

THE ASIA THINK TANK
DIALOGUE REPORT
Rebuilding Confidence
Restoring Livelihoods

**This is a report of the proceedings of
The Asia Think Tank Dialogue held
at Excelsior Hotel, Hong Kong, from
20th-21st February 2009.**

**The Asia Think Tank Dialogue was
organised jointly by the Building
a Better Future Foundation and
the Asian Strategy & Leadership
Institute (ASLI) to draw attention to
the plight of the rural poor whose
livelihood has been affected by the
global economic crisis.**

ASIA THINK TANK DIALOGUE REPORT: REBUILDING CONFIDENCE, RESTORING LIVELIHOOD

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Chairman of Building a Better Future
Foundation / Former Prime Minister of
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We live in a world of contradictions, where some enjoy unprecedented luxury, whilst others experience remarkable deprivation and want for basic needs. Disparities exist within Asia as well across the globe. Sustainable development that emphasises not only the economics, but also the environment, political freedom as well as good governance is key to overcoming these disparities. To achieve this goal, comprehensive action plans and measures need to be carefully formulated to suit each society, so that its implementation and progress can be monitored. In this regard, this roundtable discussion attempts to play a part in discussing on social development strategies and finding a workable model to uplift the poor, especially the rural poor.

Developing Countries require appropriate poverty eradication programmes in and for rural areas, open market regulation, fair trade policies, comprehensive affordable healthcare, equal access to technology and quality education to achieve economic growth and prosperity.

Asia has thus far adopted a development model that relies heavily on exports. Now that the voracious appetite for consumer goods in the West, predatory lending by financial institutions and the subsequent burgeoning debt rate among others has taken a drastic hit, the export-led economies in Asia as well as the rest of the world are now feeling the impact. Nonetheless, throughout the boom and bust periods, the rural poor in large parts of Asia remained untouched and continue their existence mired in seemingly endless hardships. We must work to produce surplus wealth, from goods and services that can be shared equitably without leaving behind the weak and the disabled. My administration in Thailand attempted and succeeded in achieving this goal. But we also recognize that in a dynamic world what we have accomplished will need constant fine-tuning and adjustment. We also recognize that working and listening to others can be a reservoir of ideas that work. We have benefited from experiments all over the world and thus welcome new project initiatives.

Nations in peace and at peace will prosper. Reducing the current inequality and inequity in development is a strong moral duty of Governments for a fair and just society.

The purpose of this dialogue is to evaluate such ideas. The mission of Building a Better Future Foundation is to turn such ideas into practical, applicable projects, and implement them – often in partnership with concerned governments, international agencies and other organisations. Analysis of development calls for an integrated understanding of the respective roles of these various institutions as social connections to mobilise structured change.

The climate and opportunity for change and hope has never been better in this unprecedented global economic crisis. Countries should take charge of their own economic policies and implement the right solutions. We all have a contribution to make in this tireless advocacy, so let us all commit to playing our part and be champions of change and hope for a better world.

Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra

Chairman of Building a Better Future Foundation

Former Prime Minister of Thailand

In February 2009, the Building a Better Future Foundation and The Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) organized The Asia Think Tank Dialogue in Hong Kong with the theme “Rebuilding Confidence, Restoring Livelihoods”. The primary objective of this Regional Workshop – attended by think tanks and strategic thought leaders from Hong Kong, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Bangladesh and Nepal – was to focus on the impact of the global economic crisis on rural communities. The emphasis on rural poor was believed necessary because measures to address the global economic crisis thus far had been largely directed towards rescuing banks and financial institutions, as well as assisting the manufacturing, construction and infrastructure sectors, with insufficient attention given to rural development. During the two-day meeting, there was agreement among the participants that the rural sector will be hardest hit by the current economic crisis and therefore needed immediate attention.

The Dialogue acknowledged the experiences and contributions of Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, former Prime Minister of Thailand, who shared village development strategies and programmes implemented while he was in office, to assist the rural poor in Thailand, resulting in five million people taken out of poverty in under five years. His reforms included the provision of universal healthcare, the creation of a village fund and the One Tambon, One Product initiative. He further explained the rationale for his strategy of debt suspensions for farmers and the intra-regional measures he undertook to raise rubber prices to more equitable levels. He also stressed the importance of land reforms.

The Dialogue noted the gravity of the global economic crisis and the impact it has had on jobs, business and investor confidence and how it will ultimately affect the rural poor. The experiences of Bangladesh, Malaysia, China, Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia in rural poverty reduction were discussed and noted. There was a consensus that more people will be made poorer during the current slowdown. It was also the collective



view that governments needed to stimulate economic growth as well as to create social safety nets to assist the poor. Further, it was proposed that economic stimulus plans should focus on rural infrastructure and micro-projects to encourage job creation in rural areas.

Asia's high savings rate received attention and the meeting recognized that Asia held the world's largest foreign reserves but lacked the intellectual resources to effectively manage these financial resources well. It was also pointed out that Asia had to move beyond the export-led growth model to boost its economy in these times. The promotion of domestic consumption was vital as a second engine of growth. Growth had to be continually promoted to ensure the multiplier effects trickled down.

It was agreed that bold new ideas and fresh ways of thinking were required in rural development strategies and that the Think Tanks present at the Dialogue could



constitute a permanent regional network for sharing best practices and facilitating the further exchange of ideas and research. Training and capacity building were cited as key success factors in rural development.

The participants argued that from a macro-perspective, a social safety net for the poor was urgently needed, along with relevant enabling policies. It was agreed that priority should be accorded to the following measures:

- Developing and enhancing the social security net for the rural poor
- Providing sufficient access to rural healthcare
- Improving the quality of rural education, including skills training and upgrading
- Land reforms especially for forest-based and interior communities
- Modernization of agriculture to improve rural incomes
- A community-based monitoring system to ensure

better accountability and transparency

- The expansion of micro-finance to include the provision of micro-insurance in addition to micro-credit
- Provision of clean water and sanitation to rural areas
- The development of social enterprises and the promotion of social entrepreneurship
- Forging regional partnerships and the sharing of best practices
- Addressing the digital divide and equipping rural areas with computers and Internet access; and
- Addressing food security.

Besides putting in place the appropriate policies and programmes, rural communities could also be assisted by self-help projects. The Dialogue heard specific examples of such rural development projects which could be replicated in other countries to assist the rural poor.

The Dialogue concluded that commitment and political will were essential ingredients to implement the right policy frameworks and programmes to address rural poverty. The need for regional partnerships was emphasized. Specific projects relating to social enterprise, healthcare, climate change, the digital divide, education and literacy as well as migrant workers were put forward for deliberation. The Building a Better Foundation took responsibility for evaluating these suggestions.

The Asia Think Tank Dialogue was a timely initiative to stimulate regional discussion and address concerns collectively in respect of rural development. Besides adding to the body of knowledge on rural poverty, the Dialogue helped provide food for thought for policy reform and programme development to bring about change among the teeming millions of Asians who live in rural communities, with implications for the rest of the world.

The convenors turned the spotlight on rural poverty against the backdrop of the unfolding global crisis. Calling for a healthy exchange of free-flowing ideas to urgently address rural poverty as well as retrenchment, job cuts and unemployment, they noted that the response of governments thus far was targeted to meeting the needs of the financial and banking institutions alone.

DR. THAKSIN SHINAWATRA

Former Prime Minister, Thailand

Having initiated numerous projects to benefit rural communities in Thailand as Prime Minister, Dr. Thaksin shared his experiences and insights from working with the rural poor and his vision for overcoming rural poverty through practical, manageable projects. Arguing that helping the poor was neither an act of philanthropy nor charity, but rather a pure act of justice, he hoped for a dialogue that would question why poverty remained a recurring theme, and that would lead to viable ways of helping the poor based on feedback and interactions. He expressed concern that governments were bailing out banks during the financial crisis rather than recognizing that it was those in the lower-income bracket that would be most affected by the current developments. Citing his own experiences as a boy, growing up in a village, he said this was akin to saving one's money, only to find that these savings were borrowed and used for urban development. Similarly, he said, savings in Asia had been put into banks in the US and the EU and were borrowed to fund growth, but as a result of the financial crises, it was Asia that suffered.

'Helping the poor is neither philanthropy nor charity, but rather a pure act of justice'

Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra

Dr. Thaksin recognized the need of the capitalist economy to have access to capital to create wealth. However, such access to capital for wealth-creation was noticeably absent in the rural areas, thereby showing up glaring inconsistencies between the urban

and rural sectors. He also highlighted the over-reliance on export-led growth by most Asian countries, whereby emphasis was directed to FDI flows, tourism and exports. This indicated that little effort was made to enhance the domestic economy of these countries, compared to Australia whose exports were lower than Thailand in volume, but whose GDP was three times that of Thailand. He argued that the emphasis on domestic-led growth could not be relegated to a back seat in economic recovery. China was a case in point, whereby since the global financial crisis broke out, there was a renewed emphasis on the domestic economy to ensure that China would still maintain its growth target of at least 8.5 per cent for 2009.

One of the ways to stimulate the domestic economy was to target the rural economy. This was one of the reasons why the Thai Government led by him took measures to enhance rural development, with the objective of introducing higher wages into the rural sector, so that the rural poor would spend more and thereby increase consumption. Basing his philosophy on his past experiences as a businessman, he maximised incomes and sought new opportunities for income generation among the rural poor. For instance, he introduced a village fund, a micro-credit scheme, whereby one million baht was promised for each village. The money, which was disbursed directly to the villages, was advanced by the government and was to be re-paid. There were rules governing disbursement that each village had to adhere to, such as the need for 75 per cent of the village community being present at a meeting where committee members consisting of 15 villagers (at least half of whom had to be women) were to decide on project proposals, the funding required and interest rates. This proved to be very effective and graduate students were recruited to



monitor progress, provide accounting and bank liaison assistance, and produce reports. Credit hours were given upon completion of these tasks. The reports were submitted to the central government which tracked the success of these village activities.

Dr. Thaksin also spoke of the many reforms in Thailand to accelerate poverty eradication such as the universal healthcare programme¹ and the One Tambon One Product (OTOP)². Debt suspensions for farmers were also implemented, where provision was made for a leeway of three years without interest, for borrowings below 200,000 baht or the equivalent of USD6,000. The Government took responsibility for paying the interests to the banks on behalf of the poor farmers. The relieving of the debt burdens for farmers enhanced their desire to use their money productively to invest and improve farming techniques and output, instead of worrying about their loans. This encouraged production in terms not only of quality, but also quantity, and led to price improvements.

On a separate note, he also addressed the problem of gambling which was rampant in Asian society, specifically underground lottery controlled by mafia groups. Gambling was legalised to stop the irregularities, and this move enabled profits to be made legally, some USD\$300 million or 10 billion baht per year. As the profits were generated from betting activities among the rural poor it was deemed necessary to plough them back to the poor in the form of scholarships. As a result, young

Thais from the rural areas were sent abroad to study and to return with skills that were put to good use in their communities.

A total of 12 million people lived below the poverty line before Dr. Thaksin became Prime Minister of Thailand and when his tenure ended, the number decreased to seven million. In six years, five million people were taken out of poverty. Dr. Thaksin believed the numbers would have been higher had he remained in office for his full term. Meanwhile, he also described his efforts to bring up the prices of commodities, mainly rubber at the time, and towards this end he negotiated with his neighbours Indonesia and Malaysia successfully to help rubber tappers in the region. With oil price increases, rubber prices too rose and rural incomes accordingly. He stressed that fair prices were negotiated, and were not inflated to make extravagant profits.

Noting the importance of helping rural folk from both the macro and micro perspectives, he also proposed that a variety of projects was needed, not just reliance on one successful project. The stability of Government was crucial to ensure success, but there was also the need to address the urban bias in government policies. He pointed to similarities faced by China at this time of economic crisis. Problems arose when industrial workers and retrenched labourers were returned to the farms where they would struggle to survive as they did not have the skills to farm.

1. The healthcare programme enabled all citizens to receive the same treatment regardless of their socio-economic status, and payment was standardized at 30 baht irrespective of the procedures required.

2. One Tambon is equivalent to 10 villages. A single village usually comprised approximately 500 people. This idea came from Japan but was customized for application in Thailand. Exhibition centres were provided to display goods and products made to increase competitiveness among Tambons. Total production under the scheme was approximately 250 million baht and increased to 40 billion baht in three years as it was mobilised nationwide, with cooperation from the provincial governments.

Land reforms too remained one of the many important policy changes needed, especially to prevent forest destruction in light of climate change and the demands for sustainable development. Without legal rights to land for farmers, forests would be destroyed as they searched for new agricultural land to farm in order to survive. If land was given, it would be used for the sustainable future, and farmers would not need to continually migrate in search of land on which to grow their crops.

Dr. Thaksin invited delegates to approach him for further information on his policies and programmes. He continued to provide assistance to some countries like Tanzania and Nicaragua, to help analyse their requirements in their bid to eradicate poverty. Suggesting that panellists supported foundations to provide aid to specific countries or even their own, he reiterated his desire to continue to share his experiences and find ways to replicate the Thai success story.

