

# Annual Activity Report

## May 2005-June, 2006

### Mutual Advancement and Reconciliation in Society (MARS)

#### **Forewords:**

The poor socio-politico-economic situation in Pakistan does not paint a pretty picture of its people, particularly those belonging to the underprivileged section of the society. Poverty alleviation is a much acclaimed program of the government to improve the working condition of its people. The government also claimed of 4.2% poverty reduction during the year 2003-2004. Whereas international development agencies estimate that the ratio of poverty further increased in the past by 1.5%. According to some independent estimates, the ratio of population living below the line of poverty, increased up to 40% in 2003. The claims of the present regime may be true but the fruits of the economic revival were yet to reach to the common people.

Indeed, majority of the working children happen to those who work for the poverty alleviation of their families. However, poverty cannot be the only explanation nor it could be justified for child labour, particularly girl child labour. Strict surveillances are imposed on women's social interaction.

The nexus between 1999 and 2000 brought evidence to the surface regarding social discrimination with members belonging to labour community, e.g. educational institutions, restaurants, barbar's shops. Ofcourse, the institutionalized forms of discriminations, happens to be more subtle and have broader impact, however, the individual behaviour can be equally devastating on personal level. The violence inflicted on psyche of a human being through discrimination is hard to remove.

State policies and religion specific legislation planted religious and social conflicts in the past twenty years. Enhanced and widespread social and religious discrimination was a direct and immediate outcome and the relationships at individual, family, social groups (having different faith background) and community level, soared.

In a globalized world, any particular reality well analyzed does indicate how the local is connected to the global. Pakistan is one of the countries where we can see, experience and understand the negative effects of globalization that does not prioritize LIFE. The world after 9-11 has been witnessing the globalization of war and terrorism while a peaceful solution of conflicts is apparently forsaken in the name of a pre-emptive attack.

Moreover, Militarization and nuclearization has not only been disturbing factor for the social and economic life but also the political uncertainty to a large extent due to these factors. A macho and chauvinist nationalism became a need and were reflected in education, media internal and foreign policies of the country.

Dealing with the immediate insecurities and the overall alienation, the people became less receptive to theories of non-violence which otherwise were indigenous and part of the local culture.

**Rockas Adeel**  
**Director**

## Introduction and interventions of MARS:

Mutual Advancement and Reconciliation in Society (MARS) is a non-profitable, non-partisan and non-governmental organization, working for the protection and promotion of human rights. MARS involves itself in conscientization and advocacy of human rights, particularly those concerning to women and child rights. The organization was established in 2002 and got registered in 2005.

MARS makes necessary interventions on local and national level to generate awareness on basic health issues, and improve the socio-economic conditions of the people through provision of formal and non-formal education. It is also supporting peace, inter-religious and social harmony modules, which include working with the underprivileged communities belonging to rural and urban areas. These initiatives are aimed at;

- *Improving the working condition of labour community.*
- *Setting a road map to non-violence in Pakistan, and joining non-violent movements in the world.*
- *Weeding out social and religious biases.*
- *Testing out philosophy of conflict resolution as a modern tool of active non-violence.*

## Peace building program (Seminars/workshops):

A wave of terrorists' attacks on Christian Institutions started in October 2001 after the US attack on Afghanistan and 45 lives had been lost till December 2003.

A preferential space for the Muslim citizens that the Constitutional provisions tried to maintain, created a dangerous mindset among the majority citizens. This mindset intrigued citizens to grab properties including places of worship, posed a social sanction on expression of faith and conscience and consequently blocked the way of refinement at individual as well social levels.

MARS organized various seminars on district level to promote social harmony among the people belonging to majority and minority communities. The seminars helped to device safeguards against those who try to water down the potential of inter-religious harmony.

Workshops on "Peace Building Mechanisms and Religious Leadership" organized in April-May, 2006 was an opening activity of MARS. This workshop helped to:

- *Organize peace building committees/groups.*
- *Device strategies to impart Peace Education among school children.*
- *Discuss possibilities of inter-faith harmony during Sunday prayers, Friday prayer gatherings and worship in temples.*



- Join governmental and civil society organizations on national and international level to voice out peace.

### Peace Education Program (PEP):

MARS is using various tools to study the multi-dimensional reality of violence vis-à-vis religious intolerance overwhelming in the society. MARS is active in promoting peace and inter-religious harmony. Through Peace Education Program, during their school timing, students assemble at 12:00 noons and pray for global peace.



Under the same program some young people are trained to promote the peace education among the communities “**Inter-religious youth peace leadership training program**”. Jandiala Road with Christian youth two leadership training program were arranged to enhance their leadership qualities. Here in this area most of the people related with labor and their children could not get education, youth is also involved in taking drugs. Here we have a youth unite that is working for the upliftment of the youth and children to secure them such illegal activities.

