

**ASIA EUROPE PEOPLE'S FORUM
FOR A JUST, PEACEFUL AND
SUSTAINABLE WORLD
AEPF 13**

17 - 24 May 2021

**"ASEC Open Space on Social Inclusion and
Social Protection Case Studies from 5 Countries"**

May 19, 2021

**12.30-2.00pm Central Europe Time;
6.30-8.00pm Kuala Lumpur/Manila Time**

PANELIST



KUMAR LOGANATHAN
Director, SARC
INDIA



DR. ERI TRINURINI ADHI
Board Member
Bina Swadaya
Foundation
INDONESIA



BHOLA BHATTARAI
Advisor
ACOFUN
NEPAL



ROLANDO VICTORIA
President CEO
ASKI Group of
Companies, Inc.
PHILIPPINES



DATUK MOHD YUSOF KASIM
Chairman
COMACT Malaysia
Malaysia



MODERATORS



NATHALIE AFRICA VERCELES, DSD
Director
CWGS, University of the Philippines



ETCHEL TONGSON, DSD
Deputy Director for training Outreach and
Expansion Program Unit
CWGS, University of the Philippines

To register go to:
www.bit.ly/ASECatAEPF-1



Co-funded by
the European Union



Case study of ASSEFA, India on
Social inclusion and Social Protection

Kumar Loganathan, *Director, Sarvodaya Action Research Centre*

The **Indian Caste System** is historically one of the main dimensions where people in India are **socially differentiated** through class, religion, region, gender and language. Although this or other forms of differentiation exist in all human societies, it becomes a problem when one or more of these dimensions overlap each other and become the sole basis of systematic ranking and unequal access to valued resources like **wealth, income, power and prestige**.

The caste system is classified in accordance with **their occupation**, which determines access to wealth, power, and privilege. The **Brahmins**, usually priests and scholars, are at the top. Next are the **Kshatriyas**, or political rulers and soldiers. They are followed by the **Vaishyas**, or merchants, and the fourth are the **Shudras**, who are usually laborers, peasants, artisans, and servants.

At the very bottom are those considered the **untouchable**. These individuals perform **occupations** that are considered unclean and polluting, such as **scavenging and skinning dead animals**. They were destined to only live in the outskirts of the village and were **never an integral part of village community**. Their services, however, are essential to the health of the community and therefore still had to be part of the system in order to serve the upper castes

During the **British colonial**, there was no major attempt to bring in reform against the caste system. Though the British law courts disagree with the discrimination against the lower castes, but their political **policy of divide and rule** contributed towards the **hardening of caste identities**.

There were many movements and governmental actions that took place during pre and post-independence in order to overcome and attempt to eliminate the inequalities and injustices associated with the caste system. During the national movement, **Gandhi** began using the term “**Harijans**” (children of God) to refer to the untouchables in order to encourage a shift towards positive attitude towards the lower castes.

Another prominent movement was the **Dalit movement** under B.R. Ambedkar. He campaigned for greater rights for Dalits in British India, and even after independence by changing the social structure through **legal, political and educational means**.

The constant policies of the Government in terms of **reservations for the lower caste, education for all and legal protection** for the lower caste, has made the caste system less significant in the daily lives of people especially those **living in urban areas**. There are more sharing between members of different castes. There is also a significant change in occupational goals and pursuits among men, most had taken up newer occupations. Although some caste-based prejudice and ranking still exist, wealth and power was now less associated with caste.

ASSEFA has been working in the rural India for the **last five decades** to overcome this challenges arising out of caste system. ASSEFA was established on the eve of **Gandhi centenary year of 1968** with the blessings of **Acharya Vinoba Bhave**, the spiritual heir of **Mahatma Gandhi** and the Father of “Bhoodan Movement” / Land gift movement.

Though, ASSEFA’s initial mission was to develop the Bhoodan¹ waste lands to settle the landless poor, who are by and large of lower caste, but subsequently changed its **mission of uplifting the lives of the weaker sections in the society and integrates them with mainstream society**. The weaker sections are less privileged such as **women, children, tribe, small, marginal and landless farmers**.

ASSEFA has been adopting different strategies, approaches and programmes in accordance with the needs of the target people, which keep on changing in the era of globalisation. This includes

- Bringing people together under **different functional groups** irrespective of caste, religion, etc., and assess the needs and prioritising to execute on consensus basis.
- Their main livelihoods revolve around **primary sector** i.e., agriculture and livestock.