Concluding his keynote address, he questioned the quantum of funds used to bail out failed banks. It was his view that the money used to save these banks could never be enough and he argued that perhaps some of them ought not to have been saved at all. Instead, he said, portions of that money could have been channelled to help the poor, which would have been far more beneficial in the long term as jobs would have been created and goods produced to increase consumption and stimulate the economy.

Finally, Dr. Thaksin also pressed for a collaborative effort in Asia, to leverage synergies and help the continent prosper. He bemoaned the fact that Asia remained the continent with the highest savings, and yet still had the highest numbers of rural poor. This called for greater introspection, to identify just what was needed in terms of human resource management, policy implications and the choices made.

The Global Economic Crisis – Impact on Rural Development & Poverty

The global economic crisis has had an impact on jobs, business and investor confidence and will ultimately affect the livelihood of rural communities. Rural poverty may increase as a result, as prices of agricultural commodities fall. This Session evaluated the impact of the crisis on Asia in general and on specific countries in particular. It posed the questions: How severe will the impact be on rural communities? What are the developmental and other challenges to address?

PROF. EMERITUS DR. MOHAMED ARIFF

Executive Director, Malaysian Institute of Economic Research, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Prof. Ariff echoed the sentiments shared by Dr. Thaksin in respect of poverty and the plight of the rural poor, noting that there was really no justification for why anyone should still remain poor, especially with the world having enough resources to meet the needs of everyone on the earth. He suggested that a key factor was the greed of some, which led to the suffering of others. He stressed, however, that the aim of poverty eradication was not to rob the prosperous to enrich the poor. Rather, it was imperative to empower and equip the poor, in order to help them to help themselves and to stay out of poverty.

Malaysia had been fairly successful in eradicating poverty. In 15 years from 1970-1985, the number of poor households was halved. Poverty in Malaysia dropped from 8.5 per cent to just 5.7 per cent of the population in 2004. Hardcore poverty, on the other hand, dropped to 1.2 per cent. This was due mainly to the rapid growth that Malaysia had experienced over those years. However, the trickle-down effect was negligible and the Government had undertaken affirmative action to address the gaps. The rise of commodity prices for rubber and palm oil in Malaysia also contributed to success, along with the growth in the manufacturing sector which helped created jobs for the urban poor. Malaysia's strong urban

development and industrialisation led to greater rural-urban migration and this contributed further to its successes in poverty eradication.

'Stimulus packages must be used to assist the needy, to help the poor generate demand'
Prof. Emeritus Dr. Mohamed Ariff



L-R: Prof. Emeritus Dr. Mohd Ariff; Dr. Raymond Atje; Dr. Josef Yap; Dr. Chap Sotharith.

Prof Arif noted that there were increased incidences of poverty during the 1997/98 regional financial crisis where the economy contracted by -7.5 per cent GDP growth in 1998. This was despite the fact that the crisis then did not have too adverse an effect on the rural sector as rubber and palm oil were fetching high prices, coupled with increased demand for both commodities. Despite these mitigating factors, the Asian Financial Crisis did affect both rural and urban Malaysia and 85,000 jobs were lost. However, compared to the current crisis, where external demand has visibly slowed, all sectors were likely to be affected. Unemployment was expected to increase with 200,000 jobs lost, and the economy was likely to nose-dive, with 0 per cent growth in 2009.

Prof. Arif predicted that the Malaysian economy may take longer to recover this time. Although there remained large foreign exchange reserves, and the Ringgit was stable with Malaysian banks reporting low NPL levels, recovery will be slow and the poor would emerge as the most vulnerable of sectors. In the absence of a social safety net, the poor would be in a far worse condition than the rest of Malaysian society. Stimulus packages, he argued, should earmark a significant proportion to assist the poor and needy – which should be the case not just for Malaysia but elsewhere. Such stimulus packages must be used to help the poor generate demand. If the problem of poverty was well-addressed, poor people would be protected and at the same time, the domestic economy would expand, if not rebound.

DR. RAYMOND ATJE

Head of Economics, Centre for Strategic & International Studies, Jakarta, Indonesia.

Though affected by the global economic crisis, Indonesia was not exposed to the subprime mortgages in the United States, therefore Dr. Atje ventured to suggest that the Indonesian economy would not be as severely impacted as it had been during the 1997/98 financial crisis. However, with economic growth slowing in the West and neighbouring countries, export growth projections were similarly declining for Indonesia.

Turning to the rural poor, Dr. Atje said Indonesia had made remarkable progress in poverty eradication, from approximately 40 per cent in 1978 to 11 per cent in 1996. During the Asian financial crisis, the percentages went up but stabilised soon after. Having said that, he drew the audience's attention to the fact that in 2007, around 10.7 per cent of the total population lived below the poverty line, with a total of 23.4 million Indonesians making do on less than 1 US dollar per day. If the data

was based on the number of people living on less than 2 US dollars per day, the percentage would increase to more than 59 per cent, or the equivalent of 134 million people. This number, he pointed out, was actually half of the total population; hence their continued vulnerability towards economic shocks.

The poorest of Indonesians lived mainly in the rural areas, with one in two rural households being classified as poor. The rural poor were likely to be in low-paying jobs in the agriculture or related sectors. He projected that by 2025, the population of the urban poor would exceed that of the rural poor as most would be heading to the cities in search for higher-paying jobs. In relation to distribution, high poverty rates were evident in certain geographical areas, such as the eastern provinces and remote areas such as in Java and Madura, which also had high concentrations of poor people.

Dr. Atje argued that the reason why the eastern part of Indonesia was particularly affected was mainly due to the lack of basic infrastructure and its subsequent isolation. It lacked access to markets and resources.

The Global Economic Crisis – Impact on Rural Development & Poverty

DR. OMKAR L. SHRESTHA

Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies & former Deputy Country Director in Vietnam for the Asian Development Bank, Singapore.

Dr. Shrestha concurred with the previous speakers that the poor were the hardest hit and the least- equipped to cope with the current global economic downturn. Although Asian countries generally managed their own economies well, some countries had for the past

This was especially true for residents in Java. Micro-credit was in abundance, with commercial banks providing these services, but the concentration was mainly in the urban areas and the poor in the rural areas had minimum access to these facilities. The lack of education to get into high-paying jobs in the formal sector was also one of the reasons for the disparities. The Government, he said, would require two parallel policies to combat poverty:

- Rapid economic growth to put them out of poverty
- The need to implement a social safety net to cater to the needs of the poor.
- He agreed that one of the recurring problems had to do with land ownership. He hoped suitable land reform measures would be implemented, while reiterating also the need for various fiscal stimulus plans to focus on rural infrastructure as this will ensure regional growth, job creation and economic recovery.

several years, recorded lower growth and showed an increase in unemployment. He commented that with a one per cent decline in the growth of a developing nation, up to 20 million jobs could be lost. As a whole, he perceived growth in the developing world to slow down to approximately 3 per cent this year, and this would definitely have an impact on minority communities, migrant workers, and women as evidenced in the flow of remittances. He cited The World Food Programme which had estimated 850 million chronically hungry in 2008, pre-crisis, with 40 per cent of children in India experiencing malnourishment.

He described the current crisis as having two parts. The first half of 2008 was focused on the food and fuel crisis along with the sub-prime mortgage issues, although the latter was localized to the United States alone, whereas the food and fuel crisis was global in nature. The second half of 2008 was better known as the era of financial meltdown, with banks declaring bankruptcy and protectionist measures aplenty. In 2009, he noted that the world was witnessing “the perfect economic downturn”, although Asia was better equipped to deal with it, given its past experiences of 1997/98. In comparing and contrasting the two economic crises, he believed the impact to the rural poor would be much more disastrous this time round. Therefore, he argued for the channelling of measures to the poor in general and other sectors, not just the financial sector. The poor, he said, could be considered the real sector.

Dr. Shrestha noted that present reserves in Asia remained huge. Up to 50 per cent of global reserves were in the region. He believed this was the time to address the deployment of such reserves for economic development and to take a fresh look at fundamental policies. For instance, he noted that China was making an effort to address the environmental costs of its

growing economy by creating new kinds of jobs and new cities. For the region as a whole, Dr. Shrestha argued that steps needed to be taken to go beyond export-led growth and the typical export-driven model that had served the region's economies well in the past. The bulk of exports – up to 60 per cent in some cases, he said – went to the G3: the US, EU, Japan. This current crisis highlighted the need to spread export growth beyond G3, and this could be done by creating strong domestic and regional demand to complement, and not to replace, the G3. The extent of dependence on any one or two markets could be gradually eased off.

‘Though rich in reserves, Asia suffers from a deficit in infrastructure. Asia’s rich should aid their poorer counterparts in infrastructure development’

Dr. Omkar L. Shrestha

Dr. Shrestha made three points regarding the response of Asia to the current crisis. He noted the Chiang Mai initiative of several years ago, when the crisis was

as widely felt. Instead of going to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), other bilateral institutions were approached. He argued that if there was a need for a safety net at an individual country or company level, the financial sector as a whole would also require a form of safety net. His other point was that though rich, Asia still suffered from a deficit in infrastructure. The investment demand for infrastructure was in the region of at least USD270 billion per year. Asia's richer associates, he said, could do well to aid their poorer counterparts in regards to infrastructure development. Thirdly, while Asia's massive financial reserves remained strong, its intellectual resources did not complement that. He called for continuing dialogue among thought-leaders in the region and cited such platforms as the Asian Financial Stability Dialogue proposed by the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Real Sector Stability Dialogue. This was to ensure that should there be yet another economic storm ahead, Asia would be a lot more prepared for it. However he pointed out that it would not be a collaboration of Asia versus non-Asia, but rather a partnership to ensure the best collective efforts in strengthening the real economy and the global financial system.

The Global Economic Crisis – Impact on Rural Development & Poverty

MR. PARTHA RUDRA

*Programmes Director, National Foundation for India
India.*

Mr. Rudra provided a different perspective based on the experiences of the National Foundation for India. The NFI was formed in 1992, by a small group of development thinkers, policy-makers and eminent academics of the country, at the outset of the economic liberalisation process. The foundation was set up to address issues of economic and social inequality which were perceived to be so deep in the country that the macro-growth model, with its trickle-down philosophy, was not adequate to address micro and local needs. Despite having limited resources, the NFI decided to focus on two broad areas:

- Supporting development action to improve pay and the quality of social development by involving civil society organisations; and
- Building capacity in addressing local issues and improving access of the poor to healthcare and livelihood opportunities.

It was felt that micro-models of development could be of greater benefit, but the NFI needed to bring this to bear on larger policy discourse. This was when the media were brought in to highlight these experiences in order to achieve awareness at the national-level dialogue in the development discourse arena.

According to Mr. Rudra, the rural crisis in India was largely focused at the eastern and north eastern ends of India, as distinguished by their remoteness, gender and social inequalities and the collapse of the rural economy. The rural crisis in India predated the current global economic crisis. Discussions on mitigating its impact were often centred on how to bring resilience

to the sector. There was also the need to recognize the deeper issues of the total loss of livelihood and opportunities, the high rate of migration from the rural to urban areas, including from areas which previously did not have the characteristics of migration patterns, and cutting across gender and social lines in the country. An observation was made by a special committee that looked at the livelihood of the unorganized sector, where a 1997 report showed that 86 million people out of India's population of 1.2 billion lived in conditions of less than USD1 per day. He noted that the middle classes and the new rich comprised only 3.5 million people in India, and expressed concern that the crisis stimulus packages were targeting instruments and mechanisms that addressed the needs of a very small percentage of the population, rather than the majority or 86 million.



Mr. Partha Rudra

Mr. Rudra argued that the economic development model used had to some extent led to the current situation. Government policies in India were largely influenced by post-independence mixed economy patterns of 1947, whereby both socialist and capitalist models were adopted. Socialist models were used to address issues of inequality. The problem was that while there were enough resources in the country to meet the needs of the people, these were not evenly distributed, especially in terms of creating opportunities in the rural areas, and implementing programmes and schemes for the benefit of the poor. In regard to schemes, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was in place to ensure that workers in the rural areas were able to provide for their livelihood for at least 100 days in the year. Healthcare and hospital services were improved but nevertheless, a lot more remained to be done at the ground level. In theory, schools and accessibility to them existed in every village but the functional applications remained an issue to be addressed. Specialised skills needed to be taught as the schooling system was not producing people with these skills especially in the villages.

He bemoaned the neglect of industrial policies, the agriculture sector and the quality of natural resources as degradation had taken place for years and was intensifying. Looking at factors contributing to the current crisis, there was a requirement also to empower women and the Government was expected to turn its focus towards solving global problems in a localized manner. He stressed on the need for policies that focused on social aspects. While the seeds of political democratization had been planted, empowerment had not yet trickled down to the grassroots. Local communities who were left out believed their aspirations were not met by the political parties who operated at a higher level. This led to a polarized society, which was often manipulated by local political parties for their own ends. Concluding his remarks, Mr. Rudra reiterated the need for an effective holistic model that would address the plight of the rural poor without compromising the pace of development created in the urban areas.

AMBASSADOR JIANG CHENGZONG

Secretary General, China National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation, China.

