

Training for Rural Gainful Activities (TRUGA) in the Context of Programme for Fulfillment of Basic Needs

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INTRODUCTION

"Basic needs" is now the dominant point of development dialogue in most countries of the Third World. The World Employment Conference of the ILO (1976) brought the subject into a sharper focus.¹ And, in recent years, these two five letter words have emerged as the key concern of all - planners, politicians, governments and donors.

Why Basic Needs

Basic needs strategy is an approach towards helping the poor emerge from their poverty, a concern which began to draw attention after World War II. The dismantling of colonial empires and the creation of many new independent nations stimulated interest in the problems of poverty and development. For almost all the emerging countries, development, indeed, became the key slogan of the post-independence era. To break with, most of these countries adopted a growth-oriented strategy within the framework of a broad two sector model - modern and traditional. And, the emphasis was always on the modern sector. It was the general contention that developing countries were poor because the size of their GNPs was small in relation to their populations. An increase in GNP was viewed as all that was required. Hence the emphasis on economic growth. Capital formation was recognized as the heart of the process; savings and investments were considered the key to progress. Understandably, the planning model of a simple Harrod - Domar type or of a more sophisticated nature, which purports to predict the volume of capital required to achieve the targeted rates of growth in GNP, attracted the development planners and policy makers. Interestingly enough, the external advice accompanying the aid package extended to these countries coincided with, rather reinforced, the internal inclination in projecting growth as the kingpin of the development process.

The essence of the growth strategy was to use capital and technology imported from outside and labour transferred from the traditional sector to achieve progressive modernization of the economy. All policies, fiscal, monetary and others, were geared towards this direction.² The under-

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lying assumption was that growth, once initiated, becomes all pervasive with its benefits trickling down to everybody through such market forces as rising demand for labour, higher productivity, higher wages, and lower prices, or through government intervention in the forms of progressive taxation, social services and other actions.³ Moreover, a skewed income distribution was considered favourable at the earlier stages of development as this would boost up savings and entrepreneurship and as the problem of distribution could be tackled at a later stage when substantial increase in GNP would have been achieved. Some might have to do without bread today so that everyone could have jam tomorrow was a general prescription. Not surprisingly, the growth strategy pushed the critical issues of distribution, poverty and employment to the back seat.

The convictions of growth philosophy clashed with many facts of experience. Many of the Third World Countries failed to make the expected headway at all. In spite of spectacular success judged by the yardstick of economic growth (i.e. increase in GNP) and even some social measures (for instance, life expectancy at birth), development did not mean much improvement in the circumstances of the poorer segments of the population.⁴ In most countries, the benefits of growth did not trickle down to the vast majority of the people while, in some cases, even the GNP failed to gain any momentum of growth. Income remained highly concentrated in a relatively small section while poverty and unemployment continued to afflict the large majority. Benefits went to fat cats instead of the underdogs. As Haq observes, "In country after country, economic growth is being accompanied by rising disparities in personal as well as regional incomes. In country after country, the masses are complaining that development has not touched their ordinary lives. Very often, economic growth meant very little social justice. It has been accompanied by rising unemployment, worsening social services, and increasing absolute and relative poverty."⁵

Despite massive efforts at the national and international levels, poverty and inequality were actually on the increase in many if not most developing countries. After decades of development, majority continued to remain victims of hunger, disease and ignorance. Some 800 million people of the world now subsist in absolute poverty. Their condition of life, in the words of McNamara, is "beneath any rational definition of human decency."⁶ As Brandt Commission reports, "Many hundreds of millions of people in the poorer countries are preoccupied solely with survival and elementary needs. For them work is frequently not available or, when it is, pay is very low and conditions often barely tolerable. Homes are constructed of impermanent materials and have neither piped water nor sanitation. Electricity is a luxury. Health services are thinly spread and in rural areas only rarely within walking distance. Primary schools, where they exist, may be free and not too far away, but children are needed for work and cannot easily be spared for schooling. Permanent insecurity is the condition of the poor. ... The condition of malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, high birth rates, under-employment and low incomes closes off the avenues of escape; and while other groups are increasingly vocal, the poor and illiterate are usually and conveniently silent."⁷

It is an irony of the fate that development has ever by-passed the poor. Wide spread poverty, which is now a fact of life in most countries of the Third World, poses a challenge to planners and policy-makers. "No concept of development can be accepted which continues to condemn hundreds of millions of people to starvation and despair", says the Brandt Commission Report.⁸ Earlier in 1972, McNamara, in his Presidential Address to the Board of Governors of the World Bank, warned, "When the highly privileged are few and the desparately poor are many - and when the gap between them is worsening rather than improving - it is only a question of time before a decisive choice must be made between the political costs of reform and the political risks of rebellion."⁹

The indication is that the traditional growth approach needs to be supplemented by a direct concern with the basic needs of the poor who need development most. In recognition of this phenomenon, search for alternative strategies began in late 1960s. And, since then, there have been various proposals introducing changes and reforms in the conventional paradigm of development. They are represented by 'Employment Generation', 'Growth with Redistribution', and 'Poverty Eradication' approaches, to mention the major ones. Finally, these various strands have been woven together in the strategy of 'Basic Needs'.

