

REGIONAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER – SOUTH ASIA
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**UNESCO FORUM OF MINISTERS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES
IN SOUTH ASIA REGION**

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UNESCO Forum of Ministers of Social Protection Policies in South Asia Region

UNESCO works to create conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples based upon respect for community of shared values. UNESCO's mission is to contribute to the building of peace, eradication of poverty through inter cultural dialogue. The regional Forum of Ministers in charge of Social Development was launched by UNESCO within the frame work of its Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme. The first forum in South Asia in Bhurban, Pakistan in 2006 focused on governance and public accountability. The second forum in 2008 in New Delhi India focused on transparency, right to information and social development. The third meeting of Ministers of Social Protection Policies in South Asia was held at Colombo Sri Lanka 20th 22nd February 2011.

This year International Council on Social Welfare, South Asia Regional committee was one of the supporters of this Forum. Representing ICSW were Mr Denys Correll, Global Executive Director, and Mr A.S. Shenoy Regional President for the South Asia Region. Our national representatives from Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan were delegates at the Forum. Mr Denys Correll chaired one session and Mr A.S. Shenoy was a panelist.



After detailed consultation and deliberations the *Colombo Declaration* was approved and signed by representatives of the governments of Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives and Nepal.

The *Colombo Declaration* recommended strengthening regional cooperation among South Asian countries, enriching the field of social protection and research by exchanging best practice on social protection policies and undertaking cross country studies, exposure visits, and joint projects.

Other major recommendations included a call to UN organisations and international donors to support South Asian countries in their efforts to expand public awareness, outreach and the scope of social protection initiatives. The Forum of Ministers of the South Asia Region agreed in the *Colombo Declaration* to:

1. Pledge to increase public funding to build the capacity of social sciences in the regions, through evidence based research analysis and statistics.
2. Commit to adopt a comprehensive approach to social protection.
3. Recognise the need for expanding the scope and benefits of social protection to most neglected and vulnerable sectors of the society including informal workers, migrants, persons with disabilities, the urban poor and other marginalised groups facing discrimination and exclusion.
4. Emphasis child – sensitive social protection initiatives and as an effective strategy to break the inter-generational cycle of poverty and reduce socio-economic disparities.

Social Welfare Ministers of South Asian Region and about 40 selected academicians, researchers and representatives of International agencies participated in this forum.

SPFI CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP IN MUMBAI, INDIA

A social protection floor initiative is the best tool by which benefits of economic growth percolate effectively to the most marginalised and vulnerable segments of the populations. For this “inclusive development” is required. India is looking forward for a target of 8.5 to 8.7% of GDP growth this year. Indian economy has become remarkably resilient to external and domestic shocks with recovery in agriculture, industry and services.

ICSW SA Regional committee with the support of UNESCO, ILO, South Asia offices and TATA Institute of Social Sciences organised a consultative workshop on "From social protection to social justice – addressing issues of poverty and exclusion in India" on 18th and 19th March at TISS, Mumbai

The meet was inaugurated by Mr. Christian Rollet, International President ICSW, Mr. A. S. Shenoy Regional President South Asia Regional Committee ICSW facilitated and Prof. Surinder Jaswal, Dean TISS introduced the consultation themes. Dr. Shajahan Asst. Professor TISS was convener of the workshop.



The consultation was mainly to deliberate and develop ideas around the context under following themes.

- Poverty – Experiences and Experiments
- Exclusion – Realms and Responses
- Existing policies and Policy gaps
- Non-negotiables for social protection

The consultation brought selected academicians, researchers, practitioners, members of International organisations such as UNESCO, ILO, ICSW, GIPSPSI France, to engage in meaningful deliberations which generated ideas for further collaborative work in the area of promoting and institutionalising social protection with a rights and entitlements frame work.



Mr. Markus Ruck, ILO



Ms. Agnes Plassart, GIPSPFI, France

NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL PROTECTION IN SRI LANKA

The national chapter of ICSW Sri Lanka organised a workshop on Social Protection in Colombo on 11.12.2010 which was inaugurated by Mr. Ratnaweera, Senior Assistant Secretary of Social Services. Sr. GVD Thilakesari our National Member and Convener of workshop welcomed the gathering. Mr. A. Ranaweera, Director of National Institute of Social Development during technical session traced the history of Social security and welfare in Sri Lanka. He also dealt with various Social Protection Schemes of Sri Lankan Government. In the second session, Mr. John Thamber, former Director of social services made a presentation on Social Security and prevailing problems in Sri Lanka. Dr. Chandra Ratna Bandara of Samadeepa Social Centre handled the topic Social Security and Social Governance. At the end of the workshop, it was decided that the recommendations of the workshop will be brought to the notice of government for implementation.

The major recommendations were to form a joint Social Protection programme by government in consultation with non-governmental organisations and to give attention in the development process of war displaced persons by providing them alternative lively hood and shelters.

Representatives of Trade Unions and Civil Society Members from all regions of Sri Lanka participated in this workshop.

REBALANCING NECESSARY FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN ASIA

Mr. Anoop Singh, Director for the Asia Pacific Region at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that Asia performed remarkably well in 2010 with strong growth in China and India. IMF expected growth in Asia to remain relatively strong and continue at a fairly robust 7 % sustainable rate in 2011. He added Asia is an economic power house and it accounts for an increasing share of world's growth. This is mainly due to rapid growth in India and China over the last 10 years. In order to maintain these high growth rates, the region would need to rebalance and reduce its reliance on export growth. Rebalancing has to be key to sustaining growth partly because the growth in advanced economies will remain sluggish for some years.

ICSW SA REGIONAL COMMITTEE MEETINGS AT COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

The National chapter of ICSW Sri Lanka (NPC) organised a meeting of NGO's in Colombo on 23rd February 2011 to interact with Mr. Denys Correll, Executive Director of Global Office and Mr. A.S. Shenoy, Regional President of ICSW SA Regional Committee. About 20 representatives of NGO's attended this meeting. The meeting decided to strengthen the ICSW activities in Sri Lanka.

A meeting of the members of South Asia Regional Committee was also held at Colombo to discuss future activities for the National chapters of the South Asia Region.



A view of meeting with NGO's



National Members of SA Region in the meeting along with Mr. Denys

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