**Inter-religious Youth Festival** was arranged with youth at Mariamabad, 45 young participants took part in this activity. During the festival emphasize was made on peace promotion and sustainable development, Director Mr. Rockas Adeel said that peace is a major tool of development in every part of the world. Today is a big need of the time for our society and the whole world as well that we must come out from social, & religious discriminations and prejudices so that the human beings and the world can be more secure healthy and developed.



An-overview of Peace Activities				
Peace activities	Number of activities	Females	Males	Total
Community and religious leadership programs	7	182	230	412
Inter-religious Youth festival	1	-	45	-
Inter-religious committee	2	-	-	-
School peace programs	10	105	180	285
<b>Total Participation</b>				<b>697</b>

Total participation of youth and school children has been 285 and community members and religious leadership 412. Two inter-religious committee are actively working one religious leadership and one young peace builders.

## Role of women in peace-building; (Women empowerment)

In a society where men kill their female relatives purportedly to preserve their so-called 'honour' it is difficult to imagine as active social life for women. Such a pervert notion of honour also endangers a pervasive culture of shame and secrecy, which compels all abused women and children to suffer in silence. Extrapolating from the occasional reported cases and from anecdotal evidence, it is not hard to imagine what goes on within the confines of the proverbial 'four walls' of homes and in offices, schools, factories, madrassas and worst of all, in prisons and police stations.



In order to bring the women from the outer margins to the main pool of their socio-economic development, MARS is taking initiatives for the active participation of women in social life. Women belonging to majority and minority communities are involved in various interventions of Peace Education program.

## Child rights; socio-economic context:

MARS has established Primary Education Centers (PEC) at district Sheikhpura. Child labour is a common social practice over the district and the society seems to be *High Child Labour Equilibrium Society*. According to some independent statistics children contribute to 18% of the total labour community in the country and this sector employs more girls than boys.



### **Primary Education Centers are aimed at:**

- Combating child labour through provision of formal and non-formal education.
- Providing non-formal education to working children (boys and girls) within the age bracket of 05-14 years.
- Imparting pre-vocational skills to working children and their siblings.

## Project performance (efficiency, effectiveness) and impacts:

**Activities planned and implanted (per results, and assessment of assumptions related to activities:**

The program was strategically designed to align with the work plan. Social mobilization was aimed to identify the target children and explore suitable premises for Primary Education Center.



### Social mobilization and awareness raising:

Mars's program strategy focuses on effective participation of parents, community members, youth, contractors and sub-contractors in the various interventions of the action program. MARS adopted PRA approach, which is commonly known as Participation, Reflection and Action.

For the successful implementation and sustainability of the Action Program, Village

Education Committees (VEC) and Family Education Committees (FEC) were organized in order to generate a sense of ownership among the target communities.

Empowerment of VEC and FEC linked to Primary Education Center is highly crucial.

Therefore, conscientization of the target communities and other stakeholders continued during the period under review. Contractors and sub-contractors are also involved in the program activities.

#### **Means planned and used:**

##### ***Baseline survey of the target areas:***

A baseline survey was carried out at district Sheikhpura to identify the target children. The community members and mothers were also involved in survey to identify the target children.



#### **Effectiveness and impact; including reasons for deviation:**

##### ***Progress towards purpose (and assessment of assumption)***

The activities of the program gained momentum during the period under review. The progress towards purpose was as follows:

- Profiles of 200 children were prepared for PEC1 PEC2 and PEC3.
- PEC1, PEC2 and PEC3 are functional, whereas other Primary Education Centers will start functioning soon.
- The communities belonging to the target areas are organized into 6 Village Education and Six Family Education Committees to monitor the performance of, and share progress of the schools.

## An overview of the progress towards results:

- A container carrying 300 items which included eatables, winter clothes and home accessories were provided to earthquake victims, in October 15, 2005 at Muzafarabad.
- Primary Education Centers (PEC) started functioning in 2005-2006.
- 116 children (boys and girls) are being benefited from Primary Education.
- 15 out of 22 (total enrollment) girls are imparted pre-vocational skills during the year 2005.
- Village Education Committees and Family Education Committees (6 each) have been formed to monitor the performance of PECs.
- 520 persons including school children, working children, target communities, religious leaders have directly benefited from the Peace Education Program.
- Seminars and workshops (six each) were organized on "Peace and Inter-Religious harmony".
- 240 children belonging to 4 schools are inculcated peace education.
- 800 siblings of school children are also benefiting from Peace Education Program.
- 25 religious leaders belonging to majority and minority communities have been sensitized about social harmony.
- 2 inter-religious youth peace leadership training programs and 3 leadership program.
- Five medical camps were organized to reach out to 1500 people, who were deprived of basic health amenities.
- 10 special children were provided free medication and medical check-up.
- Three wheel chairs were provided to special persons
- One mobile medical unit (a staff nurse and social mobilizers) provide health amenities to brick kiln workers.
- 6 couples were trained as Natural Family Planning Activists.
- 10 women were provided free medical treatment at Aitcheson Hospital-Lahore.
- 4 trainings were organized for the capacity building of volunteers and field staff.
- Two General health awareness programs were organized to generate awareness on primary health care especially child and mothers issues.
- Five trainings on Social Mobilization, two on Planning and leadership were organized for capacity building of peace activists.