The Basic Needs Package

Basic needs strategy concerns with making sure that people get all the essential elements for a life of human dignity freed from absolute need: adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, education, employment, and right to participate in making decisions that affect them.¹⁰ The first set of such needs involves a basic level of private consumption consistent with survival such as a minimum diet to keep the body ready for work or school, a minimum amount of clothing to cope with the climate and prevailing standards of public decency, and a shelter to protect from sun and rains. The second set of needs is the essential public goods and services such as clean water and sanitation, health services and education. And, the final but perhaps central basic needs is for productive employment paying adequately for purchasing the goods and services required for survival. Basic needs strategy thus seeks to secure "the provision of at least the minimum means of livelihood for everyone, through redistribution and growth."¹¹ It is, therefore, a pragmatic response to the call for eradication of human sufferings. Development planning under this approach sets the minimum targets in each of the set needs and pursues policies and priorities to achieve them.

One point which needs mention is that basic needs strategy is not a departure from the earlier concerns of development. Much of what goes under the label of basic needs has been contained in previous works on growth with equity, employment creation, integrated rural development and redistribution with growth.¹² It is, indeed, a synthesis of objectives of growth, equity, employment and the eradication of poverty.¹³ To illustrate the point, the basic needs strategy first aims at increasing the aggregate production of essential goods and services to make it sufficient for meeting the needs of the entire population. As the production process of these goods is usually labour intensive, it tends to raise the income of the poor by providing them with gainful work which, in turn, creates

demand for the goods produced. Growth is implicit in this approach. Likewise, the strategy helps to reduce inequality and eradicate poverty by promoting remunerative employment to the poor and by focussing attention on the few needs of the people in general rather than on many needs, including non-essential ones, of the few. This, of course, means a major shift of priority in favour of the majority.

Role of Employment

By many counts, employment is a key concern of the basic needs strategy. To begin with, poverty, which is the prime factor of the strategy, is a relationship between the essential needs of the people and their ability to satisfy them. If the supply side of the problem has to do more with priorities and policies of investment and production, the demand side is a direct concern of employment creation. As Harrison points out, "Without much fuller use of their unemployed human resources, poor countries will not be able to produce enough wealth to meet basic needs. And without jobs poor people will not be able to earn the money to satisfy their basic needs."¹⁴

Moreover, gainful employment gives an added measure of personal satisfaction and self-esteem. On the contrary, unemployment is demoralising. To feel unwanted, not to be able to make any contribution, lowers a man's morale and makes him lose self-respect.¹⁵ Unemployment also threatens the stability of a family as a socio-economic unit. Without income or with loss of income, the head of the family cannot play the role in which he or she is cast. There is every chance that the unemployed may become 'spiritually disabled.'¹⁶ And, one can imagine what will happen to a development strategy if the wagon carries the band of 'demoralised' or 'spiritually disabled' people. Finally, there are obvious political disadvantages and dangers of widespread unemployment. Barbara Ward rightly remarks, "Of all the evils, worklessness is the worst."¹⁷ Employment creation is central to all concerns of development and is more so in the context of the basic needs strategy.

NEPAL'S PROGRAMME FOR FULFILLMENT OF BASIC NEEDS

By many standards, Nepal is one of the least developed countries. Its per capita GNP of US\$ 150 (just above Ethiopia having the per capita GNP of US\$ 120) places it among the four poorest countries of the world. The sluggish growth of production as compared to faster increase in population has continued to push Nepal towards the bottom of the world league. For instance, in terms of per capita GNP, Nepal's relative position dropped from 'tenth from the bottom' in 1976 to fifth in 1977, fourth in 1982, third in 1983 and finally second in 1986.¹⁸

The economy is still predominantly agricultural, may it be viewed in terms of contribution to GDP or absorption of labour force or size of export earnings, as it was three and half decades ago when the country had no development plan at all. But, in spite of several measures introduced in the past, agriculture sector has given a poor show all through. Industry is still at a dismal position. Some 93 percent of the population live in the rural areas.

