

New concepts of labour and economy

Summary:

The informal sector/economy is growing all over the world. At present in India alone the informal economy is 93% and the situation in Africa, Latin America and Asian countries is the same.

With this growing sector it becomes important to organise and have enabling laws for sustainable livelihood. For example, if we take the home based workers, the struggle was able to get a convention passed by the ILO in 1996 but even today many countries need to ratify it. We need to lobby this and get the support of as many partners in this. Similarly the issue of Rickshaw pullers, vendors and hawkers, who play a very important role in a city's economy are not included in the urban planning. This is true in many cities of the world where we have free markets and give alternate plan to them.

As RLA objective, our focus should be on poverty removal and for that our objective should be on humanity with livelihood.

The issue of liberalisation is being debated all over the world. What we propose is liberalisation and globalisation as the poor want. To localise it and make favourable laws for the poor. For e.g. on one side we have global markets opening up but on the other side our forest workers have to depend on government infrastructure for marketing it, although they know they can get four times the price in the local market.

What the poor need is scaling up of opportunities for them. The demand is for skilled workers. But where are the institutions for them? We have to find them or make the existing ones enable them. We have to see how science and technology, IT and energy can reduce the drudgery and make them sustainable and self-reliant.

We need to dialogue, network and do advocacy in these areas to get a rightful place. We (Labour) are visible but we want representation.

The challenge in this millennium is to increase our organisational skills, be organised, keep our values and bring our future (the children) into the mainstream economy.

It is time once again to remember Gandhiji's philosophy of simplicity, truth, non-violence and self-reliance.

We have to remember that countries have most of their resources to fulfil the needs of the population. What consumerism is bringing in is the greed and not the need of humankind and that disturbs the ethical values of the labour system.

Please contact: Rajendra Ravi, Lokayan, 13 Alipur Road, Delhi – 110054, India