¹Bhoodan/land gift movement was started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the spiritual heir of Mahatma Gandhi to collect lands as gifts from landlords and distribute them to landless peasants. He collected nearly 4.18 million ha of land.

- **Community resources are built up** and managed by the community based “Non-Banking Financial Companies” to support the people for livelihood activities. Presently, it owns and manages 6.0 million Euros.
- **Toilets** in every house, access to **safe drinking water** (*Reverse Osmosis treated*), consumption of their **own production** and **creating wealth** (compost) **from waste** are few examples of initiatives under health and hygiene.
- **Community managed schools** are established to provide holistic education for the rural children where there are no Government schools.
- **Gender empowerment** is ensured with suitable socio-economic activities. Exclusive forums established for gender at various levels to design and execute programmes.
- **People forums to manage community assets** like lands, water bodies (tanks) and worship places.
- **Social protection** for vulnerable like **wage loss compensation** for pregnant ladies, **social pension** for aged women in the unorganised sector, **replacement of death cows** with new animal under cattle protection scheme are few examples of community based initiatives to protect vulnerable against unforeseen risks..
- Solemnised **2,670 couples** of different religion and economic status as man and wife under **mass wedding** organized by the local communities.
- Many **leaders** from the community **elected to state councils** at different levels.

As on date, **one million families** of different socio-economic background from **across 10,000 villages** in Tamil Nadu form **part and parcel of this mission** in establishing the Gandhian new social order of “self-reliant, self-sufficient and self-managed communities based on the principles of freedom, non-economical parity with social justice.

I end my speech by thanking the organizers and ASEC for giving us the opportunity to share this case study of ASSEFA...Thank you..

Jai Hind

Building Resilient **Communities** in Bogor Municipality through Community **Urban** Farming¹

Dr. Eri Trinurini Adhi (Bina Swadaya Foundation)

Rudy Mashudi, S.T., M.P. (Bogor Municipality Government)

Irma Arlini Dewi, S.T.P., M.Sc. (Bogor Municipality Government)

Bogor, Indonesia, is a city south of Jakarta on Java Island set against the volcanic backdrop of Mount Salak. The city's frequent rain is ideal for the thousands of plant species in Kebun Raya Bogor, a venerable botanic garden founded in 1817 by the Dutch colonial government. The closeness of the city to the capital city of Jakarta has set out Bogor as the supporting area of the megapolitan Jakarta

The Covid-19 pandemic has assaulted not only the society's health system, but also the country's economic and social system. With a population of 1 million people, the most important problems that confronted the Bogor municipality during the pandemic were inadequate health service facilities, food security, and loss of jobs. Government statistics show that the percentage of poor people impacted by pandemic increased from 5,77% in 2019 to 6,68% in 2020. Although 58% of the population have not lost their jobs, **but** their income is smaller. More people from the informal sector such as laborers, drivers, helpers, and freelancers are adversely impacted by the pandemic.

The pandemic has **prompted** the government to focus on the development of local communities. To respond to the pandemic, the Bogor **municipal** government with support from the Bogor University, farmers group and development NGOs **like Bina Swadaya** created a program of Bogor Urban Farming. This program is aimed to strengthen the food security, effective utility of the household garden, park and unused land, and build an agricultural ecosystem. As an outcome, the program is expected to improve the quality of life of the people, reduce the number **of** jobless and create job opportunities in the agri-business. This program has successfully transformed the unused land owned by private and government units into productive land. It covers not only horticulture, but also the fishery and animal husbandry.

The urban gardening is carried out by community farmers groups, most of which are female farmers groups. There are now about 222 farmer groups, which consist of 82 adults farmers groups, 131 female groups and 9 youth groups. The existence of the farmer groups is spreading in all *Kelurahan* (urban administration unit) in the city. **Most** of them do not look like **the traditional** farmers commonly found in the rural areas, but they **engage** in gardening and agriculture both as a hobby and **a** business enterprise. In this program, the government agriculture extension agency provides seeds, engages in capacity building and assists the women in doing organic farming. Targeting the female groups seems effective in building **people's** awareness on **healthy lifestyle** and ecological farming. The harvest of vegetables is sold to the members of the group as well as through the farmers kiosk.

