

**REGIONAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER – SOUTH ASIA**  
**JULY-AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2013**

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**INADEQUATE SANITATION IS VIOLATION OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS**

According to a recent World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund report, a staggering 2.4 billion or one-third of the world's population will continue to remain without improved sanitation in 2015. This is a violation of basic human dignity, because clean drinking water and basic sanitation are human rights that impinge on the exercise of other rights. The proportion of the population without adequate provision decreased from 51 percent in 1990 to around 33 per cent in 2011. East Asia has registered a 40 percent increase in sanitation coverage. But recent global progress still falls short of the 2015 Millennium Development Goal target. The shortfall is in the region of eight per cent, which translates into half a billion people. A major cause of concern for public health still remains, with 15 percent of the world's population practicing open defecation. Despite a declining trend from 24 per cent in 1990, the practice is rampant in over a quarter of the population in 27 countries. Water contamination is of particular concern for two reasons. First, while the MDG target relating to drinking water was achieved in 2012, some three-quarters of a billion people continue to rely on unprotected sources. Second, the MDG target on clean water is based on evaluations of the nature of construction of the source, in terms of contamination from the outside, rather than the quality of water people consume. Thus the treatment of water and disposal of fecal matter are major challenges.

A study undertaken for the Water and Sanitation Program and the World Bank in India estimates the cost of inadequate sanitation for the country's economy at \$53.8 billion a year, a figure equivalent to 6.4 percent of GDP. Among BRICS countries, India fares by far the worst, with some 627 million resorting to open defecation, while it is 14 million in China and half that number in Brazil. Universal coverage of basic sanitary services has to remain core objective to stop open defecation and to improve quality of water.

*Source : WHO and UN Children Fund Report*

### **SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN BRINGING DOWN UNDER AGE 5 MORTALITY RATE IN INDIA**

As per Lancet Global Health Global Report, many districts in India are on track to achieve the reduction of the under age 5 child mortality rate to 38 deaths for 1000 live births by 2015 and by 2020 all districts will achieve the target. The mortality rate of the children in India declined from 2.5 million in 2001 to 1.5 million in 2012 a fall of 3% annually . But female child mortality continued to exceed male mortality. Despite this progress India still has the largest number of deaths in children younger than five years of any country in the world.

*Source report of Aartidhar Hindu National Daily of 12<sup>th</sup> September*

### **VIOLATIONS OF JUVENILE RIGHTS IN CONFLICT AFFECTED DISTRICTS IN INDIA**

Asian Centre For Human Rights (ACHR) in its report submitted recently has pointed out that in 197 districts of North Eastern Areas, Andrapradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharchand, Mandhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orrisa, Uther Pradesh & West Bengal violations of Juvenile Rights are rampant. Children in these districts are subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention under the national security laws, where they may also be subjected to torture, judicial execution and sexual violence. In many cases the perpetrators get away by producing No Objection Certificate on statements obtained under duress from villages or victims stating that they had not committed any offence.

*Source : Report of ACHR*

### **FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME LAUNCHED IN INDIA**

The Government of India introduced the National Food Security Bill 2013 in August to provide highly subsidized food grains to nearly 70% of the population of the country, including 75% of the rural & 50% of the urban population. The food grains under this scheme will be distributed under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). The

aim of the bill is to wipe out hunger and malnutrition. A beneficiary will be entitled to 5Kg of rice, wheat or coarse cereals at Rs. 3, Rs. 2 & Rs. 1 per Kg a month respectively. Beneficiaries will be identified by the state governments based on parameters prescribed by the union government.

Other legislations passed earlier for welfare of citizens are:-

1. Right to Information Act ushering in an unprecedented transparency in public life.
2. Mahathma Gandhi NREGA to provide employment to households in rural areas.
3. Forest Rights Act to help tribal and other families who are traditionally dependent on forests for their lively hood.
4. Right to Education Act to educate children.

*Source Food Security Bill of Govt. of India*

### **UN PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD FOR INDIAN PROJECTS FIGHTING POVERTY**

Three Indian Projects received UN Public Service Awards this year. The Awards are given for projects that fight poverty and promote sustainable development. The projects are Mass Contact Programme of Kerala, Swavalamban of district administration in Dhanbad in Jharkhand and Graamin Haat at programme department of cottage and rural industries in Madhya Pradesh.

The Kerala Government's Mass Contact Programme initiated by the chief minister's office was launched in 2011 with the main aim of combating red tape and bureaucracy in administration.

The Swavalamban initiative of Dhanbad administration has improved disbursement of pensions in the districts. The initiative has cut down the time from three months to a maximum of three days through direct cash transfers into bank accounts.

The Madhya Pradesh government's Graamin Haat has helped women's empowerment by creating women's self help groups of rural illiterate women to operate businesses of their own and improve overall living conditions in their communities.

### **SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN MALDIVES**

Social protection is recognized as a constitutional right in Maldives. However a comprehensive social protection system has not yet been fully developed, although in recent years there has been some promising progress, particularly the enactment of the Maldives Pension Act in 2009 and the formulation of a Minimum Social Security Package Policy.

The new Maldives Pension Act introduces two type of Pension, namely the Maldives Old Age Basic Pension (MOABP) and the Maldives Retirement Pension Schemes (MRPS). MOABP Provides a pension to all who are 65 years of age or above and whose other

pension income does not exceed twice the amount of MOABP pension. The initial pension level is set at 2000 Rufiyaa (about US dollars 156) per month.

MRPS is a fully funded contribution scheme. All employees between sixteen and sixty-five years of age are covered under this scheme.

Other targeted social measures consist of –

1. Health Care Insurance
2. Access to Water and Sanitation
3. Food & Nutrition Security
4. Self Development Guaranteed Employment Programmes
5. Housing
6. Efficient Transport System

*Source : Website Maldives Social Protection Schemes*

### **SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEMES IN NEPAL**

Social Security is considered as a right of citizens and is linked to enhancing social equity and justice. Under the section 35 of the Nepalese constitution, the state policy has included the provision of social security. Section 35 (9) pays special attention to protect the interest of women, orphan, children, older persons, the disabled and endangered races.

The Ministry of Local Development in Nepal had allocated Rs. 8.5 billion to be distributed to elderly people, widows, helpless and disabled persons, children and ethnic races. Of Rs.8.5 billion allocated Rs. 981.8 million is allocated for child protection and Rs. 7 billion for social security.

*Source : Bishnu Prasad Bastola, Email [info@friendshipnepal.org.np](mailto:info@friendshipnepal.org.np)*

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