Nepal embarked on planned development in 1956. Since then, it has passed through six periodic plans, each more ambitious with growing foreign aid support than its precedent. The current plan (1985-90), which is the Seventh in the series, is nearing the close of the fourth year of its five-year cycle.

The first four plans were virtually infrastructure plans. In a sense, this is not surprising particularly when one recalls the medieval characteristics of the Nepalese economy in the mid-1950s: practically no infrastructure, extremely low literacy, very few schools, limited health services, and poor institutional base. The successive plans recorded certain signal achievements in the field of physical infrastructure, social overheads and building of development institutions. The Fifth Plan introduced a shift of strategy in favour of directly productive fronts. But the achievements lagged far behind expectations. The Sixth Plan adopted meeting basic needs of the people as one major objective besides other two objectives of raising production at a faster rate and increasing productive employment opportunities. The Seventh Plan has endorsed the same set of objectives but with more emphasis.

Nepalese plans have not recorded much success in showing convincing results in raising production, increasing employment or meeting basic needs of the people in general. The past performance has neither gained the speed nor broadened the base. Some macro-economic indicators have, however, shown signs of improvement in recent years.

The overall result of poor performance of the past is mass poverty and deprivation. A recent official estimate shows that 42.55 percent of the population subsist below even a modestly defined 'poverty line' of an income level of Rs. 5.40 per day (i.e. Rs. 1971 per year) per head at 1984-85 prices.¹⁹ Many of these unfortunate people have to go to sleep hungry at night. They do not have clothes to protect them from sun or cold. They move barefoot in search of work. They live in squalid surroundings with no or little health care. They are unable to read and write, and live a short life. Most development indicators of Nepal, economic or social, confirm its position at a low ebb (see Table I). They do not compare the Kingdom favourably with the neighbours of the SAARC Region, let alone the matter of reaching the standards of the ASEAN or 'Gang of Four' (coined after Nigel Harris including South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan) countries or Japan at the highest extreme. Development did not touch much the lives of the poor. It seems that plans have come and plans have gone but poverty is determined to perpetuate in the Himalayan Kingdom.

Nepal's Programme for Fulfillment of Basic Needs (now onwards referred as BNP), which has been the key note of the country's political or economic slogan ever since His Majesty King Birendra issued a royal directive to plan for providing all Nepalese with such basic needs of life as food, clothing, shelter, health, education and security by the year 2000 A.D. on the auspicious occasion of King Mahendra Memorial and Constitution Day and the Silver Jubilee of the Panchayat Democracy (16 December 1985), is

Table 1
Economic and Social Indicators in SAARC Countries

<u>Countries/Indicators</u>	<u>Bangladesh</u>	<u>Bhutan</u>	<u>India</u>	<u>Maldives</u>	<u>Nepal</u>	<u>Pakistan</u>	<u>Sri Lanka</u>
1. Area (in thousand sq. km.)	144	47	3288	0a	141	804	66
2. Population (1986, in million)	103.2	1.3	781.4	0.2b	17.0	99.2	16.1
3. Annual Growth Rate of Population (1980-86)	2.6	2.0	2.2	3.0	2.6	3.1	1.5
4. GNP Per Capita (1986, in US Dollar)	160	150	290	310	150	350	300
5. Annual Growth Rate of GNP Per Capita (1965-86)	0.4	-	1.8	1.8	1.9	2.4	2.9
6. Sectoral Shares in GDP in % (1966):							
Agriculture	47	-	32	-	57c	24	26
Industry	14	-	29	-	5c	28	27
Services	39	-	39	-	38c	47	47
7. Sectoral Distribution of Labour Force in % (1980):							
Agriculture	75	92	70	56	93	55	53
Industry	6	3	13	27	1	16	14
Services	19	5	17	17	7	30	33
8. Daily Calorie Supply Per Capita (1985)	1804	2477	2126	1971d	1997	2180	2485
9. (10) as % of Requirement (1984)	81	-	96	-	93	95	106
10. Life Expectancy at Birth (1986)	50	45	57	66	47	52	70
11. Infant Mortality Rate (1986)	121	139	86	108	130	111	29
12. Child Death Rate (1984)	18	20	11	-	20	16	2

