

vorhaben im Bankensektor und Baubereich abhängig. Die nächsten Jahre der japanischen Politik werden insofern sehr spannend.

Raimund Bleischwitz

Sustainable Management of Natural and Human Resources for a Better Quality of Life in South Asia

Kathmandu, 14th – 17th October 2000

This conference was the first joint activity of the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) at the Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu and the Department of Geography, University of Mainz, Germany. Both institutions signed a co-operation contract in 2000. Participants at this conference were Nepali and German scientists for the most part. They covered a wide variety of disciplines from scientific as well as practical backgrounds. Papers on science and engineering, on strategies of resource management as well as on tourism and labour-migration were numerous. In particular, there were contributions on the history of precipitation on the Indian subcontinent, on mineral resources and on "bio-engineering"-potentials for rural roads in Nepal as well as on geological and economic prospects of tunnel-construction.

Under the topic of resource management there were presentations on land use patterns and especially on ongoing water management projects. Forest and pasture utilization of rural stakeholders and their legal conditions were focussed and analysed regarding the potentials for nature conservation and sustainable development. A second focus was on the detailed analysis of small catchment areas and the identification of appropriate management activities to fulfill the increasing water needs. From the social science perspective, several papers dealt with the labour markets in Nepal, including labour migration on the regional and international levels.

The majority of papers were based on scientific case studies and only a few papers gave state-of-the-art presentations on a more general level. There were very few participants from international and bilateral aid and development agencies. However, several contributions, especially those from applied or practical projects, treated the direct participation of the local population in order to solve local problems and to improve local conditions.

About 75 percent of the presentations dealt with Nepal. These presentations were very often followed by passionate and controversial discussions, especially when papers dealt with "hot issues", such as dams or road con-

struction. Due to the small number of participants from other South Asian countries, the scientific and practical exchange on the subcontinental level was, unfortunately, quite limited. Nor did the topic of improving the quality of life receive much attention. Very few presentations made specific recommendations and were based on the activities and experiences of practical development projects.

This conference, which was supported by the German Scientific Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, DAAD) and the Austrian non-governmental organization Eco-Himal did, however, provide a platform for the intensive discussion of the broad and complex issues that comprise the concept of sustainable development. Unfortunately, specific recommendations for development activities and more applied research were scarcely made. There still remains a strong need to increase the dialogue and exchange between science, politics and development practitioners in order to improve the quality of life in South Asia.

Jürgen Clemens

Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Interfacing New Dimensions and Perspectives

Dhaka, 22nd – 24th October 2000

The South Asian Cooperation for Regional Development (SAARC), comprising India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives, was initiated by Bangladesh's Zia ur Rahman, a hero of the war of independence ("liberation" in Bangladesh), a general, dictator ("martial law administrator") and later president. Assassinated in a failed coup d'état in 1981 he did not live long enough to see SAARC come into being in 1985. Bangladeshis are rightly proud of their initiative for a regional cooperation, which explains why the Bangladesh Institute of Strategic Studies (BISS), an army outfit and leading government think-tank for national and foreign relations questions, organized this conference, despite the fact that Zia's widow, a former prime minister, is the leader of the opposition and engaged in a disturbingly obstructive attempt to prevent the government, led by the daughter of the "Father of the Nation" Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, from completing its term. Whereas Sheikh Hasina Wajid is blamed by Khalida Zia for being too close to India, Khalida's nationalist policy at the expense of the country's traditional good relations with India (without which Bangladesh would hardly have gained independence) brings her too close to Pakistan,