Ambassador Jiang began the dialogue by commenting that the United States and other developed economies and their respective media and economists were overstating the seriousness of the current crisis. He felt the reason for this was to attract assistance and aid from the countries of the developing world to pull the West out of the trouble. He expressed the opinion that the Americans still had the power to fix their problems by themselves. The Great Depression of the late 1930s was quite different in nature; moreover, today the US had reserves as much as USD9 trillion although these reserves were not in government hands, but rather in non-public sectors. The amount of money used in the various bail-out packages indicated that the US did have the capacity but America was crying out to erode the confidence of others around the world in dealing with the financial crisis. He argued that the US and other developed economies had financial power and clout – but the question was, how would they use it?

Asked if he thought the US should solve its own problems, Ambassador Jiang agreed. He also said Asians had a shared responsibility to manage the crisis. There was a need to sit together to discuss a collective approach where previously Asian countries had been observed to be selfish, taking opportunities to damage others in order to prosper. This was a matter of “economic morality”, in his view.

DR. CHAP SOTHARITH

Former Executive Director/ Senior Researcher, Cambodian Institute for Cooperation & Peace

Advancing the view that Cambodia was a small economy but nevertheless had begun to feel the effects of the global crisis, Dr. Sotharith noted

that the export of garments, a pillar of the Cambodian economy, along with tourism, agriculture and construction, were already affected. He said 80 per cent of garments produced were exported to the US, and approximately 400,000 workers in the garment industry were now suffering the effects of reduced demand. A stimulus package was not yet in place and it was necessary to ensure that this would not be prolonged. To the question of what message needed to be conveyed at the forthcoming G20 meeting, he hoped the rich countries could be convinced against cutting down their imports of products and services. At the same time, he ventured, the developing world would need to be pro-active and not wait for assistance.

MR. MICHAEL SWITOW

Co-Founder, ONE (SINGAPORE) / Founder, SUPERSEED, Singapore.

Mr. Switow agreed with Mr. Sotharith on the importance of Official Government Assistance or OGA by way of stimulus packages. He noted that US President Obama had pledged to increase the contributions made already, but many pledges made by the developed countries had not been met. Migrant labour also brought its share of issues and this was being felt in Singapore, with workers from India and Bangladesh impacted by change and their families in the rural areas getting further into debt. He was of the view that the problem lay in the fact that contracts were not being fulfilled and migrant workers were often not paid for their time and services and faced the risk of deportation. He called for reform in employment procedures, particularly in respect of migrant labour.

MR. LOW TUCK-SENG*Managing Director, Frey Capital, Switzerland.*

Speaking from a European perspective, Mr. Low urged policymakers and politicians around the world to convey to the population that the current downturn was expected to be a long-drawn affair and would pose serious problems. There was a need to recognize how sharply economies had turned downwards. For instance, a country such as Iceland now required IMF assistance, and the crisis has brought down the Prime Minister of Belgium; in fact the rescue of a leading financial institution, Fortis, has strained the tripartite Governments. The United Kingdom could also be a "basket case", with 1.3 trillion pounds of personal debt incurred. Monies were currently being lost in insane quantities and the rich as well as the governments of rich countries did not have a clue as to what to do. Mr. Low was of the view that the US would face problems of a different nature in battling this crisis but in the EU, where one single currency was in use, policies would have a serious impact on the global economy. There have been talks with Asia in the context of regional partnerships, recognizing that the flow of trade and investment between the EU and Asia was indeed very vital.

In the next two years, he said, governments would be talking about monetary wars instead of trade wars as nationalism will increase especially in Europe. He pointed out the significance of this in terms of its impact on the poor. Many European nations had not fulfilled their obligations towards OGA and he planned to introduce some ideas at the micro-level on what could be done by certain institutions to make an impact in Europe. The area he was looking at primarily was healthcare and he cited the example of how GlaxoSmithKline had initiated ways of addressing drug distribution globally, with phenomenal potential impact.

In terms of intellectual and monetary reserves, he believed many countries would continue to invest carelessly, unless they understood what sovereign funds really meant. He urged that they review their role, instead of buying more trophy assets abroad. The billions used could actually be directed elsewhere to address fundamental needs and problems, not only within individual countries but also across the region.

DR. DURGA P. PAUDYAL*Director General, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Bangladesh.*

Dr. Paudyal's main contribution was to take a leaf from lessons learnt by Asian countries. He spoke of the need to control corruption and promote accountability and transparency in state institutions. Infrastructure, he argued, was paid for by the poor who were unable to enjoy it. The regulatory system was expected to function better in order to get quality output from investments. Quality auditing procedures remained imperative in strengthening institutions and in this regard, Asia needed to follow the examples set by the West.

DR. THOMAS TANG*Executive Director, Global Institute for Tomorrow (GIFT), Hong Kong.*

Dr. Tang cautioned the delegates against turning the discussion into paranoia, noting that the current crisis was also due to the failings of countries. He argued that the fact that Asian countries had become manufacturing factories was due to the desire for capitalism instilled in these countries. Nevertheless, he said, the global meltdown had provided Asia with an opportunity to take stock of its role in the global system and to review the merits of it being a huge manufacturing base which had its limitations. He called for Asia to look at sustainability seriously, or it would be recycling the



L-R: Dr. Denison Jayasooria; Ambassador Jiang Chengzong; Dr. Aris Ananta; Dr. S. Manivasakan.

same problems being faced right now in the future. There remained also a number of important areas demanding closer review and action such as land reforms, food chains, rural development and the need to look at appropriate industries that would have long-term benefit and did not merely provide short-term relief from the crisis.

DR. ARIS ANANTA

Senior Research Fellow, ISEAS, Singapore.

Like other speakers, Dr. Ananta believed the current economic crisis would further aggravate poverty and therefore, he argued for solutions beyond the short-term fix. He called for thinking around a new paradigm. The Great Depression, he said, had created new economic theories such as Keynesian, and Dr. Ananta wondered if there should be a fresh new paradigm and whether the current dialogue would provide a good opportunity to get inputs into the thinking behind such a paradigm.

MR. SAM MOON

Acting Executive Director Building a Better Future Foundation, Hong Kong.

Mr. Moon drew the delegates' attention to projects of social enterprise, one of which was in Cambodia, focusing on rice. A pilot project requiring loans to get rice planters and producers off the ground, this project will subsequently be adopted by business communities. If successful over a year, it would be replicated and multiplied.

He cited the environment, healthcare and education as part of the multitude of factors requiring attention today. In the current financial tsunami, the plight of the poor was easily forgotten. The issues of climate change and environmental sustainability were also priorities to be managed, he said. He noted the work done by Dr. Thaksin who had focused on the poor primarily while in office, and he hoped for his continuing assistance in poverty-eradication at the regional level. He urged stakeholders to discuss the issues in-depth, and develop concrete ideas for the Foundation.

Case Studies – Sharing of Country Experiences and Perspectives on How Rural Development & Poverty Eradication Programmes Have Succeeded

This Session looked at specific approaches taken by some countries to address rural poverty as well as rural development programmes. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals provided a useful benchmark of global standards to be achieved to overcome poverty and ensure sustainable development. The United Nations Human Rights approach to development and poverty was another yardstick.

DR. DENISON JAYASOORIA

Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Ethnic Studies, National University of Malaysia /Human Rights Commissioner Malaysia & former Executive Director, Social Strategic Foundation, Malaysia.

Dr. Jayasooria noted that since gaining independence, Malaysia's poverty rate had come down to 3.6 per cent in 2007, from 51.2 per cent 50 years ago, indicating a dramatic decline. Poverty was acute in Malaysia during the colonial period, especially in the rural villages where facilities and basic

amenities were scarce, if they existed at all. Over the years, Malaysia had been transformed from a poor agriculture-based society into a modern, industrializing nation. He described three basic strategies which were enhanced with five-year development plans and aggressive state involvement which addressed the poverty issues in a holistic manner:

- Focus on rapid economic growth and distribution. The economy was export-oriented and led by a strong industrial sector, which brought about rapid urbanisation
- Focus on agricultural and rural development where



L-R: Dr. Josef Yap; Dr. Denison Jayasooria; Ambassador Jiang Chengzong; Dr. Aris Ananta.

incomes for farmers and the agricultural workforce were raised through productivity. An institutional infrastructure including agricultural banks, aided rural development

- An emphasis on strong institutional support for farmers and fishermen to support productivity was also evident, with micro-credit facilities in place

The Government also maintained high levels of public sector investments, channelled towards education and healthcare, to raise living standards and the quality of life. This was when access to healthcare, roads and education, previously neglected during the colonial period, were addressed. New challenges which were further complicated by the current economic slowdown now had to be met:

- Rise in income inequalities between communities
- Problems of forest-based communities and interior communities. While rural communities in Peninsular Malaya had been addressed in a systematic way, in Sabah and Sarawak, and among the aboriginal community in particular, affirmative action had been lacking, especially in land reform
- The initial phase of aggressive state intervention was more community-based, but the situation had changed and there was now a requirement for action to be needs-based
- The digital divide between urban/affluent areas, caused by issues of access and connectivity, had displaced poor communities.

Dr. Jayasooria forwarded some key strategies to deal with these challenges, with micro-targeting, and a renewed focus on such specific matters as:

- Housing
- Integrated land development
- People-centred development projects in the villages and at community level.

On the global crisis, he singled out three possible areas of impact on Malaysia with implications for projects that could also be undertaken by other Asian countries.

- All over Asia, forest-based communities – tribal, indigenous, aboriginal and largely living off the forests – were a community neglected and exploited. They had a right to land, legal rights.
- Foreign and migrant workers would be losing their jobs, and movements of labour were not only observed at the professional level, but also at the worker level. Issues of labour, protectionism, unions and banking facilities were all extremely vulnerable in the current situation. There was a need to establish synergies between the receiving and labour-providing countries. The human rights of migrant workers were also a matter crying out for attention.
- The trafficking of women and children could be further exploited in the present environment. Many would come with the promise of good job. Again, there was a need to review the issue of poverty as it was the root cause of these social issues.

Case Studies – Sharing of Country Experiences and Perspectives on How Rural Development & Poverty Eradication Programmes Have Succeeded

AMBASSADOR JIANG CHENGZONG

Secretary General, China National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation, China.

In an attempt to resolve the issues of poverty-eradication for more than 200 million rural people, China had adopted three guiding principles, according to Ambassador Jiang:

- It took economic development as the key to ensure the people could share in the benefits of development
- It insisted on poverty alleviation through development initiatives such as training and participation at all levels; and
- It insisted on mobilising people in a sustainable manner.

Because of the need for nationwide efforts, various ministries at the central level were engaged and assigned to poor counties in order to drive poverty alleviation. Financial support and training courses were among the many initiatives taken to achieve success. However, funding was also a challenge and China had received support from the World Bank and other institutions in its ongoing effort to eradicate poverty.

Specifically in respect of poverty eradication, China had attempted to tackle the issue in the following ways:

- Firstly, it recognized the need to improve understanding of the importance of the rural communities, and the boosting of domestic demand in the rural areas.
- Secondly, it provided the foundation for a stable economy based on agriculture; and

- Thirdly, it embarked on the tough task of ensuring security and improving livelihoods.

'The vast rural market will finally be the next powerful engine of growth for the Chinese economy. We are stimulating the agriculture sector and bringing people to the farms'

Ambassador Jiang Chengzong

In order to support the agriculture sector and farmers he said the Chinese Government boosted the rural economy by improving rural infrastructure as there remained a grave disparity in infrastructural development between the urban and the rural areas. The Government also perfected the social security net for lower-income groups, especially for farmers.

Believing that the vast rural market will at last ride as the powerful growth engine for the Chinese economy, he urged the central government to shift its focus towards agriculture. He noted that many measures had already been taken to stimulate the agriculture sector and bring people to the farms. However, he also recognized the need to create a culture of micro-finance in the rural areas to encourage better micro-credit. It was very important for these facilities to be made available and to ensure easy access. He further hoped that institutional and cultural barriers would be dismantled to ensure awareness was present and capacity-building was in place.

Case Studies – Sharing of Country Experiences and Perspectives on How Rural Development & Poverty Eradication Programmes Have Succeeded

DR. JOSEF T. YAP

*President, Philippines Institute for Development Studies
Manila.*

Sustainable economic development was still an elusive concept in the Philippines. Looking into per capita GDP growth over the past 50 years, the Philippines had lagged behind its neighbours in poverty reduction, with its absolute poverty incidence of USD1 a day representing 13.2 per cent of the population as compared to Viet Nam's 8.4 per cent. Dr. Yap noted that the Philippines had a long way to go to address this. Noting that poverty in the Philippines was largely a rural problem, and given its overwhelming numerical importance, poverty programmes had to be concentrated in the rural areas. Thus far, he said, there had been very little progress made by the Government. Besides the adequacy of programmes and resources, targeting was also poor as most developmental efforts were concentrated in Manila. More importantly, local government agencies were not fully equipped to tackle poverty-reduction programmes. At the heart of the problem, baseline data at the local level was not yet credible and there was a need for national aggregated data. At the provincial, municipality and town levels, the data was incomplete to ensure a better understanding of the problems at hand.