¹This paper is presented in the virtual forum of Asia Europe People's Forum For a Just, Peaceful and Sustainable World. AEPD 13 on 19 May 2012.

The **urban** farming program has successfully strengthened the social capital of the local community. Social capital is one of the important elements in building a resilient community. The farmer groups can immediately respond with the solidarity actions to support the people who are independently isolated. For example, they can quickly identify people affected by the corona virus. On job creation, urban farming activities have created job opportunities in agriculture business such as compost making, organic fertilizer production and post harvest activities such as home industries.

A big challenge to this program is how to measure its impact **on community development**. The government tends to measure productivity rather than the impact. The productivity of the urban farmers group is likely lower than that of the traditional farmers in the rural area, but it has a higher impact on awareness about organic farming and healthy lifestyle. The Female Farmers Group needs to be improved to become Self-Help Groups or self-sustaining economic groups. The role of NGOs like Bina Swadaya is important to build the capacity of the female farmers group in group management and to assist them to be self reliant. Over the last **50** years or so, Bina Swadaya has helped establish and strengthen women self-help groups all over Indonesia. **As demonstrated by Bina Swadaya's initiative of developing village economies**, the impact of urban farming on job creation can be promoted more widely by linking the community garden activity with tourism and other economic activities. **In conclusion, the partnership among the local government, self-help-groups of the people, and development NGOs is crucial in advancing the revitalization of local economies as well as in promoting social solidarity economy as an alternative development model.**



KWT Flamboyan in Bogor. Source:<http://bogorberkebun.kotabogor.go.id>



Trubus Agriculture Magazine by Bina Swadaya Foundation has 50 years promoting agriculture development in Indonesia.

Community-based forestry in Nepal

Bhola Bhattarai

Problems/issues of exclusion

- In the context of Nepali society, I am referring to institutions with unwritten yet powerful rules like patriarchy, patronage, caste discrimination, and so on contributing to social exclusion.
- Social Exclusion is described as the **experience of groups that are systematically and historically disadvantaged** because they are discriminated against based on their caste, gender, ethnicity, disability or religion, or an overlapping combination of these.
- Social exclusion in social norms, forms, and practices of the society.

Role of state:

1. The constitution of Nepal (2015) has provisioned 31 fundamental rights; provisions numbers of constitutional commissions provisioned to address the issues of exclusion. The Dalits, HR, Inclusive, Tharu, IPs, women, etc. are the commissions dedicated to advancing the role of marginalized peoples.
2. Nepal, as a new federal country, the three-tier government has constitutional rights & responsibilities to address the issues.
3. The local government operational act 2017, also provided sufficient rights and responsibilities to 753 local governments to address the issues of excluded communities.
4. **In the forestry sector, Forest policy and laws open space for inclusion; now more than 25000 FUGs are actively engaged in managing 40% of national forest through inclusive governance model.**

Our role (NAFAN & network):

- **[A shared problem]** The first element in organizational leadership with a shared understanding of a problem that is defined by those affected, a shared vision of change that reflects local aspirations, and the resilience to push through the obstacles in CBFM.
 - **[Organizational support]** The second ingredient is support for that organization so that it can have influence. In this case, 25000 FUGs wanted to protect the forest & biodiversity, to the existence of Indigenous Peoples & Local Communities through forest conservation.
 - So, CSOs like NAFAN helped FUGs to be stronger to advance this agenda.
 - **[Skilled civic engagement]** The third ingredient is skilled engagement with public decision-makers that can lead to a solution not just for specific individuals, but for anyone in the future. In other words, a solution at the institutional level.
1. Organizing & mobilizing excluded groups and communities
 2. Providing legal & technical support to form FUGs and manage forestry & biodiversity and promoting local enterprises in the forestry sector
 3. Advocating for inclusive & participatory policymaking process

4. strengthen support for women and marginalized groups' participation in law and policy processes, advocacy, and citizen-led accountability efforts. The CSOs/NAFAN will continue to prioritize marginalized peoples' participation and perspectives, elevate their voices and concerns in all project interventions, and empower them by improving their access to information/knowledge.

Malaysia case Study

By Datuk Prof Mohd Yusof Kasim

1. Problem confronting country/ society which contributes to social exclusion?

- regional and social inequalities (uneven development)
- rising cost of living/ inflation, and unemployment especially during pandemic COVID-19.