## Training workshop on Natural Family Planning and Family Life:

In order to control the increasingly growing population, the government has launched several campaigns in the country, particularly in rural-urban areas. The use of contraceptives is widely promoted as an effective tool for family planning. However, the damage potential of the contraceptives is not touched upon in these campaigns. On the other hand, women, who contribute to 26% of the national literacy rate, have no means of knowing about natural methods to achieve or avoid pregnancy. Hence, the majority of women have no other choice except to adopt artificial methods for family planning.



MARS has organized four training programs on NFP. 20 couples are trained as NFP activists to impart the skills in their respective communities. 10 women are provided free reproductive health treatment. Introduction and promotion of NFP is a collaborative effort of MARS and Archdiocesan Family Life Commission-Lahore.

### Basic health amenities:

Indeed, the government has made several sincere efforts to provide basic health amenities. However, in many parts of the country, particularly, in rural areas people continue to live with no means of basic health amenities.

People belonging to underprivileged communities are often prone to serious diseases like Tuberculosis, etc. On the other hand, parents often fail to approach doctors due to the big expenses involved in medical treatment.



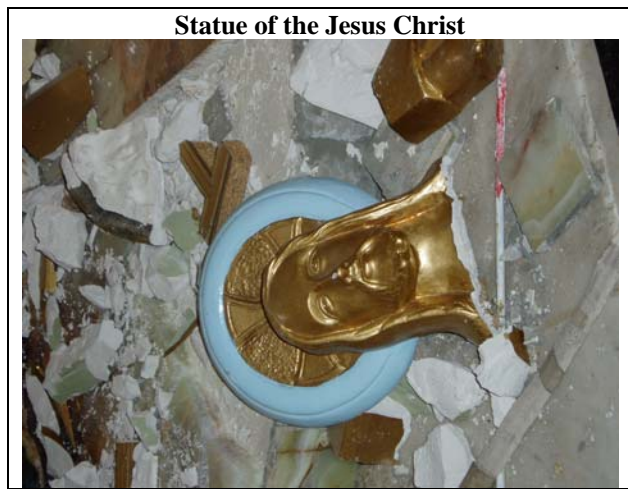
MARS arranges for free medical treatment of the deserving cases. Over the past one year, MARS has provided rehabilitation to the people belonging to the target communities. Women are sensitized about mother-child and Reproductive Health care.

## Terrorism attack on church in Sangla Hill District Nankana November -05

Mr. Amir Arif active member of MARS Personally visited Sangla Hill, where **Church of Holly Spirit, St. Mary's convent, St. Mary's School, Parish House, Presbyterian Church and Pastor's House** Sangla Hill District Nankana, was inflamed with chemical and fire under the pretence of molestation of Holy Quran By MR. Yousaf, which was not reality. I personally collected views from different people, the game was something else. Four individuals were playing gamble, main players Kaloo Sunyara (Gold smith) and yousaf were there. People were explained that Yousaf Masih was winning

constantly for last three four days. Last day on 11<sup>th</sup> November on Friday once again Yousaf Masih won the game but Kaloo Sunyara could not bear it and asked Yousaf to give me back my money When Yousaf refused Kaloo scuffling was started between both of them. When Yousaf tried to run away after getting released from Kaloo, he blamed him that he inflamed the paper of Holy Quran.

When Kaloo ran after Yousaf and shouted that he burnt the Holly Quran, people gathered there, Yousaf came back and explained to people that I am ready to swear Holy Bible that I did not do so, as Kaloo was saying. Thus people believed Yousaf and to set at rest this matter. But later on Muhammad Zulifqar Mochi(buckler) shouted and ran towards the main city and told every person that Quran was burnt by Yousaf. People gathered there and made plan at the home of Tehsil Nazim Haji Muhammad Malik Azim. After the planning police also became a part of this terrible incident, while the local government was informed by the people ad Parish priest Fr. Samson Dilawar and Presbyterian Pastor but police did not take notice. Thus Friday night Muslims came to Christian's houses and stoned at their houses.



After this action, people were informed for



morning strike On Saturday these announcements were made in Mosques. Thus in the morning people invaded of all above mentioned church properties and invaders were estimated above 2000. All these buildings and Church is terribly destroyed. Record of the both churches have been burnt nothing behind there. People are still under fear could not sleep, when protector (Government Machinery like Police, Nazim Tehsil) will be the part of such type of terrorism activities. On Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November Chief

Minister Pervaiz Elahi came at the spot, offered one 1000 million rupees for repairing but all religious leader said that we don't need your money, our demand is that all the culprits would be hanged so that, in future such type of incident of terrorism do not take place. Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi at the time unemployed DPO, SHO and some others officials. Nazim Haji Malik Muhammad Azim has ran away but case has been filed against him.

Such type of attacks at churches has been routine of the majority in Pakistan, and most of the time Christians affected by their aggression, discrimination and prejudice.