He described the Micro Economic Impact of Micro Policies, a community-based monitoring system (CBMS), as a way out as it addressed the gaps in data and diagnosed poverty at the micro level by identifying eligible beneficiaries, policies and programmes. He said it was more than a data-collecting system as it also intended to promote evidence-based

decision-making. It was a tool to support the decision-making process by providing local government units with the means to promote better governance. There was, however, some resistance to the project because local politicians did not want the public to know whether progress had or had not been achieved.

'Sustainable economic development is still an elusive concept in the Philippines. We have lagged behind our neighbours in poverty reduction'
Dr. Josef T Yap

Dr. Yap explained that there were 14 indicators under various headings such as education under the CBMS. It had been streamlined to make it more effective. CBMS tabbed on local governance and its data had been drawn upon for human development reports and by NGOs for resource profiling. Major lessons learnt from the implementation of CBMS over the past nine years were many and they included the need for a local poverty monitoring system to ensure efficient assessment of impact from Poverty Reduction Strategies. It was also important to work with local governments and convince them of the importance of CBMS to ensure its sustainability. He found that political scions were progressive and hence more open to the concept of CBMS. While it was moving forward, it was not progressing as fast as he had hoped. Nevertheless, a good beginning had been made to make sense of what poverty meant and what could be done in a much more systematic and rational manner.

DR. THOMAS TANG

Executive Director, Global Institute for Tomorrow (GIFT), Hong Kong.

Citing an experience from rural banking, Dr. Tang said there were two factors inhibiting its growth – the nature of the rural Chinese countryside, where there wasn't a culture of micro-finance compared to other economies such as Bangladesh, and the lack of banking licences which were very sparsely given. Due to heavy protectionism for local banks, foreign banks were not allowed to play a role. Therefore there were both cultural and institutional barriers, in his view.

MR. BENJAMIN QUINONES, JR.

Chairman, CSRME Asia / Institute of Small Scale Industries, University of the Philippines, Manila.

Mr. Quinones bemoaned the fact that the poor have always understood crisis -- because whether they were in a global economic crisis or not, they were always facing crisis in one form or another. He noted that the poor were good clients for micro-credit and he believed therefore that investing in the poor was the best form of investment in times of crisis. He agreed that governments tended to bail out large organisations who did not know how to handle crises. However, the poor who knew how to handle crises as a way of life, received no support whatsoever via government bail-out programmes.

MR. PARTHA RUDRA

Programmes Director, National Foundation for India

Expanding on the point on micro-credit, Mr. Rudra argued that while there was no doubt that the poorest and the base borrowers were deserving, micro-credit alone would not work. He said there was a need to look at micro-finance, savings facilities, insurance, the people's capacity to absorb that kind of money, and the need for education along with capacity-building as ingredients for success.

DR. ARIS ANANTA

Senior Research Fellow, ISEAS, Singapore.

Turning to Indonesia, Dr. Ananta said its problem was that the poverty rate remained high at 16 per cent. Absolute numbers were vague because population numbers were also vague, he said. Indonesia had been successful in family planning but as a result it was beginning to see ageing populations, especially in the rural areas. The rural areas demonstrated real depths of poverty and severity of poverty. As for the effects of the global financial crisis, urban communities would say they were worse off than the rural communities, but he believed the rural poor would always pay the price. He also believed that poverty reduction schemes were often mis-targeted and he hoped that efforts would be made to ensure that leakages would not be the case when tackling poverty.

'All stakeholders must remain focused on the ethics and morality of labour mobility, ensuring there is freedom from fear' – Dr. Aris Ananta

In solving the problems associated with poverty, Dr. Ananta argued for the development of capacity while expressing concern that governments would provide an environment of dependency instead. He urged for more attention towards health matters, which went beyond the healthcare system. For instance, preventive campaigns, clean water, cleanliness and sanitation should be of primary importance in addressing rural problems. All stakeholders, he said, should engage in improving education systems, remaining focused on the ethics and morality of labour mobility, ensuring there is freedom from fear and creating an investment climate in the rural areas. A healthy investment climate, he posited, included small-scale enterprises and poor people, not just the foreign and big companies alone.



Rapporteurs hard at work - L-R: Ms Khairiah Mokhtaruddin; Noel Navin Dass and Ms Jean Wong observing the discussion

DR. S. MANIVASAKAN

Head in Charge, Centre for South and South East Asian Studies, University of Madras, India

Dr. Manivasakan spoke of India's experience in rural development programmes and how these were implemented for poverty eradication. The first focused on agriculture, where facilities, loans for farmers, educational opportunities, and peer support groups run by women were among the initiatives under this scheme. For instance, the Tamil Nadu Government waived all co-operative farm loans, thereby rejuvenating the farming sector. In another example, the abolishment of common entrance test for professional courses by the state government has facilitated an increase in number of students from rural and poor families to have access to technical education. A number of welfare schemes were also introduced and implemented to aid the disabled, including mentally-disabled minorities and tribes. For example, free gas stoves and free gas connections were given by the state government in the women's welfare schemes, and encouragement

for self-help groups were given for nearly 1163 self-help groups for disabled persons. However, the major hurdle was when the money allocated was not received by the people for whom it was intended, with approximately 70 per cent of allocations resulting in leakages. He also spoke of the need to address the malfunctioning of government missionaries and to take the lead on the Right to Information act.

DR. DURGA P. PAUDYAL

Director-General, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia & the Pacific (CIRDAP), Bangladesh.

Rural development policies and institutions remained a low priority in the region, according to Dr. Paudyal who noted that this, along with malfunctioning of institutions and the lack of distribution of powers and political support, resulted in weak rural institutions.

He also observed that the size of the rural area had

become smaller for two reasons – one, the lack of security and the increased violence in rural areas, not just by terrorism alone but also civil wars between tribes; and two, the depletion of natural resources and climate change. For example, he said, from a study done in Bangladesh, it was found that in the next 30 years it would be difficult to access clean water and the nation was unprepared for it. He argued for planning to prepare for the depletion of resources and population increases in times of climate change.

Citing the example of Nepal, he said the country could produce about 50 thousand megawatts of electricity by using water resources, but the problem remained rooted to the lack of political will, rather than the lack of monetary resources. Therefore, he said, nations had to come together to address not only poverty, but also those other issues which if not resolved, would impact further on poverty. The rural area cried for investments, but these should come with the right kind of political will and some understanding of the real causes of poverty.

MR. PARTHA RUDRA

Programmes Director, National Foundation for India, India

Referring to the presentation by Dr. Durga, Mr. Rudra noted the need to rethink policies for

the rural poor and how investments should be ploughed into the rural areas to address the exploitation of natural resources. Again, the view was forwarded that investments ought not to benefit only a select few. An equitable model was needed and a desire to go beyond tested practices. Harnessing understanding was also important as misunderstanding and misinformation were seen to be firewalls in the effort to bring about change.

Alluding to Dr. Manivasakan's presentation, he deplored the high rise of farmer suicides in India because of certain agriculture policies where they were not protected. Farmers borrowed heavily and when unable to pay off their debts, there were left with no options. He argued that governments had responsibility at two levels – formulating policies and then implementing them. Good governance remained important, as perfect policies poorly implemented would result in institutional failures.

What Next? – Programmes for Action

Poverty eradication called for concerted efforts by Governments, Civil Society, Think Tanks and Business to work together in a collective strategic partnership. Rural empowerment and SME involvement could facilitate poverty eradication and improve the incomes of rural households. This session built on the two previous sessions to generate ideas and free-flowing solutions towards the improvement of rural livelihoods and to identify specific programmes and projects that could be implemented. Some questions were raised: How to improve rural incomes and the wealth of the rural population? How to improve rural healthcare, education, water and utilities? What programmes and projects could be launched and funded? What could individuals do by themselves and collectively to improve the livelihood of rural communities?

MR. BENJAMIN QUINONES, JR

Chairman, CSRME Asia / Institute of Small Scale Industries, University of the Philippines, Manila.

Commenting on the case for a new world order, Mr. Quinones said this called for a system of coordination and working together, with continuing dialogue among countries, each taking responsibility to strengthen their commitments, and the need to look at mental models. He highlighted the prime importance of the old economy, which was to make profit. The idea of the market adjusting automatically was based on the idea of the free market but he now proposed a new paradigm which would enable the participation of all stakeholders, each of whom would have a say in the model going forward. This line of thinking, he said, had led to the evolution of social entrepreneurship or social enterprise, which is a natural organisation where goods are produced and traded for social and environmental purposes and not for profit alone. This Non-Profit model for doing business remained in the social responsibility sphere, but in exchange, trading and banking, it was not yet recognized as a sector, despite its active participation in the economy. NPOs provided a third leg of the economy, he said, and complemented the government and the traditional profit sectors.

For instance, he said, Fair Trade enabled marginalised and small producers to become big players, encouraged fair participation of children, promoted gender equality, provided a safe and healthy environment for workers, and produced fair profit. He noted that the NPO model was not against profit but required that profits made had to be equitable, without jeopardising the environment and other factors. Mr. Quinones concluded by making a number of important points:

- There was a need for better coordination and dialogue whereby stakeholders would go deep into their mental models, readjust their understanding of things, especially in agriculture, and agree what it means to the domestic economy as a whole.
- There was a need for greater social entrepreneurship.
- Value-chain development was greatly required for social enterprise as one had to think not only about enterprise development but also to take stock of the whole value chain.
- The poor were valuable partners in building socially-sound enterprises
- Social enterprise was the best model for mission-oriented institutions.

What Next? – Programmes for Action



L-R: Dr. Chap Sotharith; Mr. Michael Switow; Dr. Thomas Tang

DR. CHAP SOTHARITH

*Former Executive Director/ Senior Researcher,
Cambodian Institute for Cooperation & Peace*

Dr. Sotharith shared his concerns on the financial crisis and its impact on Cambodia. He argued that the poor would remain poor as they were punished by the vicious cycle of poverty. They had no access to information and were deprived of rights. Loans provided for them were often coupled with extortionate interest rates. Against the backdrop of the current financial crisis, Mr. Sotharith pointed out that:

- Cambodia was in a good position to protect itself because of the small size of its economy
- Banking was not yet mature as Cambodia did not have international links, with its savings coming from local money, hence its exposure to the global financial sector was very limited
- The agriculture sector was still thriving and remained the number one contributor to the economy
- Cambodia was not yet dependent on external trade.

‘The poor will remain poor as they are punished by the vicious cycle of poverty. They have no access to education and information and are deprived of rights’

Dr. Chap Sotharith

Nevertheless, he said, the need to help the rural poor out of poverty was particularly relevant in times of economic crisis. Employment and job creation were means of ensuring that the local domestic economy remained active. Social safety nets were also important as people often succumbed to issues related to the healthcare system and education. He urged the acceleration of reforms such as land reforms, public service delivery, the reduction of corruption, increased accountability and transparency, and judicial and legal reforms. Trade liberalisation was also one of the key tasks to be looked at by Cambodia, to guard against protectionist measures.

What Next? – Programmes for Action

DR. THOMAS TANG

Executive Director, Global Institute for Tomorrow (GIFT),
Hong Kong.

Dr. Tang took the debate on social ventures further. These ventures were similar to Social Enterprises, he said. SEs started off as enterprises with a mission to bring benefit to society. Where they 'fail' is the lack of business skills and management systems necessary to drive the enterprise forward. Healthcare and education for example, were important but systems were needed to ensure delivery. Funds were required to maintain these enterprises. In respect of the SE, there was now a changing mindset as a result of the move towards Corporate Social Responsibility. Although private money was required for

social ventures, projections, profit making, cash flow, returns etc, were looked at as investments, he said. He cited the example of renewable energy which was currently big business as climate change had taken centre-stage in the global agenda. Westerners were looking at where they could invest in renewable energy, especially in Asian countries. He predicted that in time, people will look at forests as good investments.

In regards to the digital divide, he ventured that infrastructure was a major issue, but there were also other factors to be looked into closely to derive simple solutions to simple problems. Empowering villagers with the right technologies and the right skills would help them attain competency and subsequently reduce the digital divide.

MR. MICHAEL SWITOW

Co-Founder, ONE (SINGAPORE) / Founder,
SUPERSEED, Singapore.

Mr. Switow suggested the need for both a macro and micro view as there were cross-cutting issues. These were issues that could be taken to G20, and were among the five top-line demands:

- Debt: There was more money going out than coming into countries. Indonesia spent 25-40 per cent of every dollar earned on debt repayment
- Aid: The quality of aid needed to be improved
- Trade: In rich countries there is talk about free trade but it is never about fair trade
- Gender equity: Women make up 70 per cent of the world's poor

- Transparency and accountability: People have a right to know how the money is spent and transparency was expected for both donor and recipient.

In a reference to migrant labour policies, Mr. Switow called for greater regulation by the authorities as it has become a form of business taking people from the rural areas to the cities in promise of a better job. He called for the formation of unions and for worker rights to be observed to ensure that no individual is manipulated.

What Next? – Programmes for Action



L-R: Dr. Aris Ananta; Dr. S. Manivasakan; Dr. R. Srinivasan; Mr. Benjamin Quinones.

DR. R. SRINIVASAN

Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science & Public Administration, University of Madras, India.

