17 March 2000, the Chamars in Siraha denied to carry out an order prescribed by Padma Narayan Chaudhary, a so-called high-caste local landlord, that they dispose a carcass dead in his house. It was the Chamars' right to revolt against the murderous prescription, and, as in all approved history, this was to hurt the landlord's self-asserted righteousness. He thus made a retreat by socially boycotting them, denying their labour, preventing them from using public wells, shops and medicines. He gave the verdict "the Constitution is for Kathmandu only, here my voices prevail" justifying his acts.

A series of protests were organised thereafter, INSEC participated in them, siding with the Chamars and demanding legal action against the



guilty. A renowned Indian dalit leader, D. Prem Pati, was invited to participate in one of the rallies. It is still on, one way or the other. The Chamars are yet to get justice.

English Publications

- A Decade of Human Rights Movement in Nepal (An Assessment of INSEC Activities)
- Bonded Labour in Nepal Under Kamaiya System
- Election Observation Report 1991
- Election Observation Report 1994
- First Victim Women's Forum (Report)
- Forced to Plough
- Human Rights Yearbook 1992
- Human Rights Yearbook 1993
- Human Rights Yearbook 1994
- Human Rights Yearbook 1995
- Human Rights Yearbook 1996
- Human Rights Yearbook 1997
- Human Rights Yearbook 1999
- Human Rights Yearbook 2000
- INSEC Activities Report 1990-93
- Nepal Awareness Programme in Election
- Nepal Human Rights Conference (Report)
- Plight of the Kamaiyas
- Report of Election Reforms Recommendation Committee 1994
- Revisit to Kamaiyas
- Second Victim Women's Forum (Report)
- The Bhutan Tragedy : When will it End
- Women in Politics