



## **SOUTH ASIAN NETWORK FOR SOCIAL & AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Foreword**

SANSAD wishes all its readers a very happy and prosperous march towards realizing goals of an equitable and just society. We strongly believe it is hard for one person to make changes or even just keep things going, but in partnership anything is possible! We are looking forward to coping with challenging times ahead in ensuring sustainable and inclusive development of people in the face of constraints imposed through financial crisis and climate change events, in solidarity with other like minded people and organisations.

I would like to extend very warm greetings to our readers to the September 2010 edition of the SANSAD Newsletter. We have carefully chosen to avoid or at least limit political inferences. It is the intention of the author that issues highlighted in this and subsequent newsletters will spur the reader to greater action and become part of the global community for change. Please feel free to share this Newsletter with your friends.

We greatly welcome your comments.



# News from South Asian Region

## Aftermath of the Pakistan Floods

As the Pakistan floods recede so the story recedes from the headlines. Now the long and difficult task of dealing with the aftermath begins. It will take a long time and a lot of resources. There is still aid being promised with the UK doubling its aid pledging an extra £70m on top of £64m already committed. And the UN has launched an appeal for more than \$2bn (£1.3bn) to help Pakistani flood victims, its largest ever response to a natural disaster. The funds, which include \$500m already raised, will be used to help up to 14 million people over a period of a year.

Sources:

[UK commits further £70m to Pakistan for flood relief](#)

[Pakistan Indus flood diary - day two](#)

[UN launches \\$2bn appeal for Pakistan flood victims](#)

## Food Prices are rising – is it a crisis?

Grain prices hit a two-year high recently. With food riots, reported grain shortages in Russia, and an emergency meeting at the UN, are we witnessing another food crisis? In 2008 price rises led to food rioting and malnourishment in many of the world's poorest countries. This UN conference has been told the recent sharp rises in food prices do not point to a repeat of the food price difficulties in 2007-8 and that the overall harvest in 2010 could be the third highest on record.

Is this too casual a response? India's annual food price inflation continued to quicken in mid-September and analysts see another rate increase by the year end as the [Reserve Bank of India](#) (RBI) acts to stamp down persistently high inflation. In many developing countries, people typically spend about 60-70% of their income on food and this makes them particularly sensitive to changes in food prices. For the hundreds of millions of people in the world living on less than \$1.25 (£0.78) a day, these are worrying times. Coupled with high oil prices stability in oil prices matters for food production because oil is essential in the fertiliser industry and in moving goods to market. High oil prices also make it more attractive to plant biofuels, which compete with food crops for scarce land.

In particular, there is a new awareness that the solution to hunger might not be just in food aid. The head of global communications for the World Food Programme, Greg Barrow, has said "Food might be there on the markets, but people don't have the resources to buy it because it is too expensive," That might mean that ration cards and other supports to help people secure food is the best solution. "What we have put in place to make things better for people in the poorest, least developed countries is a greater awareness that access to food is critical."

Appeals from various UN leaders that speculators should not gamble on the food price market have not been heeded, which can make the markets even more volatile and at risk of sharp movements.

Sources:

[UN eases fears amid rising food prices](#)

[Q & A: Rising world food prices](#)

[Food inflation surges to 16.44%; RBI rate hike seen](#)

## More Food Rotting in India than Admitted

As if the scandal of rotting food was not bad enough it has to be admitted that the amount of grain and rice that went to waste was far more than originally reported. The government officials did not explain that the figure of 11,700 tonnes they were quoting only counted the grain rotting in state warehouses. They left out the grain stored by the Food Corporation of India, the nation's main repository of wheat and rice purchased from farmers.