Dr. Srinivasan presented a case for the reasons for the failure of poverty eradication programmes, especially in the rural areas. He said this was not due to the lack of laws and programmes but rather it was because the poor were not in position to grasp this information due to lack of awareness and understanding. One of the most important factors in poverty eradication, he said, was social marketing and social auditing. One solution would be to introduce parliament at a local level, where anyone could take part in the policy-making process, thereby allowing for participation across socio-economic classes. This would enable people to raise questions on what was available to them, and demand to know what is the reason why some development aid is not reaching them.

‘Allow the villagers to take part in the policy-making process. This would enable them to raise questions on what is available to them. They can also ask why some aid is not reaching them’
Dr. R Srinivasan

He agreed that the agriculture sector was very much affected at this period of time as it held the largest share in employment and job creation. The contribution of the sector had been reduced greatly because farmers were now going to the urban areas in pursuit of higher-paying jobs. Should this trend continue, India and subsequently the rest of the world will face a grave food crisis.

A summary and an overview of what had been discussed on Day 1 were provided, highlighting possible measures to be taken by the Building A Better Future Foundation. It was also agreed that initiatives proposed could be taken up through the networks created during the two-day Dialogue.

This part will be divided into four areas. The first covers the 40 summary points discussed on the previous day. Subsequent discussions will be divided into two parts, with the first representing macro perspectives of the issues and recommendations to government and international organisations, and the second focusing on micro issues around six subtopics as follows:

1. Social enterprises, and social ventures
2. Healthcare
3. Climate change
4. Digital divide
5. Education literacy
6. Migrant workers

The fourth section will comprise a summary by the Conference Keynote, Dr. Thaksin.

THE 40 KEY POINTS

The 40 key points derived from Day 1 are listed below.

1. The global economic crisis is serious and will be long-drawn, with a major impact on the rural communities as well as urban poor
2. Poverty eradication is not a zero sum game
3. Any stimulus package must focus on the underprivileged communities and provide them with an adequate social safety net
4. Urban poverty could potentially become more a serious problem than rural poverty due to rapid rural-urban migration/urbanisation
5. The crisis would put basic services at risk, including education and healthcare. This calls for investment into capacity-building and intellectual capital
6. The question of migrant labour looms larger in this crisis and the movement of labour will be impacted
7. The situation could cause governments to focus on monetary wars rather than trade wars
8. Land reform, rights to land, the needs of forest-based communities were a cause of concern with dire consequences for farming output
9. The trafficking of women and children could worsen in the current crisis
10. Asian countries need to move beyond export-led growth models and develop strong domestic sectors
11. Domestic demand alone may not be enough to bring countries out of crisis; there was also a need to boost regional demand while retaining regional cooperation and integration
12. Infrastructure and development spending were required to create more jobs
13. The region had to move faster to intensify regional cooperation and financial interactions
14. Asia needs to put forward a stronger voice in G20 and send a clear message to the forthcoming London Summit
15. Asia should consider having its own rating agencies
16. There was a mismatch between Asia's wealth of financial reserves and its intellectual resources
17. Besides the Asia Financial Stability Dialogue, there was a proposed to initiate a Real Economy Stabilizing Dialogue
18. The retraining of retrenched workers was important
19. In China, agriculture and rural development were clearly perceived as the new engine of growth
20. While micro-credit was required for the rural communities, it had to be matched by micro-finance and micro-insurance
21. The digital divide could deepen rural poverty
22. There had emerged a new phenomenon of ageing rural poor and poor elderly
23. The problems related to aid were leakages in

- development programme funding and mis-targeting of programmes
24. Social auditing was necessary to prevent leakages and misdirecting of schemes to benefit the wrong communities
 25. Clean water was an important priority as it could impact on public health.
 26. The need for a healthy investment climate in the rural areas was stressed
 27. Population control was significant, especially for countries with large populations such as India and China
 28. Climate change issues had gained consequence in Asia
 29. Dialogue was required, but had to be followed through with coordination and commitment
 30. Social Enterprises and Social Entrepreneurship had gained credence under the CSR movement and could potentially become a third pillar of the economy
 31. Public sector reform was urgently required to improve public service delivery, along with judicial/legal reform to reduce corruption and enhance transparency
 32. The mindset of the rural poor had to be changed through education and awareness programmes
 33. There should be a reduction in the debt burdens of the poorest countries
 34. Very few countries have honoured their aid commitments
 35. Gender equality and gender issues had to be addressed as 70 per cent of the world's poor were women
 36. Education was a key challenge in the rural sector, to ensure there was knowledge and to facilitate access to growth schemes
 37. Data management would help greatly in the success of poverty-eradication
 38. Small projects at the grassroots level brought success as in the case of Thailand and India
 39. Involvement of local communities in the democratic process would lead to greater public involvement

40. Improved security in the rural areas in some countries was also a priority



MACRO ASPECTS OF RURAL ISSUES: WHAT GOVERNMENT CAN DO

Dr. Omkar opened the discussion by stating that micro-setting becomes successful when the macro setting is in order and therefore there was a need to look at macro issues and identify what could be done at both regional and international levels to complement the specific action plans taken by respective governments. He noted the many specific projects which had received mention throughout the discussions and acknowledged the truth of the remark by Dr. Thaksin that helping the poor was not philanthropy but justice. Export-led growth had helped the region to prosper but however, there were risks associated with over reliance on an export-led economy. Rural development was seen as a way to complement the export-led economy. The stimulus packages being launched by government could be channelled to the rural sector from the national level. This could provide a boost to the rural economy.

On regional growth, he noted that once domestic demand was expanded, demand could then be brought to the regional level through greater regional cooperation. Unfortunately, thus far, regional cooperation had not taken off as expected, such as the Chiang Mai Initiative; therefore he called for these

initiatives to be revived. He pointed out that regional growth was not a substitute for the international market but only a supplementary mechanism. Apart from the need for regional partnerships, there were a number of things that called for attention at the macro level. For instance, the glaring deficit in infrastructure in Asia should be fixed. This could be done easily as it was not due to the lack of resources, considering Asia had huge surpluses. It was acknowledged that Asia needs also to boost its intellectual capital to complement its rich resources. This can be done through regular dialogue among Asian counterparts. An inclusive, country-specific, sustainable-growth model approach could be considered instead of a one-size-fits-all model. Champions were required to advocate for transparency at home and abroad. Promoting investment transparency was clearly a priority to ensure good governance and credibility. In the banking and financing sector, regulation and monitoring were necessary, to prevent issues such as the world was now facing.

Co-moderator Dr. Durga identified the positive points arising from the discussions which included how Asia had sustained high economic growth and continued to register a high surplus of reserves. However, the negatives outweighed the positives, he felt, especially in these challenging times: Growing inequality, a widening digital divide, depletion of natural resources, lack of intellectual institutions to foster knowledge and thinking, and the increase of conflict and lack of security in rural areas. The underlying causes included the malfunction of state and public institutions and the lack of political commitment and will at the highest levels. He called for a strengthening of institutions, the advancement of knowledge and political leadership. At the political level and state level, addressing inequality called for a clear roadmap in terms of the mission and objectives to ensure that it would not be a futile attempt. Foundations of moral discipline and commitment were greatly required, along with long-term commitment to institutionalise thinking.

MICRO ASPECTS OF RURAL ISSUES : THE PRIORITIES

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Consensus was reached as to the divide between the economically-empowered elite and the social sector – caused mainly by mental models from the old economy; epitomized by such platforms as the World Economic Forum and the World Social Forum, two forums which are in conflict and are now set to exacerbate the global economic problem. As the divide between the social movement and economic agendas was widening and deepening, there was a need to converge these two forums. There was also the need to recognize that the social side of the economy was just as important. It was felt that Dr. Thaksin's foundation could initiate ways to support social enterprises and pave the way for their recognition as a legitimate sector rather than an informal sector. SEs were not set to replace the current sector, as the old economy focussed on profit which remained a central goal in business ventures. However, the new models would allow the social sector to be operated by marginalised communities and empower them to become a major stakeholder of the economy. There were evidences showing that this sector was a viable alternative and a means forward for the marginalised communities. The new economy was set to develop fair trade and deliver fair profits without impinging on the environment or impact on society in other ways. Such initiatives would further encourage socially responsible investors who are investing on grounds of ethical and responsible investments.



HEALTHCARE

The issues that affect rural healthcare were of interest in Switzerland, where the leading healthcare companies are based. The view put forward was that in healthcare, socioeconomic status ought not to be an important factor as availability of drugs and

access to the treatment of illness should be readily available to everyone, everywhere. Given that in the West, healthcare had become a very expensive exercise and there was a real issue of affordability, Asian governments had to recognize the need for a sustainable, comprehensive health system, with key components as described below:

- Health education
- Locally-available disease control
- Expanded programmes of immunization
- Maternal care and healthcare.
- Essential drugs and affordable essential drugs
- Nutritional programmes and preventive programmes
- Clean water, sanitation.

The key elements in healthcare would be affordability and supply. The most comprehensive healthcare programmes were provided in Cuba with more and more Americans going there for medical treatments. Affordability was deemed vital as people in poor countries were unable to afford costly medical and health care. In regard to supply, stocks were believed lacking in rural communities, along with inadequate staffing leading to patients not getting the required assistance. Healthcare provider GSK had introduced a revolutionary initiative where it offered to cut its prices for all drugs in the 50 least-developed countries to no more than 25 per cent of the levels of countries like the UK. This was its contribution to secure more affordable drugs for mid-income countries.

CLIMATE CHANGE

It was largely felt that the level of discussions on climate change thus far had been about representation and disseminating certain messages. The discussion centred on taking climate change issues down to populating research projects. For social enterprises or micro-enterprises, there remained clear opportunities, including the need to find projects that are unique and that will be attractive. One of the likely opportunities lay

in renewable energy. However caution was necessary as there could be a potential threat from the custom-made approaches brought in to Asian environments from the developed world.

Some examples of climate-change projects:

1. **Laos:** Leased out new renewable energy kits to the rural areas to filter technology to the grassroots, where technology provides energy to the rural areas. Once there is access to energy avenues open up and informed decisions can be made, resulting in the creation of mini-businesses.
2. **Cambodia:** A case for the protection of forestry and the rural opportunities to invest in this. A mindset is in place in terms of valuing the forests assets they have there. In the Kyoto Protocol, there is a focus on how to reduce carbon emissions through the use of new technology, but there is also interest in the harnessing of natural resources. The challenge is to bring it down to the micro-level.

DIGITAL DIVIDE

The measurement of poverty has always centred on income poverty line indices but an important indicator that is often left out is that relating to the digital divide between those who know and those who do not know. The deprivation of information is very important as it marks a deep contrast between poor and more affluent elite families. To the rural child who is disadvantaged, because of lack of access, connectivity and education, provisions from government or private institutions can be channelled to narrowing the gap and giving him or her a new life. Rural farmers and fishermen can also use information from technological devices to help them check the weather or pricing and such tools will empower them economically.

Asia has the largest number of rural areas, and inexpensive 75-dollar laptops can be used in the remotest parts of Asia to facilitate internet connectivity. This is all made possible with the help of technology and

innovations. Now children with no background in English can actually acquire knowledge and information. This can be done by getting private-sector companies to either lease out their computers at a low rate or otherwise. Kiosks were another option to be looked into. These efforts were believed to be feasible, achievable and target-oriented.

The poorest of the poor in Asia are forest-based communities and as they do not have land titles, they tend to be exploited. Suggestions were received about how they could be helped through integrated development programmes and legal support, advocacy, access to basic facilities, land reforms, and a more equitable share of the forest produce. It was agreed that there were many who wanted forest products and herbal remedies, and that these medicinal values of the forest were what forest-based communities were familiar with, but their knowledge was not exploited to benefit them economically. There was a felt need for macro support for this community which faced the risk of being the poorest of the poor regardless of whether or not there was a global economic crisis. Though issues of ethnicity and identity were not addressed in the context of the rise in inequality, it was acknowledged that the resurgence of culture and the resurgence of ethnic consciousness could pose a challenge. Insurgency movements may intensify if some communities felt the state was depriving them of equitable resources. While the strong hand of the state may be in control, with increasing market forces, consciousness of freedom and growing democratization, greater awareness of ethnicity, religion, and cultural identities may resurface, causing divides of another kind.



EDUCATION & LITERACY

Education should not be boxed up as merely a system of formal academic institutions and literature but rather be positioned as a way of making the public

participate in the development process as a whole. This would ensure the nurturing of a mature democracy. People have the right to know what the government does and people need to know what the government isn't doing. At the micro level, government should focus on the quality of education, as attendance in schools was simply not enough. The need to create a sustainable education system for the poor was discussed, to enable the pursuit of a good education regardless of socio-economic status.

MIGRANT WORKERS

Migrant labour was regarded as a serious problem as it led many people to leave their homes in the rural areas, to sell their lands and move to a new city on the promise of good wages. Many ended up without work, without income, in debt, and living on the streets. In times of economic downturn, one could expect to see an increase in the number of contracts not being honoured, workers unpaid and workers having no recourse to justice and being deported back to their countries. Better regulation was called for with some asking for action to ensure rules were fairer and justice prevailed. For instance, employers often paid agents a fee for highly-paid workers; however this was not the case for low-paid workers. Advocacy groups could be established to help migrant workers. In line with the business model of a socially-responsible enterprise, fair-trade employment agencies could be encouraged, with companies having the option of hiring employees in an ethical way.

