

Crisis of Natural Resources and Livelihood Security Discussion

Dr. Naruemon Thanjumbon:

“Thank you. We have three very interesting papers, two from India, East and West, and one from Thailand; all three were linked with the issue of food security. Gopinath started talking about the links between Human Security and emphasized that livelihood security needs to be related. We need to look towards other watersheds; we’re also talking about the issue of the livelihood security which is related to food security. Abdul Shaban also talked about food security and described the situation in the western region of India. I think you and Kritsda have something in common in that it shows the paradox that India is the first [inaudible] country in terms of food but still lacks food. Kritsda demonstrated a way forward to solve it but he started by redefining the concepts. So we have two particular cases that were interesting and a new concept that starts from the movement that was already fighting for various cases. I would like to open the floor for comments and discussion.”

Unidentified speaker:

“I am [inaudible] teaching geography at [inaudible] School of Economics. I would like to join our chair person in congratulating our three panelists for bringing up very important issues of human security, what we call the food security. There were two case studies, two from India and one from Thailand. They all linked livelihood security to food security. But it requires careful ecological, geographical, economical and social inquiries. We need to see the various components and missing links in the [inaudible], like ethics at the local level. Dr. Abdul has pointed out that we need a sense of responsibility. We have to create this.”

Dr. Naruemon Thanjumbon:

“Alright, thank you. Anyone else?”

Unidentified speaker:

“Having been a student of gender studies, I have three questions. For Gopinath, you presented very well the management of watershed. Communities are beginning to participate in the management of development. But you didn’t mention gender roles, what men and women are doing? Particularly in south Asia, there is a trend where women are marginalized or limited to household roles. They are deprived at the decision-making level. So what is the [inaudible] of gender roles in management? My second question to you, you mentioned somewhere that girls are dropping out of school – girls and not boys. What other regions behind [inaudible]. These are both for Gopinath. And this last one is for Dr. Abdul: you mentioned that [inaudible] of households. But [inaudible]. Why did you not mention this [inaudible]. [Inaudible]. And particularly there is a common practice in south Asia that within the household, women, especially mothers, eat [inaudible] after other family members. In your study of India, patterns of food [inaudible]. I would like to know that pattern.”

P. Gopinath:

“The reason I mentioned gender is because in 1994 when guidelines [inaudible] for securing watershed there were clear-cut rules for gender classification. The two say that humans should participate in self-help rules and, even before watershed communities. But the guidelines suggest that there should be self-help groups to ensure that gender classification is [inaudible]. They told the ministry that it wasn’t implementing the program. [Inaudible]. There were thirteen self-help groups in that village but when I asked what their role was in terms of participation, they told me that just to be on record. So if an inspector comes to record a self-help group it is there. They can also call these groups [inaudible]. Gender roles for your understanding are pre-defined. That is the first aspect. The second aspect is that girls’ drop out rates are extremely high. Boys stay longer because the importance of girls’ education is not valued. You can look at the census data. There is a low percentage of women who are able to read and write. Girls’ education is not an important criterion in establishing gender roles because gender roles have been pre-defined – girls take care of the home and perhaps a little other manual work. So school drop out rates are high for girls. This is very specific.”

Abdul Shaban:

“Thank you very much for this question. I was unable to talk on this issue because of [inaudible]. Gender issues are very important in [inaudible]. The women generally eat after the men have eaten everything. In my own house, my sisters will eat whatever is left. This is an issue, how the distribution of food [inaudible]. This is a very important issue that should not be overlooked. [Inaudible].

Dr. Naruemon Thanjumbon:

“Any more comments or questions? In this session we can see so many things – in the introduction Dr. Chantana asked us to find more questions and then create answers and even today I think we’ve already found some common answers together, especially when we look at the issue of food. We talked about food security, food crisis, food production, and we can see that the issue of human security is directly linked to the issue of food especially in regards to livelihood security as elaborated by P. Gopinath. Abdul Shaban talked to us about the issue of food security especially in food production while Kritsda suggested a few possible solutions to the food crises. Now we’ll get comments from our participants. When we talk about the issue of [inaudible] we should also include the issue of gender because it’s not only indigenous people when we talk about marginalized peoples but also Asia. In many other countries we face the same issue. If we are going to look at the issue of food security and try to link it as a point of human security, we also need to look at the issue of equality and, in the case of equality, we also need to bring in the issue of gender. This is the common link between the three papers. Now we will probably see many such cases because at home we are going to face the issue of free trade agreements. Here India is at the forefront of the fight. We can see specific cases in India. They are linked with movements in Thailand that are trying to redefine the meaning of food; so in that case we can use it as a weapon of the weak to fight back. These are things we can find out and I think for us when we look at the issue of human security and food we’re not only looking at the FAO concept or the mainstream

concept but we're also trying to find a new operative meaning. I think the cases in India and Thailand will yield some answers. Now that it's six o'clock we face a physical problem of our own concerning food – that is our own hunger. Let me close our session.”

[Session ends]