2. The role of the State in addressing the problems.

- The state plays a major role to promote social inclusion with many policies/ programs. Example: Budget 2021, the largest budget in Malaysian history address the needs of the most vulnerable group particularly B40 group and economic recovery via various stimulus measures. Amongst programs include financial assistance to the poor people, wage subsidy, and economic incentives for the industry to create new job opportunities, skills and re- skilling programs.

Limitation: Despite Government initiatives, many workers loss their job especially those in the informal sector and or receive less income, as well as unemployment among graduate thus worsening social exclusion issue.

3. The role of Cooperative sector in promoting social inclusion and social protection.

- Initially with the assistance of the state, this sector is implementing the 6MY programs/ initiatives, as follows:

3.1: MY Job- create job opportunities.

3.2: MY Grocer- selling goods at 20% cheaper than public market in low cost housing area.

3.3: MY School Bus- providing free bus service for low - cost housing area.

3.4: MY Medic- Mobile Clinic Serving urban dwellers at low- cost housing area.

3.5: MY Food- Providing food baskets for urban poor , benefiting 32 thousand households.

3.6: MY Rice- Distribution of 6000 bags of free rice per week to the B40 group (low income group)

Limitation: the program cover only Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan, i. e. Not yet nation-wide.

Thank you.

Asia Europe People's Forum
"Asia Europe People's Forum for a Just, Peaceful and Sustainable World"
May 19, 2021

MR. ROLANDO B. VICTORIA
President and CEO
ASKI Group of Companies, Inc

At the outset, please allow me to thank the organizers of this forum for inviting ASKI in this very timely and significant activity. We hope that you are also keeping safe and healthy during this time.

1. What is the most important problem confronting your country/society at present which contributes to social exclusion?

Poverty and lack of awareness on having and valuing formal financial accounts mainly contribute to the social exclusion in the Philippines. In 2017-2018, the Central Bank of the Philippines conducted a study "The State of Financial Inclusion/Exclusion in the Philippines", it revealed that:

- *22% of Filipinos are living below the poverty line and only 23% of Filipino adults had a formal financial account either through banks, cooperatives, microfinance and e-money accounts.*
- *Among the top reasons for not having a financial account is "not enough money" with 60%. People usually use the account for emergency (42%), education (31%) and business (29%). Only 18% of Filipino adults had insurance and in terms of investment, only 23% of Filipino adults had some form of investment.*

With the COVID-19 outbreak, 2020 became a year like no other. It will be remembered in the history after taking millions of lives and shutting down the world's economy and endangering social well-being of all people around the globe.

*However, we have to adapt to the call of the changing times and address the challenges confronting us. Digital payments have become a fast-gaining currency in the Philippines as consumers are shifting from cash to digital to avoid physical contact on worries over catching coronavirus. Two largest digital payment companies, **GCASH and PayMaya Philippines said they have reached 33 million and 28 million users**, respectively, across its platforms by the end of 2020.*

Although, there is a demand side for digital payment transaction, it has to be accompanied by infrastructure network that ensures security, reliability and efficiency. These facilities will

ensure the interconnection and adoption of different platforms as the payment of choice of the consumer. In one of the reports of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, it said that the 4G speed in the Philippines ranked 4th slowest of 88 countries in OpenSignal's 2018 State of LTE and recorded the poorest overall mobile video experience of 69 countries in OpenSignal's 2018 State of Mobile Video." *Having a good infrastructure network will enable consumers to shift from the traditional to digital payments.*

In terms of unemployment due to community quarantines or lockdowns imposed in March 2020, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority showed that unemployment rate in April 2020 reached to 17.7% accounting to 7.3 million unemployed Filipinos.

A year after, in March 2021 the unemployment rate fell to 7.1 percent. This is the lowest reported rate covering the period of the COVID-19 pandemic since April 2020. The number of unemployed Filipinos, 15 years and over in March 2021 was estimated at 3.44 million.