In regard to the exploitation of low-skilled workers, it was recognized that part of the problem was because they did not know enough or did not have sufficient information about the situation. If the migrant workers knew better, the possibility of them being exploited would be greatly reduced. Access to the Internet could be the answer, and computers could be part of the support system for migrant workers.

Summary by Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra

Commenting on the digital divide, Dr. Thaksin noted that more and more countries in the Asian region had collaborated in undertaking research on education using IT. For instance, the one laptop per child initiative by Thailand was the first of its kind, but the project was postponed because of pricing issues. However, pilot projects in villages in those countries with free software and powered by solar energy, had seen progress.

In tackling poverty eradication, it was his view that governments and politicians sometimes found the challenges insurmountable. Many would resort to listening and not take up the baton themselves to bring about change. He urged such governments to turn the burden of the poor by helping them to help themselves.

Citing issues of human trade, trafficking and child labour, he said there was a need to present these to government officials in a manner understandable to them and to show how neglect of these matters could impact on them. Managing such issues effectively called for a lot of mobility and interactions between stakeholders from the private sector and government agencies to ensure that human rights are protected and this would not escalate to become a social pandemic.

With regards to literacy, he believed Asia should not consign itself to be merely English-oriented. He referred to a study which found that the brains of children who surfed the internet for a certain number of years had brain cells which had changed for the better. This evolution was due to the amount of information fed into their brains which was much greater compared to those without access to the Internet. The study also found that those who used the Internet frequently and at the same time maintained their communications with people in real life were better able to manage human relationships. This generation will be future leaders and



(L-R) Sam Moon, Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra & Dr. Michael Yeoh

more of them were needed. Clearly governments ought to work towards building this generation.

Asia also needed to reduce its dependence on the rote style of teaching and learning. There remained a grave need to change the teaching style from rote learning (teacher teaching) to learner learning. The problem now was that whole generations had spent their lives in rote learning to the extent that they were unable to think. Rote learning lent itself to students memorizing everything without understanding the fundamental meaning of knowledge obtained. Asian countries needed to address this immediately. The technology was in place to assist but a systematic educational model was required to overcome the obstacles.

On the plight of tribal communities in Thailand, he described a previous initiative where teachers would stay with the community and provide them with education. He believed regardless of whether children were born rich or poor, and no matter which part of the world they were born into, what mattered was that they got the same opportunities in life, including education. It was also important how they were nurtured and groomed to better prepare them for the future. It was not tenable that the children of the poor should continue living poorly for generations. It was the responsibility of all to bring the children of the poor to be good citizen, able to produce and contribute to their countries.

In regards to healthcare, Dr. Thaksin applauded the initiative of GSK and hoped it would be followed by others. Besides being a good marketing strategy, it was also devised with good intentions as well. By extending its tentacles deep into the village to reach the people, margins would naturally be sacrificed but this would be worth it in the long run. He hoped that as a result of leaning towards more ethical business practices, such initiatives of healthcare companies will become a common practice in the future.

Commenting on the issues around migrant workers and the export of labour, he said migrant workers do provide their home country with a form of income through remittances. Both labour providing and receiving countries, however, needed to work closely together to ensure the public, and especially interested and potential migrant workers, knew what to expect so they were not exploited. If the labour force did not have access to the vital information required, there was a need to educate and inform them.

As for social enterprise, he believed this was a small investment to small communities. Social enterprise was something that could be done easily as there were many success stories and case studies. For instance, Thailand's OTOP was a case in point – projects like these would soon expand and grow links to become a community of entrepreneurs. In some social enterprises, government may need to provide funding assistance

in terms of investment. However, the money invested should be returned in due time as many rural families only required small margins to turn around their livelihoods and improve their lifestyles. Providing budgets to villagers and allowing them to manage the money as they wish based on the needs of their projects would be one of the most effective ways to achieve success. For instance, some villages which grew rice was able to use the budget given to purchase a small rice mill, based on the consensus of the community. Because of this small step, the village would not need to sell paddy cheaply and buy rice expensively as they were now able to produce rice from their own paddy harvest.

Dr. Thaksin concluded that there were many solutions to the problem of poverty. It was just up to the individual governments to seek the answers and find the political will to implement programmes and monitor their progress. He believed that for a country to flourish and prosper, it needed to have its citizens healthy in three areas:

- Physical health,
- Mental health
- Intellectual health

If these indicators were strong, that country would have citizens of vitality and quality and this would allow the country to grow, not just economically but also socially.



Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra

Former Prime Minister of Thailand

Mr. Sam Moon

Acting Executive Director, Building a Better Future Foundation

Dr. Michael Yeoh

CEO/ Director, Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute

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Building a Better Future Foundation



**DR. THAKSIN
SHINAWATRA**
**Former Prime Minister of
Thailand**

Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra became the 23rd Prime Minister of Thailand on 9 February 2001 and was the first Prime Minister in the Thai history who completed a full four – year term in January 2005. He was reelected in February 2005 and was Prime Minister until a military coup on 19 September 2006. Previous political appointments include Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2 November 1994 to 10 February 1995; Leader of the Palang Dharma Party, 28 May 1995 to 18 November 1996; Deputy Prime Minister (in charge of traffic and transportation in Bangkok) 28 July 1995 to 14 August 1996; and Deputy Prime Minister from 15 August to 14 November 1997. In July 1998 he established and became Leader of the Thai Rak Thai Party. On 6 January 1998 to 9 February 2001 he was Member of the Parliament (Party List).

Dr. Shinawatra founded and became vice chairman of the THAICOM Foundation, (initiating the satellite education program for young children in remote areas unable to continue their education at the secondary school level) on 20 September 1993.

Since 1994 he has been chairman of the Advisory Committee of Pre-Cadet Class 10 & Police Cadet Class 26. On 12 September 1998 he became president of the Northerners' Association of Thailand; on 9 February 1999 he became honorary chairman of the Northern Thai Association of Washington, D.C., United States, and on 28 June 1999 he became honorary advisor of the Thai Northerners Association of Illinois, United States. In 1973 Dr. Shinawatra joined the Royal Thai Police Department and was promoted to Police Lieutenant Colonel in 1987. His last position was as deputy superintendent of the Policy and Planning Sub-division, General Staff Division, Metropolitan Police Bureau. In 1987 he started Shinawatra Computer and Communications Group, and became its chairman until 1994.

Dr. Shinawatra has received several awards including "1992 ASEAN Businessman of the Year" from the ASEAN Institute, Indonesia in 1992; "Kiattiyod Jakdao" in Economical Development from the Committee of the Armed forces Preparatory School Foundation in 1992; In 1993 he was "Outstanding Telecom Man of the Year Award"; was honored as one of twelve "Leading Asian Businessmen" by the Singapore Business Times, a finalist of the "Asian CEO of the Year" selected by the Financial World; and was invited as the first Thai and third fellow to attend the "Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellowship" program. In 1996 Dr. Shinawatra received the "Outstanding Criminal Justice Alumnus Award" from the Criminal Justice Center, and was honored the "Distinguished Alumni Award" from Sam Houston State University. In 1997 He received the honorary award as the "Outstanding Politician" (who has contributed significantly to the society) from the Mass Media Photographer Association of Thailand (MPA). In October 2002, he received " Sam Houston Humanitarian Award" from Sam Houston State University, U.S.A. Dr. Shinawatra also received Honorary Doctorate Degree from Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan. In May 2007, he received Honorary Doctor of Sciences of Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics, Russia.

Dr. Shinawatra graduated from the Police Cadet Academy in Thailand in 1973. In 1975 he gained his master's degree in criminal justice from Eastern Kentucky University, and in 1978 gained a doctorate degree in criminal justice, from Sam Houston State University, United States. Dr. Shinawatra holds the following royal decorations: Knight Grand Commander of the Most Illustrious Order of Chula Chom Klao (2002); Knight Grand Cross (First Class) of the Most Admirable Order of the Direkgunabhorn (2001); Knight Grand Cordon (Special Class) of the Most Exalted Order of the White Elephant (1996); Knight Grand Cordon (Special Class) of the Most Noble Order of the Crown of Thailand (1995).

He also holds the foreign decorations: Royal Order of Sahametrei (Grand Cross) of the Kingdom of Cambodia (2001); Ahmed Al Fateh of the Kingdom of Bahrain (2002); The Most Blessed Order of Setia Negara Brunei (1st Class) P.S.N.B. of Brunei Darussalam (2002); Commander Grand Cross of the Royal Order of the Polar Star of the Kingdom of Sweden.



SAM MOON
Acting Executive Director
*Building a Better Future
Foundation/ General
Manager, HighLink*

Prior to establishing HighLink in 2008, Mr. Sam Moon was the CEO of DNMstrategies, a 12 years old company using the core business model and philosophy: "creating dialogues not monologues". His experience in developing and building conference activities as a business and a profit centre resulted in the development of a partnership with BusinessWeek which has evolved and strengthened over the past 10 years of working together. Mr. Moon has spent over 23 years in Asia based in Hong Kong. He originally transferred from Chicago with The Economist Group, and during his 12 years with the company, spearheaded the efforts to transform the company's conference activity into a growth-oriented, profitable business unit. Under his leadership Mr. Moon made the conference unit in Asia the 2nd most profitable business unit within The Economist Group. He was responsible for The Economist Group's conference business for the United States and Latin America, creating a growth-oriented business for The Economist brand.

Mr. Moon joined Dow Jones to establish an umbrella conference organization. He launched Dow Jones Asia Dialogues which brought together the Asian Wall Street Journal, Far Eastern Economic Review and Asia Business News. Mr. Moon is the senior advisor of Boao Forum for Asia, Jeddah Economic Forum, and The Pacific Basin Economic Council. He has authored several think pieces, including Sponsorship 101 and Event Planning 101, and frequently chairs/ moderates events and conferences for BusinessWeek as well as other groups across the region. Mr. Moon holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Tennessee, United States.

Dr. Michael O. K. Yeoh is Co-Founder & CEO of the Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI), Malaysia's leading independent Think Tank and foremost Conference Organiser that brings together senior government, business and thought leaders in interactive, high-level discussions. As CEO of ASLI, he conceptualised and founded the World Ethics & Transparency Forum, the World Islamic Economic Forum, the ASEAN Leadership Forum and the Asia Economic Summit. He also established the Centre for Public Policy Studies (CPPS) to undertake independent public policy research. A strong advocate of international networking and track two confidence-building processes, he helped set up the Malaysia-US Business Council, the Malaysian-British Business Council, the Malaysia-Russia Business Council and Malaysia-Indonesia Business Council where he serves as Executive Director of these Business Councils. He is also Joint Secretary-General of the Malaysia-China Business Council, the ASEAN Business Forum and the Corporate Malaysia Roundtable.

He graduated in Economics & Accounting from Monash University and did his practical accounting training with PricewaterhouseCoopers in Melbourne. He has attended the Aresty Institute of Wharton School in USA, the Melbourne Business School and UCLA's Graduate School of Management. A Certified Management Consultant, he specializes in Corporate Strategic Planning, Asian Strategy and Political Economy. He was Vice-President of the Institute of Management Consultants and the Malaysian Institute of Directors. He is a Member of the Institute of Directors, UK.

Dato' Michael has written several books on Management, Leadership and Malaysian Politics such as Vision & Leadership, Management Strategies for Malaysian Companies, Globalization and the New South and the Malaysian Chinese. A sought after speaker, he has addressed international conferences and forums organized by the Asia Society New York, World Economic Forum, Confederation of Indian Industry, China Development Institute, Young Presidents Organization, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies Singapore, Michigan Business School, Wilton Park UK, the Monash Asia Institute Australia and the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN).



DR. MICHAEL YEOH
Chief Executive Officer
*Asian Strategy &
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**PROF. EMERITUS DR.
MOHAMED ARIFF**
Executive Director
*Malaysian Institute of
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A specialist in International Economics, Dr. Ariff previously held the Chair of Analytical Economics at the University of Malaya where he had also served as the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Administration. He was conferred emeritus professorship by the University of Malaya in August 2004. Dr. Ariff obtained his B.A. First Class Honours and M.Ec. from the University of Malaya. He completed his Ph.D. programme at the University of Lancaster, England, in 1970, as Commonwealth Scholar. He had a brief stint in the private sector as the Chief Economist at the United Asian Bank in 1976. His book "The Malaysian Economy: Pacific Connections" - published by Oxford University Press - won the prestigious Tun Razak Award in 1993. He has also made some pioneering contributions to the theoretical and empirical literature in the field of Islamic Economics.