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13. Crude Birth Rate (1986)	41	40	32	42	41	47	24
14. Crude Death Rate (1986)	15	20	12	14	17	15	6
15. Total Fertility Rate (1986)	5.6	5.7	4.4	6.5	5.9	6.8	2.9
16. Percentage of Women of Child-bearing Age using Contra- ceptives (1985)	25	-	35	-	15	11	62
17. Population Per Physician (1981)	9690	19160	3700	20300	28780	2910	7460
18. Population Per Nurse (1981)	19370	8310	4670	600	33390	5870	1260
19. Primary School Enrol- ment Ratio (1985, as % of 6-10 Age Group)	60	25	92	61	79	47	103
Boys	70	32	107	-	104	61	105
Girls	50	18	76	-	47	32	102
20. Adult Literacy Rate (1980)	26	-	36	-	19	24	85
21. Distribution of House- hold Income (in % Shares):							
Lowest 20 Percent	6.6	-	7.0	-	4.6	8.0	5.8
Lowest 40 Percent	17.3	-	16.2	-	12.6	21.0	15.9
Highest 20 Percent	45.3	-	49.4	-	46.5	42.0	49.8

Notes: Dash (-) stands for not available.

a) The area is less than 500 sq.km.

b) Actual population is 189 thousand.

c) Calculated from HMG, Ministry of Finance, Economic Survey 1987-88.

d) Figures for the year 1977.

e) Bangladesh (1981-82), India (1975-76), Pakistan (1973) and Sri Lanka (1980-81).

Source: The World Bank, World Development Report 1988; and Social Indicators of Development, 1987.

a response toward the growing problem of poverty, deprivation and inequality. The entire planning and bureaucratic machinery of the country is now geared to achieve this goal. Understandably, BNP has now dominated discussions on planning and policy making at different levels and sectors.

Now a brief reference to the intent and content of the BNP. The prime intent is to eradicate absolute poverty in Nepal by the year 2000 A.D. and enable the Nepalese people to achieve a standard of living commensurate to lead a life with human dignity through fulfilling such basic needs as stated above. The theme had already been echoed in the Sixth and Seventh Plan objectives. But, as the BNP Document states, "This clarion-call introduced two new dimensions to the basic needs satisfaction objective. First, it clearly enunciated the specifics of the basic needs goods and services and secondly, the time horizon within which these are to be fulfilled have also been spelt out in clear and unambiguous terms. Moreover, it has also stressed the need to renew the commitment of all sectors and all levels in government as well as private and Panchayat levels to meet the basic needs of the Nepalese people by the year 2000 A.D. through the instrument of planned development process."²⁰

The standards of basic needs may not be exactly the same for all countries, regions or places. Such standards are largely governed by respective traditional, cultural, physical and geographical conditions. For instance, the calorie need of a person is primarily determined by his physique, nature of work and the local climatic conditions. Nevertheless, a minimum daily diet is estimated to vary between 2180 and 2380 calorie per person.²¹ Clothing needs again have much to do with climatic conditions and social customs. Similarly, the space required for shelter does vary according to general household standards and weather hazards. The ILO's World Employment Conference proposed a space of 5.25 square metres per person in Asia and Africa and 7.5 square metres for Latin America. BNP has taken care of such considerations while fixing the quantitative targets of basic need items, which are stated below.

Food is the first component of basic needs package. The BNP has estimated that the per capita calorie requirement is 2340 for the hills and mountains and 2140 for the Terai. On this basis, it has set a national standard of 2250 calorie per head per day. Minimum per capita annual requirement of clothing textiles is estimated at 11.7 metres for the Terai, 10.3 metres for the hills and 12.7 metres for the mountains. The national average is fixed at 11.0 metres per head per year. Likewise, the minimum annual requirement of shoes/slippers per capita is considered to be one pair.²²

Nepal has a relatively comfortable position in housing. About 93.6 percent households have their own dwellings though the situation of essential services are far from satisfactory. The BNP has set a minimum national norm of 30 square metres of floor space per household in rural areas and 40 to 60 square metres in the urban areas. Besides, such facilities as kitchen, latrine, clean drinking water and sewerage, etc. are considered as basic utility services to be incorporated into housing development scheme.²³

Primary education (Grades I-V) is identified as the basic need and the target is to universalize primary education covering all children of 6-10 years age group. On top of that, free distribution of textbooks to primary school going children is also a component of the BNP. Literacy rate also is planned to be stepped up through various measures.²⁴

Basic needs targets in the field of health to be met include an infant mortality rate of 45 per thousand; provision of one trained health worker (doctor, Kavi Raj, health assistant, auxiliary health worker, Vaidya etc.) for every 3000 person, one nurse or assistant nurse midwife for every 600 population, and one health volunteer for every 500 population, less than 2 percent growth rate of population per year; and life expectancy extending to 65 years.²⁵

Security component of the BNP is more prone to be polemical. But, the document has identified safety of created economic infrastructures and physical facilities, improvement in the working of the offices which come in frequent contact with general people (such as Land Revenue Office, Courts, Post Office, Wireless, Telephone, Radio, Television, Banks, Airports, Customs and Police Station), reduction in scope for exploitation of the people through socio-economic development measures for the hard-pressed groups, development of moral character and control of undesirable social customs and adverse features, promotion of social welfare measures, and smooth and regular supplies of essential commodities of daily necessities (rice, pulse, sugar, firewood, salt, kerosene, edible oil, etc.) as ways to ensure the economic and social security of the people.²⁶

What has been said above mainly deals with the supply side of the programme. The problem cannot be solved by increasing the production or managing the supply alone. This is just one side of the coin. The other side is equally, if not more, important but at the same time difficult as well. What is crucial is to enable the people to purchase the goods and services they need for survival. This calls for increase in the purchasing power or income levels of the people.

