

## **Human Development Organisation – Sri Lanka**

In 2008 the Human Development Organisation (HDO) in Sri Lanka worked with advocacy and research activities at national level, and on awareness raising and human rights campaign activities in the regional districts of Nuwara Eliya, Kandy and Kegalle.

The South Asian People's Assembly was held in Colombo in July 2008 in connection with the 15th SAARC Summit. Around 1500 delegates from civil society organisations and various movements had assembled from all South Asian countries to oppose militarisation, nuclearisation and globalisation. In a common demand, they urged for democracy, equality and peace in South Asia. The Asia Dalit Rights Movement (ADRM) organised a workshop along the theme "Caste and Caste Based discrimination in South Asia", where the Dalit representatives demanded increased awareness on the issue of caste-based discrimination and dignity, equality, justice and peace for all.

Throughout the year HDO has supported work and descent based groups like plantation workers, urban health and sanitation workers in obtaining their rights. HDO are also involved in organising contacts and forming groups among urban-based sanitation and plantation workers. HDO is in the process of organising a common platform for different groups of sanitation workers living in the various cities of Sri Lanka. In 2008, HDO was furthermore involved in the community mobilisation of sanitation workers. As an outcome, the organisation established five sanitary workers' groups on work-based discrimination in three districts. The groups discussed matters pertaining to human rights, including labour rights. Moreover, HDO sensitised grassroots-level key leaders to strengthen their participation in local politics. It lobbied the Urban Council towards prioritising the social development of sanitary workers and towards working for the elimination of discrimination against women and men.

HDO also organised a group of Dalits who were affected by the tsunami in Ampara, Eastern Province and provided them with economic support for development of their traditional occupation. In addition, HDO arranged education advancement programmes which were conducted among children of urban workers.

National level research was conducted with the Department of Sociology at University of Peradeniya. In cooperation with the University, a consultation on caste issues was organised where around 50 people participated.

Five HDO representatives participated in, and contributed to, the Regional Human Rights Training Programme organised by the ADRM in Bangkok with the cooperation of FORUM-ASIA.