Dr. Ariff is currently Vice President of East Asian Economic Association and Vice President of the International Association for Islamic Economics. He has served as a board member in a number of bodies including the Inland Revenue Board in Malaysia. Currently he sits on the boards of Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC) and HSBC Bank Malaysia Berhad (HBMY), in addition to being a member of the TNB-E Council and the Selangor Business Council (SBC). He has served as Consultant to many international organisations, including the World Bank (Washington DC), UNIDO (Vienna), OECD Development Centre (Paris), Commonwealth Secretariat (London), UNCTAD (Geneva), UNCRD (Nagoya), ESCAP (Bangkok) and Islamic Development Bank (Jeddah). Dr. Ariff was attached to the Institute of Developing Economies in Tokyo (April-November 1974), the Australian National University in Canberra (November 1983-July 1984) and the East-West Center in Honolulu (October 1989-July 1990) as Visiting Research Fellow.

Ambassador Jiang had served in the Chinese Foreign Ministry since 1950s. He had served in the Chinese Embassies in India, Nepal, Fiji Island, USA, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, first as junior official and moved up to Ambassador. Ambassador Jiang was involved in the 1971 "Pingpong Diplomacy", the fore-runner to China-US breakthrough relationship; joined in the reception work for former US President Richard Nixon's ice-breaking visit to China in 1972; and in-charge of the newly set-up Congressional Liaison Office in the Chinese Embassy in Washington D.C. in late 1980s.

After leaving the foreign service, Ambassador Jiang had served in several non-governmental organizations prior to his current position, the Secretary General of China National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation since 2000.



**AMBASSADOR JIANG
CHENGZONG**
Secretary General
*China National
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DR. RAYMOND ATJE
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Dr. Raymond Atje has worked on a wide range of research topics, from finance to the environment. At present, his main research interest is in understanding the development of entrepreneurship and its impacts on growth. He has previously worked with various international institutions, including the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Institute for International Economics (IIE).

Dr. Raymond Atje completed his Bachelor of Science in Physics from the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) in 1979. He then became a visiting scholar at the Energy Modelling Forum of Stanford University before pursuing a Master of Science (MSc) degree in Engineering Economic Systems there. After graduation from Stanford in 1985, he immediately enrolled in the doctorate program at the New York University. His dissertation, entitled "Finance and economic growth: An empirical analysis," was among the earliest proponents of the notion that the financial sector was an important source of economic growth. For this, he received his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Economics in 1993.

Michael Switow is an anti-poverty campaigner, freelance writer and new media professional. Among the non-profit groups in which he plays an active role are ONE (SINGAPORE), SUPERSEED and the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP). He moved to Asia as journalist in 1996 and covered stories like Hong Kong's return to China, the Asian Economic Crisis, Bird Flu and even the Wild Cows of Hong Kong. Since 2000, Mr. Switow has worked in e-media (webcasting, podcasting, blogging) and as a freelance writer. He has also worked in homeless shelters in the USA and as a Peace Corps volunteer in the West African countries of Niger and Gabon. Mr. Switow received a Masters in Public Affairs from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School. He can be contacted at switow@gmail.com.

ONE (SINGAPORE) is locally-registered society dedicated to raising public awareness and taking concrete actions to Make Poverty History. Every three seconds a child dies from extreme poverty. But it doesn't have to be this way. The resources and technology exist in the world today to transform the hopes and dreams of an entire generation. From 17th to 19th October 2008, ONE (SINGAPORE)'s supporters joined 117 million people from 131 countries in "Stand Up and Take Action Against Poverty" to call on world leaders to do the right thing and honour their commitments to end poverty. Over 14,500 people across 35 events "stood up" in Singapore to raise awareness as well as funds for MDG-related projects. ONE (SINGAPORE) also partners with Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) on The Cuff Road Project to assist homeless migrant workers in Singapore. For more information, please visit www.onesingapore.org.

(Note: The MDGs, or Millennium Development Goals, are a set of 8 clear-cut time-bound targets to halve extreme poverty by 2015 and eliminate it by 2025.)



MICHAEL SWITOW
Co-Founder, ONE
(SINGAPORE) /
Founder, SUPERSEED



DR. OMKAR L. SHRESTHA
Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore and former Deputy Country Director in Vietnam for Asian Development Bank

After serving over 27 years at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in various capacities, Dr. Omkar Lal Shrestha is currently a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) in Singapore. He also serves as non-resident advisor to the National Economics University (NEU) in Hanoi, Viet Nam. Among many responsibilities during his tenure at the ADB, Dr. Shrestha was among the few to be selected to help develop ADB's first ever assistance programs to China (soon after its ADB membership in 1986) in its transition from a socialist command economy towards a market driven economy. He was engaged in ADB's China operations for nearly a decade. In his ADB's three year assignment in Dhaka, Bangladesh, he helped introduce corporatization/ privatization of the state-owned agencies in the energy sector. He helped introduce, through ADB project, the mandatory use of CNG gas in vehicles in Dhaka helping improve the city's heavily polluted air quality.

Dr. Shrestha also served as Deputy Country Director and Head of Economics and Programming functions at ADB's Viet Nam Resident Mission in Hanoi for about two years. His responsibilities included, among others, formulating ADB's medium-term assistance strategy and an annual assistance program of over \$3 billion for Viet Nam for 2007-2010 period with particular focus on infrastructure development, private sector promotion and regional cooperation activities in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and ASEAN countries. Over the years, Dr. Shrestha has also established himself as performance evaluation expert through his extensive work on performance audit of the ADB-financed projects in many countries in Asia-Pacific region.

With a Ph.D degree in Economics from the University of Hawaii (USA), Dr. Shrestha is an East-West Center Scholar with several publications to his credit. He is interviewed by international media such as New York Times, London Economist, Bloomberg, Wall Street Journal and Channel News Asia. He is co-editor of the Special issue of ASEAN Economic Bulletin (AEB) magazine brought out by ISEAS. He has participated in several national and international conferences and talk programs as lead speaker. He has been honored with several gold medals for his academic and professional excellence. He has also been honored with medals and citations from the King of Nepal, Emperor of Japan, and President of Asian Development Bank.

Dr. R. Srinivasan, a senior faculty member in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Madras, Chennai, India. He received his doctorate in 1994 from University Madras and he also graduated in Law. His main area of research lies in pressure group politics, civil society organizations, fresh water scarcity and conflict study, Governability and governance in local governments. He published several research papers that have focused on primary education, trade union politics, caste conflicts and reforms in distance education.

Dr. R. Srinivasan, written several books for the distance education students pertaining to Politics and Public Administration. Presently he has undertaken one major project on status of Dalits in Tsunami Affected Region: A Study indiscrimination at Nagapattinam District, Tamil Nadu, India.



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*Institute of Southeast
Asian Studies, Singapore*

Dr. Aris Ananta is an economist-demographer with an interdisciplinary research interest. Indonesia is his regional expertise and his long-run research agenda is on "Migration, Ageing, and Development in Southeast Asia". He is currently preparing a conference on "Poverty, Food, and Global Recession in Southeast Asia", to be conducted on 25-26 March 2009 at ISEAS. He will edit the revised papers and put them into an edited book. His upcoming publication is an edited book *Older Persons in Southeast Asia: An Emerging Asset*, co-edited with Evi Nurvidya Arifin, to be launched in Singapore around August 2009. He and Evi Nurvidya Arifin edited *International Migration in Southeast Asia*, published in 2004.

He also published books on politics, such as *Emerging Democracy in Indonesia*, co-authored with Evi Nurvidya Arifin and Leo Suryadinata, in 2005. He and Lee Poh Onn edited *Aceh: A New Dawn*, in 2007. He has also published book chapters such as "Chinese Indonesians in Indonesia and the Province of Riau Archipelago: a Demographic Analysis", co-authored with Evi Nurvidya Arifin, in *Ethnic Chinese in Contemporary Indonesia*, edited by Leo Suryadinata in 2008; journal articles such as "Migration and Violent Conflicts in Some Southeast Asian Regions" *Population Review*, Vol. 45, No 1, 2006; newspaper articles such as "The Lure, Temptation to Sell Our Rice" *The Jakarta Post*, 11 April 2008. He participated in various seminars/ conferences in Singapore, Indonesia, and other countries. He is often interviewed by mass media on various Indonesian economic and political issues, as well as sharing his views to visitors to ISEAS.

He is an Indonesian citizen, born and growing up in a small town of Klaten, Indonesia. He did his undergraduate study in economics in the University of Indonesia, Jakarta, earned his Master degree in Socio-economic statistics, specializing in population statistics from George Washington University, the US, and obtained his PhD in economics, specializing in population economics, from Duke University, the US, in 1983. Since then he returned to University of Indonesia to teach, conduct research, manage academic institutions, and disseminate research results to policy makers, business persons, and NGOs. He was inaugurated as Professor in Economics in 1995. He joined the Department of Economics, National University of Singapore in 1999-2000 before joining ISEAS since 2001.



DR. THOMAS TANG
Executive Director
*Global Institute for
Tomorrow (GIFT)*
Hong Kong

Dr. Tang is a policy specialist and consultant with over 15 years experience in corporate social responsibility, policy research and sustainable development. As the Executive Director of the Global Institute for Tomorrow, Dr. Tang co-developed GIFT's Global Young Leaders' Programme in 2004. To date, leadership development programmes have been conducted in China, India, Laos and Cambodia covering rural IT, agri-business supply chains, eco-tourism, renewable energy and conservation.

Dr. Tang's work includes the field of social investments where he is involved in microfinance, venture philanthropy and the setting up of social enterprises. In addition, he has consulted to public institutions such as the World Bank, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, the UK's Department of Trade and Industry and the Hong Kong government. An accomplished author and speaker, he has written a number of reports. Examples include: "Clear Air – A Path to Clear Choices", a report on Hong Kong's power and transport choices for better air quality; "Shaping the Future", a report on children's rights; and "Clean Energy in the Pearl River Delta", a report on power and transport sectors in Southern China identifying and analysing regional energy issues. He has spoken on international forums on climate change, energy and sustainable development and he has also been interviewed on his regional views by Bloomberg and Al-Jazeera television.

He is currently the President of the Institute of Management Consulting for Hong Kong, an advisor to the Business Environment Council, an affiliate of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, and a chartered member of the Royal Society of Chemistry. In addition to his consulting and research activities, Dr. Tang is a Faculty Associate of the Henley Business School in the UK and a visiting scholar for the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He is also the chairperson of the advisory board to the Department of English at Lingnan College in Hong Kong.

Born in Malaysia, Dr. Tang attended Epsom College in the UK, graduated from the City of London University with a degree in chemistry and was later awarded a doctorate in materials science in 1985. He obtained his MBA from Brunel University in 1990 where he was nominated outstanding student for his year. Previously engaged as a research scientist in the UK, he moved to Asia in 1993 where he worked for ERM Hong Kong and later for the PA Consulting Group. He is married with two children.



DR. DURGA PRASAD PAUDYAL

Director General

Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Bangladesh

CIRDAP is a regional, inter-governmental and autonomous organisation established under an Agreement signed in Kuala Lumpur on 01 August 1978 by the Government representatives of the countries of this region. The member countries of CIRDAP are Afghanistan, Bangladesh (Host State), India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

With the expertise on local governance and decentralisation, Dr. Paudyal has extensive research experience on rural development issues across the Asia-Pacific region. He worked as Executive Director of Rural Self-Reliance Development Centre (1999-2004), Nepal. A Consulting Specialist, Dr. Paudyal served several national and international organisations in Nepal. He was also a professional staff-member of CIRDAP from 1986-1995. He has contributed a lot in the policy-making process of Nepal as a member of the High Level Decentralisation Coordination Committee (1997) with the Chair of the Prime Minister of Nepal, and as a Member-Secretary of the High Level Committee to Strengthen Local Bodies (2003) constituted under the Chair of Minister of Local Development. Several papers and articles have been published to his credit, in both Nepali and English, in leading national and international newspapers and journals. Dr. Paudyal has assumed the position of the Director General of CIRDAP from 6 July 2004.

Dr. Durga obtained his Master's in Social Planning from the University College of Swansea, U.K; and Ph.D. in Local Level Planning, Wageningen Agricultural University, The Netherlands

Dr. S. Manivasakan had obtained M.A., from Department of Defence Studies, M.Phil., from Department of Geography and Ph.D in the Defence and Strategic Studies, University of Madras. Since 2000, he has been working as a Teaching Faculty in the Centre for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Madras. Prior to his appointment in the, he worked as a Guest Faculty in the Department of Defence and Strategic Studies.

He has organized several Seminars / Conferences at National and International level including the International Conference on "Terrorism" (2002). The paper presented in the conference ignited interest and based on the discussion, proceedings of the conference was brought out as an Edited Book on "Terrorism" (2003). Dr.S.Manivasakan has been researching on Sri Lanka Ethnic Problem and Impact on India. He has published two books on the "Strategic Dimensions of Sri Lanka Ethnic Conflict" (2000) and "Guerrilla War: Theory and Practices in Sri Lanka" (2007).

He has published research papers as a Monograph titled on "Peace Efforts in Sri Lanka" and "Ethnic Politics and Political Degeneration in Sri Lanka".