The per capita income level required for meeting basic needs as envisaged by the BNP is Rs. 1971 per year at 1984-85 prices. The household income amounts to Rs. 10,367 per annum (assuming an average family size of 5.26). Per capita GNP in 1984-85 at current market prices was Rs.2693. This should not lead us to an impression that the level of income is higher than required by the BNP. A look at the regional distribution of GNP per capita shows that a large section of population falls below the basic needs level (see Table 2).

As the table shows three of the Five Development Regions (Western, Mid-Western and Far-Western) fall below the national average, and two of them (Mid-Western and Far-Western Regions) are even below the level of basic needs income. Likewise eight of the fifteen sub-regions (all the five mountain regions except the western mountain region, and all the five hill regions except the central hill region) are below the national average and seven of them (all except the eastern hill region) fall below the basic needs level of income. Moreover, 42.55 percent of the total

Table 2
Nepal's Per Capita GNP in 1984-85

<u>Region</u>	<u>GNP Per Capita (in Rs.)</u>
Nepal	<u>2693</u>
Eastern Development Region	<u>3039</u>
Mountains	1958
Hills	2164
Terai	3613
Central Development Region	<u>3472</u>
Mountains	1726
Hills	3802
Terai	3466
Western Development Region	<u>2123</u>
Mountains	4998
Hills	1433
Terai	3461
Mid-Western Development Region	<u>1811</u>
Mountains	971
Hills	1192
Terai	2905
Far-Western Development Region	<u>1507</u>
Mountains	957
Hills	961
Terai	2346

Note: Quick Estimates.

population and 46.92 percent households exist below the poverty line. The basic needs income targets are obviously an enormous challenge. The BNP document substantiates its boldness when it sets the target of raising GDP at the annual rates of 4.5 percent, 5.7 percent and 7.0 percent during the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Plans, respectively. This is again followed by the assumption that, by the year 2000 A.D., the bottom 42.55 percent population will share 23 percent of the national cake.²⁷

Now the message is clear: the only viable and dependable way of making the BNP a success is to expand and diversify the opportunities of employment and income for the poor people, many of whom reside in rural areas with a relatively higher concentration in mountains and hills and in Mid-Western and Far-Western Regions. They comprise mostly the landless and small farmers, petty workers and craftsmen, and physically weak persons.

A look at the demographic scene offers an illustration. The size of population now is 17.5 million, which is growing at the rate of 2.66 percent per annum. The labour force i.e. population aged 10 years and above constitutes 70 percent of the total population. During 1971-81, the average addition to labour force was 2.0 million, eventually raising the size to 6.8 million in 1981.²⁸ It was estimated to have approached 8.0 million in 1985 and is projected to exceed 11.6 million by the year 2000 (based on the assumption of a significant reduction in growth rate). Roughly considering 5 percent unemployment rate and 40 percent under-employment rate, about 3421 thousand persons were unemployed or under-employed (398 thousand unemployed and 3023 thousand under-employed) in 1985. Taking into account the projected new addition of about 3.7 million by the year 2000, it is clear that the nation will have to create new full employment opportunity for over 7.1 million persons.²⁹

Between 1971 and 1981, out of 2.0 million labour force added only 334 thousand (17 percent) were absorbed by the non-agricultural sector. The vast residue (83 percent) was compelled to dump in the already overcrowded agriculture just to further worsen the consequences of underemployment. One can imagine, what will happen in 2000 A.D. or what will be the fate of the BNP if employment opportunities fail to record unprecedented spectacular expansion and diversification. Moreover, the BNP document itself admits that employment can be made available only to 5.0 million people with the postulated growth rates, and additional employment to 2.1 million people will have to be created through special programmes.³⁰ Employment generation especially for the poor people is, therefore, the most vital link in the BNP. This strongly justifies, inter alia, the need for massive rural vocational training activities to expand self or wage employment to a very large scale.

