



**REGIONAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER – SOUTH ASIA**  
**JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH 2012**

**In this edition**

**MEMBER COUNTRY SOCIAL ISSUES**  
**AND**  
**UNESCO-CSH PUBLICATION ON THE RIGHT TO THE CITY IN**  
**INDIA**

***Social Development Protection Initiatives in India***

a) Rashtriya Swasthya Bhima Yojana (RSBY)

The Indian government is reviewing its various Development Protection Schemes introduced with the aim of trying to improve facilities for neglected and marginalised rural and urban populations.

In the middle of last year, the Central Government announced the extension of medical assistance under Rashtriya Swasthya Bhima Yojana (RSBY) medical insurance scheme to help domestic workers, the majority of whom are women in the age range of 18-59 years. These workers are from vulnerable communities and from backward areas. Most of them are illiterate, unskilled and do not understand the urban labour market.

The new insurance scheme is based on a smart card cashless health insurance and will be available to workers below the poverty line (up to Rs. 30,000 annually). The scheme will benefit about 47 million domestic workers. The funding for the scheme will be allocated from the National Social Security Fund for unorganised workers. The premium will be shared by central and state governments in the ratio of 75:25. In the case of North Eastern region and Jammu and Kashmir the ratio will be 90:10.

The RSBY is now being implemented in 25 states and union territories. The scheme has since been extended to building and other construction workers registered with Welfare Boards constituted under the Building and other Construction Workers (Regulation of employment and condition service) Act 1996 and under those under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme who have worked for more than 15 days during the preceding year. The Government proposes to extend the benefits of this scheme to overseas Indian workers.

b) Swavalamban Scheme to provide old age security to workers of unorganised sector

Another Insurance scheme approved by Government is Swavalamban to provide old age security for all workers in unorganised sectors. Under this scheme the Government

will provide assistance of Rs. 1,000 to 12,000 per year as a contribution to every new pension scheme up to the year 2013-2014. This will benefit 4 million subscribers.

This scheme is aimed to inculcate the habit of saving by workers who contribute any amount from Rs 1,000 to 12,000 a year towards the National Pension System account. This scheme will be managed by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) and the Government would release its contribution to it.

### ***Call for use of technology to solve socio-economic problems in Bangladesh***

Noted Bangladeshi economist, founder of the Grameen Bank Programme and Noble laureate Muhammed Yunus said that technology should be used to solve socio economic problems rather than for commercial exploitation discarding the economic theory that business was all about profit making. Prof Yunus had initiated Micro Finance to get over poverty without any intention of making money out of poor people.

The Grameen Bank programme which he started has helped about 8.3 million borrowers of which 97% are women. The programme succeeded in weaning people away from begging by making them sale persons. As a result of this programme about 22,000 people had become door to door salesmen in Bangladesh.

Another technological innovation he introduced to solve energy problems in Bangladesh were Solar Home systems. While 70% of people in Bangladesh had no access to electricity, he changed the situation by introducing Solar Home systems. In the beginning (1994) only ten systems could be sold a month but now it is 750,000 systems with the expectation the sales will increase to 1 million soon.

Prof Yunus in his review of the micro finance system feels micro finance is being abused by people exploiting poor borrowers by imposing high interest rates. This according to him is a complete abuse of the very purpose for which micro finance was created and suggested that there should be proper legislation to create a banking system for the poor.

### ***Review of Afghanistan's Government and UNICEF Country programme of co-operation 2010-2012***

Bredo, Research, Education and Development Organization, our National member in Afghanistan conducted a midterm review (MTR) of government and UNICEF Country programmes of co-operation implemented in Afghanistan.

The midterm review was conducted with the aim of critically reviewing the current country programmes (CP) and to asses the extent to which progress has been made towards reaching CP results for children and women, thereby contributing towards Afghanistan's National priorities and MDG's within a rapidly changing environment. This review focused on implementation of the impact of the following programmes.

- Water and sanitation programmes of UNICEF
- Child protection and birth registration
- Changes created in the life of women by UNICEF programmes
- Implementation and monitoring community development programmes
- Natural disaster and impact of UNICEF programmes.

The major recommendations of the review are.