DR. S. MANIVASAKAN

Head in Charge, *Centre for South and South East Asian Studies, University of Madras, India*



DR. CHAP SOTHARITH
Former Executive
Director/ Senior
Researcher, Cambodian
Institute for Cooperation
& Peace

Dr. Chap Sotharith is Advisor and Director of Cabinet of Deputy Prime Minister of Kingdom of Cambodia. He is also a Senior Researcher and former Executive Director of Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) Cambodia, an independent non-profit policy research and advocacy institute. During the past 10 years, Dr. Chap Sotharith has been involved in various policy research networks including East Asian Development Network (EADN), and the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies (ASEAN ISIS) that provides policy inputs to the ASEAN policy making processes. Within these networks, he is very active in writing papers, presenting ideas in many regional and global conferences in many topics related to international relations, international politics, trade, investment and international economies.

Dr. Chap Sotharith is also serving as an Advisor to H.E.Mr. Sok An, Deputy Prime Minister in strategic and policy analyses. During 1996 to 2004, he worked as Consultant to many international organizations such as World Bank, UNCTAD and FAO. Dr. Chap Sotharith holds a Master of Science from Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok in 1994, and Ph.D. in Economics from the Sydney University, Australia in 2005. He has published many books both in English and Khmer on topics related to Cambodia and regional development.

Mr. Benjamin Quinones, Jr, has 9 years work experience in government service dealing with rural/agricultural development, 8 years in the private business sector and 16 years in international organizations at top/senior management levels, involving close coordination with international organizations (e.g. UNDP, UNESCAP, UN-FAO, Asian Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development, ILO, GTZ, UNDP, etc). He is also involved in multi-continental programme coordination and cooperation in microfinance and small and medium enterprise development (i.e. Zimbabwe and Senegal, Africa; Chile and Brazil in Latin America). CSR SME Asia is an alliance of NGOs in Asian Countries (China, Indonesia, India, Japan Malaysia, Philippines & Thailand). Since 2004, it has organized four international forums on Globalization and SME Development under the umbrella of CSRSME Asia. It has also provided consultancy services to Cambodia Community Savings and Credit Federation (CCSF) in 2004-2005, Ahon Sa Hirap Inc (ASHI), and Advocate of Philippine Fair Trade Inc (APFTI). Mr. Quinones, Jr, is also the President of SPACE (microfinance network founded by French Organization Entrepreneurs du Monde). He was the former Secretary General, Asia Pacific Agricultural and Rural Credit Association (APRACA), a regional organization of 55 agricultural and development banks in 22 countries in Asia-Pacific.

Mr. Quinones, Jr, holds Master of Science in Agricultural Economics, University of Philippines (1983); and BA in Economics, University of Philippines (1974). He has published and written many books and papers, to name a few:- Quinones, B. (2006) "Financial Linkages in the Philippines" FAO, Rome; Quinones, B. (2004) "An Evaluation Study of the Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO) International", GTZ-Rockfellers Foundation-Pi Environmental. Pully Switzerland; and Quinones, B. (2002) "Globalization and SME Development" APDC: Kuala Lumpur.



BENJAMIN QUINONES, JR
Chairman & President,
Coalition of Socially
Responsible SME's in Asia
/ Institute of Small Scale
Industries, University of
the Philippines

Dr. Yap specializes in macroeconomic policy and applied econometrics. He finished his doctoral studies at the University of the Philippines and went to the University of Pennsylvania on a post-graduate program. His current research interest centers on regional economic integration in East Asia.

Dr. Yap was team leader of a study on integration strategies for the CLMV countries under the auspices of the ASEAN-UNDP Project Facility and was actively involved in the establishment of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA). He has been a regular consultant at the Asian Development Bank and was the coordinator of the 2007 Boao Forum for Asia Annual Report and team leader of the Asia Recovery Information Center based at ADB. Dr. Yap is co-author of the book *The Philippine Economy: East Asia's Stray Cat? Structure, Finance and Adjustment* and is an Associate Editor of the *Asian Economic Journal*.



DR. JOSEF T. YAP
President
*Philippines Institute for
Development Studies*



He holds a PhD in sociology from Oxford Brookes University, United Kingdom. He was conferred the Darjah Panglima Jasa Negara (PJN) in 2006. His working career has been with Non Governmental Organisations such as the Methodist Church (June 1981 - May 1986), Malaysian CARE (June 1986 - Dec 1993), Foundation for Community Studies & Development (Jan 1994 - July 1997) and Yayasan Strategik Sosial (August 1997- May 2008). His fields of expertise are in social work, community mobilisation, policy research on urban poverty, social development, minority concerns for social inclusion and effective public sector delivery of services. He served as a member of the Royal Police Commission which was established to enhance the operations and management of the Royal Malaysian Police Force (2004-2005). He was also a member of the Second National Economic Consultative Committee (1999-2000). He is a frequent panellist at conferences and seminars including TV talk shows.

**DR. DENISON
JAYASOORIA**
**Principal Research
Fellow, Institute of
Ethnic Studies, National
University of Malaysia
/ Human Rights
Commissioner Malaysia
/ Former Executive
Director, Social Strategic
Foundation Malaysia.**



PARTHA RUDRA
Programmes Director
National Foundation for India

Partha Pratim Rudra works at the National Foundation for India as Director (Programmes). He joined the Foundation in 1998 as Senior Programme Officer. Prior to working at the Foundation, he worked at CAPART and Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi, both Indian development support organisations. In his present role at the Foundation, he is leading and coordinating both the fundraising and grant making work of the organisation. Partha has a great number of years of experience in the field of livelihood security, as also other areas of social development, in particular community health and local governance. He has deep interest in civil society and social justice issues in India and has worked extensively in community level constructive work and institution building.

As a qualified professional in the field of development management, Partha has been working in the non profit sector in India for over 20 years. After a bachelor's degree in science, he studied Rural Management from XISS, Ranchi (1988). He was part of a senior fellowship programme on reproductive health, in California, USA (2004), and also a senior fellow at the Center of Philanthropy and Civil Society, The Graduate Center, The City University of New York (2005).

He has specialized in planning and evaluation processes at the level of programmes as also grassroots, and has taken a keen interest in efforts to strengthen institutional mechanisms for improved effectiveness, accountability and quality of interventions like capacity building, service delivery, networking and advocacy. Partha has worked on consultancy assignments for organizations like DFID and GTZ. He is well networked with poverty action and civil society groups that are making a positive contribution towards empowering communities. He is a founder member of the non profit organization, CADAT in northeastern India and he is also one of the founder Directors of a non-profit which is venturing into the field of micro-credit delivery to the poor in India. He actively participates in various national and international workshops and seminars. Partha has been contributing articles and essays on civil society and social justice issues in different newsletters and publications. He has presented papers in national and international seminars including a collaborative paper on development and conflict issues at the Chronic Poverty Research Institute, Centre for Poverty Research and Studies, University of Manchester and also independently made several presentations on topical issues in India and abroad including at the workshops of International Initiative to Strengthen Philanthropy (IISP) workshops. IISP is facilitated by Ford has 20 member Foundations who have been or are Ford grantees, and acts as a knowledge building group.

20TH FEBRUARY 2009, EXCELSIOR HOTEL, HONG KONG

9.00am – 9.30am	Arrival of Participants / Morning Coffee / Informal Interactions.
9.30am – 10.30am	<p>WELCOMING REMARKS & INTRODUCTIONS BY Mr. Sam Moon, Acting Executive Director, Building a Better Future Foundation and Dr. Michael Yeoh, Chief Executive Officer, Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI)</p> <p>SCENE SETTING Special Address by Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, former Prime Minister, Thailand. Dr. Thaksin initiated numerous projects to help rural communities in Thailand as Prime Minister. He will share his experiences and insights on working with the rural poor and his vision on how we can collectively overcome rural poverty through practical, implementable projects. Dr. Thaksin will also share his vision for the Building a Better Future Foundation.</p>
10.30am – 11.00am	Morning Refreshments / Informal Interactions.
11.00am – 12.30pm	<p>GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS – IMPACT ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY The global economic crisis has an impact on jobs, business and investor confidence and will ultimately affect rural communities. Rural poverty may increase as prices of agriculture commodities fall. This session will evaluate the impact of the crisis on Asia in general and on specific countries. How severe will the impact be on rural communities? What are the economic challenges to address?</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Emeritus Dr. Mohamed Ariff Executive Director, Malaysian Institute of Economic Research. • Dr. Raymond Atje Head of Economics, Centre for Strategic & International Studies, Jakarta. • Dr. Omkar L. Shrestha Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore and former Deputy Country Director in Vietnam for Asian Development Bank. • Mr. Partha Rudra, Programmes Director, National Foundation for India
12.30pm – 2.00pm	Lunch.
2.00pm – 3.30pm	<p>CASE STUDIES – SHARING OF COUNTRY EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES ON HOW RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ERADICATION PROGRAMMES HAVE SUCCEEDED This session will look at specific approaches taken by some countries in addressing rural poverty as well as rural development programmes. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals have provided a useful benchmark on global standards to be achieved to overcome poverty and ensure sustainable development. The United Nations Human Rights approach to development and poverty can be another yardstick as could other countries' experiences.</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Denison Jayasooria Principal Research Fellow, Institute of Ethnic Studies, National University of Malaysia / Human Rights Commissioner Malaysia and former Executive Director, Social Strategic Foundation Malaysia. • Dr. Josef T. Yap President, Philippines Institute for Development Studies, Manila.

- **Ambassador Jiang Chengzong**
Secretary General, China National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation.
- **Dr. Aris Ananta**
Senior Research Fellow, ISEAS Singapore
- **Dr. S. Manivasakan**
Head in Charge, Centre for South and South East Asian Studies, University of Madras, India
- **Dr. Durga P. Paudyal**
Director General, Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Bangladesh

3.30pm – 3.45pm

AFTERNOON REFRESHMENTS.

3.45pm – 5.15 pm

WHAT NEXT? – PROGRAMMES FOR ACTION

Poverty eradication requires concerted efforts of Governments, Civil Society, Think Tanks and Business to work together as a collective strategic partnership. Rural empowerment and SME involvement could facilitate poverty eradication and improve incomes of rural households. This session will build on the two previous sessions to generate ideas and solutions on how to improve rural livelihoods and identify specific programmes and projects that can be implemented. How to improve rural incomes and wealth of rural population? How to improve rural healthcare, education, water and utilities? What programmes and projects can be launched and funded? What can we individuals and collectively do to improve the livelihood of rural communities.

Speakers:

- **Mr. Benjamin Quinones**
Jr, Chairman, Coalition of Socially Responsible SME's in Asia – CSRME Asia / Institute of Small Scale Industries, University of the Philippines.
- **Dr. Chap Sotharith**
Former Executive Director/ Senior Researcher, Cambodian Institute for Cooperation & Peace
- **Mr. Michael Switow**
Co-Founder, ONE (SINGAPORE) / Founder, SUPERSEED
- **Dr. Thomas Tang**
Executive Director, Global Institute for Tomorrow (GIFT), Hong Kong
- **Dr R. Srinivasan**
Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Madras, India

7.30pm – 9.30pm

Dinner hosted by **Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra**, former Prime Minister, Thailand.

21ST FEBRUARY 2009, EXCELSIOR HOTEL, HONG KONG

8.30am – 9.00am

Arrival of Participants / Morning Coffee / Informal Interactions.

9.00am – 11.00am

WRAP UP AND CONCLUSIONS

This session will summarize the key issues discussed and ideas put forward. The Draft Statement of Outcomes will be discussed and agreed upon)

11.00 am

End of Dialogue / Refreshments.

Building a Better Future Foundation

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE FOUNDATION

The Building a Better Future Foundation, with offices in Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates, has been established with two goals: First, to encourage and nurture the next generation of Asia's business and financial leaders. Second, to nurture start-up projects in Asia that will stimulate development. The Foundation invites talented individuals to be considered for the Foundation's Think Tank by submitting their resumes in confidence to Leaders@BuildingBetterFuture.org. In addition to helping tackle the current economic crisis in the region and some of the most pressing problems facing developing nations, the Foundation seeks to stimulate development in the region.



ASIAN STRATEGY & LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The ASLI Foundation is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to the development of Asian leadership, knowledge and strategic thinking in the Asia region. It owns the not-for-profit Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI). The ASLI Foundation supports scholarship and research on policy studies contributing to a better society. It contributes to programmes that enhance governance, leadership, economic competitiveness and international partnerships.

The Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI) is a Malaysian-owned, non-political and not-for-profit Think Tank that promotes business excellence, ideas interchange and business cooperation.

ASLI's vision is to create a better society. Its mission is to help organizations enhance competitiveness, leadership and strategic capabilities through the interchange of ideas, information and knowledge. Towards this end, ASLI is continuously engaged in the research and implementation of strategic programmes, conferences, publications, CEO membership programmes, bilateral business councils and policy studies.

ASLI's leading-edge programmes are customer-focused, well-researched, ethical and value for money.

ASLI aspires to be a premier Research-driven Institute that offers quality:

- Events that provide a platform for interaction and for the interchange of knowledge.
- Research and Publications that collate and disseminate information, promotes continuous learning and thought leadership.
- Business Councils that strengthen relationship between people and foster economic cooperation.
- Membership Programmes that enable corporate leaders to make more informed decisions.
- Policy Studies that address important issues of nation-building, national economic competitiveness, human capital development, poverty and income inequalities through occasional papers, brainstorming sessions and roundtable discussions.