THE TRUGA CONTEXT

At present a number of Ministries and Departments of HMG are providing skill or vocational training either on a project basis or in support of their respective technical responsibilities. Most of such programmes are launched under the Department of Cottage and Village Industries (DCVI), Department of Labour, Technical Education and Vocational Training Council, Women Training Centres, Cottage Industry Development Board, Agriculture Development Bank, etc. Many NGOs such as Nepal Disabled Association, Family Planning Association of Nepal, Mother's Clubs, Youth Clubs, Nepal Women Organization, Nepal Labour Organization, etc. are also coming forward with such activities. TRUGA, being launched under the DCVI is one notable programme in this context.

TRUGA, the acronym for 'Training for Rural Gainful Activities' is a vocational training methodology developed by the ILO to promote employment and income generating activities for the poor rural populace. The methodology is employment-oriented at the local basis and, therefore, it tries to relate training directly to identified employment and income generating opportunities in the rural areas. The fundamental ideas upon and within which the TRUGA Methodology is based are two in number: Training is an intervention whereby gainful activities are generated on wage or self-employment basis, and participation of the beneficiaries in gainful activities is the ultimate goal of training which calls for relevant training, follow up, credit and support services after training.

TRUGA adopts a system approach in designing and delivery of vocational training programmes. The methodology comprises a set of clear and inter-related steps in the process of planning, delivery and follow up/evaluation of training activities. This is perhaps the reflection of the widely felt need for a holistic approach so as to ensure that training is provided in relevant skills and it results in actual participation of beneficiaries in gainful activities.

TRUGA Methodology begins with a thorough investigation of the local situation, economy and population to determine viable economic activities and skill requirements. It thus gears the training of village people to available or potential employment opportunities and not the other way round. The methodology consists of clear processes and procedures for identifying employment and market opportunities and related training needs; planning, designing and delivery of training appropriate to needs; and providing follow up and support services including credit and technical assistance to facilitate the application of training to income generating activities. Country-specific instruments, manuals and procedures are developed and used as guidelines for operationalizing each step of the methodology. This makes training purposeful, relevant and systematic. Needless to say, TRUGA Methodology offers adequate scope for local participation in planning and implementation of training activities and for utilization of local materials, skills and resources.

TRUGA Project commenced in Nepal some five years ago. During February 1984 through June 1986, it was launched as a pilot project under the technical and financial assistance of the ILO and SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency). The project was launched within the DCVI which is by tradition a major agency to provide training in various skills and trades. The primary purpose of the project was to test the validity and reliability of the TRUGA Methodology for improving the existing or developing new vocational training programmes. In support of this objective, the major thrust was to develop, test and validate manuals, instruments and procedures. Accordingly, during this phase, a set of eight TRUGA manuals was developed, tested and adapted to suit the local conditions of Nepal's rural areas. On top of that, training programmes were mounted at five sites covering all three ecological belts of the country. For instance, Bhatte Danda (Lalitpur District) and Khopasi (Kabhre Palanchok District) were located in hills, and Sano Siluwari (Sindhu Palchok

District) and Chauri Kharka (Solukhumbu District) in mountain, while Gularia (Bardia District) represented the Terai. On the whole, 22 training courses in 9 broad subject areas (knitting, weaving, tailoring, pottery, tile making, bullock cart and wooden wheel construction and repair, furniture carpentry, vegetable drying, packing and pickling, and hand-paper making) covering a span of 2 to 24 weeks were offered to 287 persons. Some 254 persons successfully completed their training courses in 8 subject areas and two-thirds of them were women.³¹ A follow up study to evaluate the impact of training has shown that the project had pioneered many skill activities in its approach areas.³² Moreover, the multiplier effect in the form of beneficiaries training their family members and neighbours was encouraging.³³

TRUGA activities were continued under Phase I during December 1986 through November 1988 with the technical and financial assistance of the ILO and UNDP. Now, the project activities, with a target of training 400-600 persons, were launched in the districts of the Far-Western Development Region. Training programmes were mounted in 15 sites under 3 cycles covering all the nine districts of the region. Considering the needs and viability, three broad types of courses (textile weaving, knitting, and vegetable/meat drying and packing) were offered to 375 persons, and 329 trainees successfully completed the courses. The employment effects of training were impressive. An evaluation report found that over 60 percent of the trainees were engaged in gainful employment and a multiplier effect was observed amongst the ex-trainees involving 3-4 additional family members in their trades.³⁴

The positive outcomes of the project activities created ground for its further continuation. And, the project is now extended under Phase II to cover a period from December 1988 to May 1991, again with the technical and financial assistance of the ILO and UNDP. The target of the present phase is to provide skill training to 600-800 persons through 31 training programmes to be mounted at different sites embracing all the 24 districts of the Mid-Western and Far-Western Development Regions. Through multiplier effect, it is hoped that some 2500 persons will ultimately benefit from the project.³⁵