After insisting in Parliament and elsewhere that the amount of rotting food grain revealed by the *Hindustan Times* was “exaggerated” the food ministry has changed the figures. The *Hindustan Times* first reported how 50,000 tonnes of grain had decayed in Punjab alone and 17.8 million tonnes was at risk from rotting. The government ministry said no more than 11,700 tonnes had rotted. In an affidavit to the Supreme Court, the food ministry admitted the figure for decayed grain was more than 67,000 tonnes, or nearly six times higher than it had admitted.

This story underlines how the problem of hunger is not necessarily a problem of food shortages but also of food distribution.

Sources:

[Grain stored by FCI not counted](#)

[Rotting grain 6 times more than Govt claimed](#)

## Jammu Kashmir troubles

More than 100 civilians have been killed in Jammu and Kashmir since June in protests against Indian rule. These two states have been constantly in the headlines this month, with the government simultaneously trying to contain the situation and offer conciliatory gestures at the same time. The security forces in Indian-administered Kashmir have imposed an indefinite curfew in the city of Srinagar and other big towns in the region. This has met with defiance from some sections of the population who have ignored the curfew and thrown stones at the police. Police have shot dead 18 civilians in the worst day since protests started three months ago. At the same time Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has appealed for peace, saying, at an all-party meeting in [New Delhi](#), only dialogue could lead to a lasting solution of the long-running issue. He appealed to the people in the state to shun violence. Authorities in Indian-administered Kashmir say men detained for pelting stones at security forces during the ongoing protests will be released immediately. India has announced a range of measures to defuse tension in the region.

Along with this contradictory approach there has been much political jostling and negotiating, both nationally and internationally. Pakistan has asserted in recently de-classified papers from 2002 that "Kashmir should have been ours" while warning the US not to push it too far. Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah met his ministers and coalition partners about the course of action over the "delay" in getting a political package from the Centre and denied reports he might resign. Omar is said to be upset over use of phrases "trust deficit, governance deficit" in the official statement. The government called an all-party meeting to try and devise a comprehensive consensual strategy for the state. This strategy could include including withdrawal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), measures to control violence in the Valley and dialogue with the separatists. The three main separatist leaders in Indian-administered Kashmir have met the members of the all-party delegation. (The separatists had previously refused to meet the delegation). Moderate separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said certain "agencies" were out to "sabotage" their movement.

At a more domestic level everyday life is very difficult for people. Just visiting shops is risky and there are problems of low stocks. "Kitchen garden has proved a boon in the time of crisis. Traditional vegetables, those that grow on their own and are no more cooked in the modern-day kitchen, are back on the menu whether you like it or not. Options at the dinner table are shrinking each passing day. Cornflakes, eggs and white oats are already off the breakfast table."

Several commentators suggest that there is a way forward if enough goodwill can be generated and an honest appraisal of the problems and causes discontent can be addressed. There is too much trying to apportion blame, find scapegoats and not accepting there are genuine grievances. For instance "While

there is an Islamic viewpoint on things in Kashmir, it is far from being the dominant one. And attempts to portray it as such are part of a campaign of delegitimisation”, says Najeeb Mubarki.

Sources:

[Indefinite curfew imposed in Kashmir after protests](#)

[Police shoot dead 18 during protests in Kashmir](#)

[Kashmir mob defies curfew to pelt troops with stones](#)

[Omar sore with Delhi, but will not resign](#)

[Don't push us too far on Kashmir, it is ours: Pakistan warned US](#)

[PM appeals for peace in Kashmir at all-party meet](#)

[It's now or never](#)

[Only path for lasting peace in Kashmir is dialogue: PM](#)

[All-party meet on Kashmir to decide on AFSPA today](#)

[Kashmir voices: 'We are angry'](#)

[The Islamism bogey in Kashmir](#)

[3 more die in Kashmir Valley](#)

[India MPs meet Kashmir separatist leaders](#)

['I am turning into a mental wreck'](#)

[India agrees to release Kashmir stone-throwers](#)

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## ***SANSAD Events***

**November 18th-19th, 2010 - National Consultation on Aid Effectiveness - Delhi**