1. Need for creating more awareness on UNICEF Programmes
2. Community based implementation and monitoring strategies need to be adopted for getting better results.
3. Local Imams and school teachers should be involved in awareness raising and community education activities.
4. Government departments should be involved more actively in helping UNICEF and communities for better implementation of the programmes.
5. UNICEF programmes in education, health, water and sanitation to be enhanced.
6. A collaboration mechanism between Government, NGO's and international organisations to be established.
7. An effective use of local and national electronic media (Radio and TV) to be implemented.
8. Changes created in the life of girls and women in communities by UNICEF programmes needs regular follow up.
9. There is need for more research studies in the UNICEF programme area.

*Source: Bredo report on Midterm Review of Government and UNICEF programmes in Afghanistan 2010-2012. For more details contact [deputy@bredo.org.af](mailto:deputy@bredo.org.af)*

### ***Report on World Economic Forum on Economic progress in Sri Lanka***

Sri Lanka has made an impressive jump of 10 places to 52<sup>nd</sup> from 62<sup>nd</sup> in rankings of the latest Global competitiveness Report (2011-2012) issued by the World Economic Forum. This is a further improvement from the 2009 – 2010 report which ranked the country to 79<sup>th</sup> position while last year's report placed Sri Lanka in the 62<sup>nd</sup> spot.

Sri Lanka made the greatest improvements in macro economic stability, infrastructure and security which World Economic Forum attributed to the improved climate following the end of the civil war.

*Source: NPC Email News Letter*

### ***Pakistan Region gives women legal right to property***

Pakistan Regional Assembly has passed a law making it illegal for parents not to extend property rights to female family members as per a report of RFF/RLS Radio Mashaal. The bill was presented in the Assembly in the north western region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by Deputy Noor Sahar and was unanimously passed under Islamic Sharia

law. According to this bill a daughter should receive half as much property from her parents as her brother would receive.

Source: [www.referi.org/policytracking@afppd.org](http://www.referi.org/policytracking@afppd.org)

### ***Nepal 2011 Census***

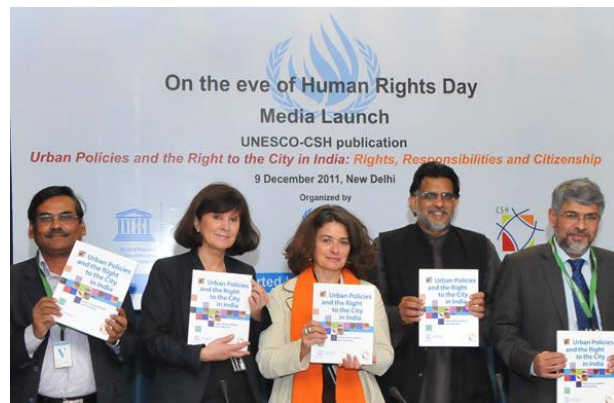
The preliminary report of the national population and housing census 2011 reports the country's population has increased to 26,620,809 with an annual growth of 1.4 %. During 2010 the population was 23,151,423. Katmandu has recorded a 60.93% population growth in the last decade, while the national population growth was 1.4%.

### ***UNESCO-CSH publication on the Right to the City in India***

On the occasion of the Human Rights Day, celebrated every year on the 10<sup>th</sup> December, UNESCO-CSH launched a publication titled Urban Policies and the Right to the City in India: Rights, Responsibilities and Citizenship at the UN Conference Hall.

The publication, prepared in collaboration with Centre de Sciences Humaines, New Delhi and supported by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, is a compendium of 16 research policy-papers written by 14 eminent researchers covering several angles of the right to the city approach in India.

Mr Milon Kothari, ED, Housing and Land Rights Network who launched this publication said "right to the city concept encompasses a bundle of human rights – right to housing, the right to security of the person and the right to health, food, water and livelihood".



"By publishing the richness of sixteen original research papers, this publication focuses on the multiplicity of entry points of the right to the city as a vehicle for social inclusion and sustainable social development for Indian cities", said Ms Marina Faetanini, Programme Specialist in Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO New Delhi.

The publication is intended as an advocacy tool to promote a right-based approach to urbanization in India.

The publication can be downloaded at: [www.unesco.org/newdelhi](http://www.unesco.org/newdelhi)



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Newsletter Editor: A. S. Shenoy: National President ICSW, India  
Link Heritage, 6A, Chittoor Road, Kochi -682 018, Kerala, India  
+91 484 4023436

Regional President: A.S. Shenoy, India  
Email: [shenoyas2006@yahoo.com](mailto:shenoyas2006@yahoo.com)  
Tel: +91 9995440154

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