Some of the activities planned for the present phase have already been on the move. A four-day workshop seminar was organized in Dhangadhi during the first week of January 1989. Participated in by Director General, Deputy Director General (Planning) and CTO of the DCVI, TRUGA Project staff and the DCVI officials of the Far-Western Development Region, the workshop resulted in the preparation of a TRUGA Operation Manual apart from other activities. TRUGA training programmes have already been mounted in 9 sites - Kachanapur and Kohalpur (Banke District), Bayal Pata (Achham District), Koltee (Bajura District), Dhadhagaon (Salyan District), Parashyauni (Dang District), Kaate and Brahma Dev (Darchula District), and Daijhi (Kanchanpur District). The courses offered include textile weaving, dhaka weaving pottery, wool and cotton spinning, knitting and ginger processing. Besides, training programme is going to be launched in Jajarkot very shortly.

This phase of the TRUGA Project is also making attempts towards integration with rural vocational training or employment generation programmes of some other agencies. Thus far, such attempts are three in number. TRUGA launched, its training course on pottery at Parshyauni of Dang District in collaboration with GTZ-assisted Ceramic Promotion Project. Training course on spinning and knitting mounted at Kohalpur of Banke District is in mutual cooperation with Nepal Rastra Bank's Lead Banking Project. And, TRUGA worked in association with UNFPA-funded Cottage Industry for Women Project in launching its training course at Kaate of Darchula District. Apart from the above, TRUGA Project has also extended raw materials support to trainees of textile weaving course addressed to Deoki Community at Melauli of Baitadi District, and technical supports for repair of knitting machines to local hosiery practitioners of Dadeldhura, and for loom making using local materials to local carpenters of Achham, Bajura and Darchula. The Project has also established a TRUGA Liaison Office within DCVI's Banke District Office with three major purposes - to promote publicity of TRUGA Methodology, to facilitate service delivery to TRUGA programmes launched at different sites, and to coordinate with activities of the Lead Banking Project in Mid-Western and Far-Western Regions.

TRUGA PROJECT AND THE BNP

The Relevance of the TRUGA Project in the context of the BNP is self-evident. Addressed to the rural poor and designed to promote gainful employment through relevant training in identified skills and trades of local needs as TRUGA is, the project, though of a modest scale, appears by all counts in line with the focus of the BNP. Moreover, the project activities are meant for the districts of the Mid-Western and Far-Western Development Regions where the concentration of poverty is relatively very high.

The relevance of TRUGA may also be judged from the methodological perspective, particularly with reference to some emerging issues of concern relating to rural vocational training programmes in Nepal. To begin with, most of the existing programmes have piece meal approach. Training given without follow up services, credit floated without adequate training, entrepreneurship facilitated without care of market or training offered without identification of employment opportunities are at their best partial attacks to the problem and, therefore, cannot fully ensure accomplishment of the ultimate purpose of vocational training. Promotion of gainful employment is the real proof of the pudding and this is by and large the composite result of the play and interplay of such inter-related processes as identification of training needs, planning and delivery of training, and provision of follow up and supports. This calls for a structured, holistic approach which the systems approach of TRUGA consisting of integrated steps in all the said aspects hopefully offers.

Poor utilization of training is a common observation in Nepal. This may be due to several reasons including inappropriate selection of training points or beneficiaries, irrelevant subjects of training, lack of follow up and support services, and a host of socio-cultural or attitudinal factors. But the ultimate results are the same - wastage of scarce resources spent on such training on the one hand and perpetuation of

poverty in the target group on the other. The prevalent practice of evaluating the success of training programmes or the performance of training agencies on the basis of the size of enrolment or output has motivated the planners and implementors to go in for more enrolment or output, often irrespective of eligibility of beneficiaries, than for what the trainees do after training. Take care of training and it will take care of utilization has become a popular idea. Against this, TRUGA makes express provisions for caring utilization through placement, credit, follow up and support services apart from providing training on relevant skills to eligible beneficiaries. The present phase of the project has plan for establishment and operation of a Revolving Fund to provide follow-up support for trainees.

One key issue is the mobilization of local support and participation. Promotion of local participation has ever been a popular slogan everywhere but this is the point where problems have often eluded solutions. The growing culture of dependence at the national or local level has constrained the growth of participation.³⁶ Too much aid does not always ensure much development. Moreover, the top-down planning has strengthened the attitude of indifference at the grassroot level. So long as programmes are imposed from above, expecting much from the bottom remains a mere wishful thinking. TRUGA's local level approach of planning and on-the-spot approach of delivery offers scope for high participation. The methodology, by its very philosophy, is local-based in identifying areas of training, selecting beneficiaries, developing training package or building mechanism for follow up and support services. This approach is likely to be cost-effective as well in the sense that training is utilized, gainful employment is created, and wastage is reduced.