Table A-1. Results from the March 2021 Labor Force Survey (LFS)

Philippines	Mar 2021 ^P	Feb 2021 ^P	Jan 2021 ^P	Oct 2020 ^P	Jul 2020 ^F	Apr 2020 ^F
Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	65.0	63.5	60.5	58.7	61.9	55.7
Employment Rate (%)	92.9	91.2	91.3	91.3	90.0	82.4
Underemployment Rate (%)	16.2	18.2	16.0	14.4	17.3	18.9
Unemployment Rate (%)	7.1	8.8	8.7	8.7	10.0	17.6

Notes:

^P Estimates are preliminary and may change

^F Final Estimates

Source: Philippine Statistics Authority, Labor Force Survey

2. What is the State doing (what social inclusion/social protection policies/programs -good or bad - do the government promote) to address the problem? Cite a few major examples, no need to be exhaustive in highlighting what the government does.

The government provided social amelioration program, loan moratoriums, small business wage subsidy and establishment of health care facilities with personal protective equipment and negotiations on the procurement of vaccines, among others. However, uncertainty still looms as we continue the battle against the virus developing new variants despite health protocols and quarantine measures ever since and with the roll-out of the vaccine.

As of May 17, reports from the government said *nearly 3 million* Filipinos received the vaccines. *This includes the 2.2 million who received first dose and more than 700,000 for the second dose.* The government aims to vaccinate 70 million Filipinos to achieve herd immunity.

Meanwhile, social protection is a major part of the government's development agenda. One of key components of the social protection program is the promotion of microinsurance. We are lucky to have one of the best enabling policy environments in the world for microinsurance that made the outreach to 48 million individuals in 2020 or about 44% of our total population. It has also enabled the mutual microinsurance since 2006 to provide microinsurance to their members roughly contributing 60% of the 48 million insured.

2. *What is your organization/sector doing to address the problem and which promotes social inclusion/social protection. Cite only one (1) specific social inclusion/social protection program to focus on.*

ASKI has continuously promotes social protection through microinsurance. We actively participate in the Microinsurance Mutual Benefit Association of the Philippines. The network has 18 mutual benefit associations and has a combined membership of 7.22 million, insuring nearly 27 million lives.

Some of the initiatives made by the association during the pandemic includes the extension of grace period for at least two months during hard lockdowns, while continuing to pay claims benefits, easing claims requirements and payments, doing e-kumustahan or the emphatic listening and show of concern to members, among others.

*At the end of 2020, ASKI Mutual Benefit Association have **188,101** insured members and **752,404** family members. We have an increase of 4.63% compared in 2019 despite the community lockdowns and economic effects of the pandemic especially to poor families. Also, we have developed an online application to respond to the needs of the clients. New members and renewal can be processed in the online application.*

From 2006 to 2020, there were 3,0382 families who benefited from the ASKI MBA. The total amount of claims we paid totaled to Php188.9 million (USD 3,779,440).

In terms of Board Governance, 5 out of the 9 board of trustees are elected among the general membership. Client-members were given the opportunity to sit in the Board as part of their empowerment. They were trained to participate in the policy and decision-making of their own MBA.

The ASKI Foundation Inc. on the hand is taking the lead in relief operations to victims of natural disasters like typhoons. Food packs like canned goods, rice, noodles and other basic commodities were given to clients and non-clients. This is through the generous support also of the staff and partners of ASKI.

In the midst of COVID-19 global pandemic, the ASKI Foundation focused on addressing the different struggles and challenges brought about by the public health emergency and community quarantines in the country.

The Foundation distributed groceries, food packs, cash assistance and personal protective equipment (PPE) such as facemasks and face shield to different families and frontliners.

To further help poor families cope up after losing their livelihood due to economic freeze, the Foundation, through the support from its local and international partners, provided various vegetable seeds for household gardening of the recipients and help them in marketing their produce. The ube or purple yam produced by the indigenous peoples that we are supporting were delivered to markets in Metro Manila.

We believe that public, private and people partnerships are crucial especially during these unprecedented times. Our local and international partners both from the government and the private sectors like Landbank of the Philippines, Small Business Corporation, Agricultural Credit Policy Council and Coca-Cola Philippines, to name a few provided us with the necessary support to help our women microentrepreneurs get back on their feet after the impact brought by COVID 19.

At the end of the day, even in the midst of loss, uncertainty and suffering, I am confident that we will HEAL and RECOVER as one if we will WORK as ONE to create a just and sustainable communities.

Thank you very much.



asec

ASIAN SOLIDARITY ECONOMY COUNCIL



www.asec-sse.com



[asec-sseasia](https://www.facebook.com/asec-sseasia)



[ASEC-SSE](https://www.youtube.com/ASEC-SSE)