Problem of coordination is a critical issue in all development programmes including the rural vocational training. Over the years, several agencies at different levels in government, corporate or non-government sectors have come forward with skill training activities for the rural poor. In some cases, even a single agency is launching a variety of programmes. This looks a good idea for it provides for multiple attacks on the problem of rural poverty and unemployment. But it requires an orchestrated move which is possible only when there is strong coordination, cooperation, complementarity and concerted effort at all levels, which is a rare phenomenon in Nepal. Surprisingly, coordination is the dominant point of discussion in seminars, workshops and peer-group meetings but, in practice, everybody beats its own drums and goes on with its own approaches, methods, materials and resources to meet its own objectives. Consequently, programmes are too scattered with unmanageable multiplicity, complicating the task of coordination. Perhaps, there is not even a single agency in Nepal which can provide at least a comprehensive list of programmes now in operation at different levels and parts of the country. The results are overlapping and duplication of efforts, misallocation of resources, high concentration in certain 'show case' places, and, above all, inter-agency rivalry, if not conflict, instead of complementarity.³⁷ The worst of all is the growing state of confusion regarding who will do what, where, when and how and with which resources. The intent is not to discourage the initiatives or the generosity of the donors but

to make a polite appeal to search a strategy to evolve a functional mechanism of coordination and complementarity among programmes and agencies. It seems that TRUGA tries to learn a lesson from this as it seeks to roll training in such regions, subjects or groups which are less touched by other comparable programmes. And, TRUGA's attempts for integration with other projects, which is a new feature of the present phase, mark a good beginning.

Last, but not of least significance, is the issue of institutionalization. Initiating development is not a big problem in Nepal particularly when donors are plentiful in number, and they often vie with one another. Our past experiences have taught us like this. The crux of the problem is sustenance. So long as the donor's interest continues to gain height and the aid charisma is there, the programme goes a smooth way in a 'honey moon' spirit. But, once the aid stops or declines, things abruptly take a different turn. In most cases, programmes fade out one after another and ultimately reaches a halt perhaps to prove the 'myth of development.' The main reason for this state of affairs is that things are seldom institutionalized in the structure of the recipient system. Aid is soft, moves at the surface, and goes back leaving little penetrated into the hard core. TRUGA appears to be aware of this phenomenon, which is symbolized in its mission to institutionalize the methodology in the regular training programmes of the DCVI.38

CONCLUSION

Despite planned efforts of three and half decades, mass poverty continues to pose the greatest challenge in Nepal. Even on an austere definition, 42.55 percent of the population (i.e. some 7.5 million people) now exist below the 'poverty line.' This is an alarming situation. The economics, politics or ethics of development cannot digest it. Development should no more mock the aspirations of the people. BNP is a right response towards the proper purpose.

The success of BNP largely depends on two things: Self-sufficiency in the production of basic needs goods so as to ensure smooth and regulated supply at the doors of the people on the one hand and, more importantly, the raising of the power of the people, particularly the poor mostly residing in rural areas, to purchase such goods through generation of employment and income on the other. It is in the latter context that vocational training programmes can make tangible contribution while creating substantial scope for use of human resources to meet the first purpose as well. TRUGA both as a methodology and a skill training project, seems to be a purposeful intervention in line with the object of the BNP.

Of a modest scale as TRUGA is, viewed in terms of the numerical size of its target, it would not be just to expect many answers to the problem from this project alone. But, in view of its concentration in the most backward regions and severe poverty groups, the attempt has many points to commend. It may not be naive to see that the project has also scope in the regions it has not touched thus far. Moreover, it is basically a training methodology which could be taken into consideration while going

in for improving the existing or developing new rural vocational training programmes in the country. Needless to say, TRUGA manuals, instruments and procedures could provide useful reference for the purpose.

FOOTNOTES

1. The first attempt to define the standard of living in terms of basic needs was made by an UN Document as early as 1954. But this could not influence much the development strategies of the 1950s and 1960s, which were virtually growth-oriented. Later in 1969, Pearson Report emphasized the policy of income distribution with a view to reducing the problem of growing inequality. Then after, international agencies like the ILO and the World Bank began a new search for anti-poverty measures. Robert McNamara's Presidential Addresses to the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors in 1972 and 1973 also raised many issues in this respect. They may be considered as antecedents of Basic Needs Strategy. But, the clear interpretation and determination were first seen in the ILO's World Employment Conference of 1976.

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