



**REGIONAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER – SOUTH ASIA**  
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**UN SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR INITIATIVE (SPF)**

The SPF is conceived as a fundamental element for national social security systems. Social protection floors are nationally defined sets of basic security guarantees that should ensure at a minimum that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential health care and to basic income security. The United Nations stresses the importance of promoting universal access to social protection systems and endorses the concept of SPF in line with International Labour Organization Recommendation 202 adopted unanimously in mid-June 2012 by all ILO member states and partner labor and business organizations.

The Indian Council on Social Welfare has adopted Social Protection as a priority item on its agenda during the next two years, stressing the need to provide social protection floor to all members of society, including those who are not employed in the formal economy, to foster resilience, social justice and social cohesion.

**THE ECONOMIC WOES WORLD OVER**

**The world economy may face another major downturn.**

The continued jobs crisis, coupled with anemic recovery from the global financial downturn, makes the prospects for resumed growth very uncertain in many parts of the world. In the European Union and the United States of America many workers remain out of a job, and the length of job search has been on the increase. Unemployment affects all segments of the workforce; in some countries youth unemployment is especially high. The prolonged absence of workers from gainful employment cannot but affect their skills and experience, undermining medium-term job prospects. In some countries in Europe like Spain, nearly half of young people are unemployed.

The food crisis has detrimental impact on the standard of living of many people in the developing world, causing poverty and hunger. Per capita food grain availability / output at present is less than that in 1980's, largely because of the food price hikes. Slowing growth of global food production amid increasing diversion of food crops to production of biofuels and animal feed makes highly unlikely the return to declining food prices seen earlier.

Even as economic ties among countries of the global South are strengthening, these countries often remain dependent on the level of economic activity of the developed countries, particularly trade and monetary policy. In South Asia, private consumption and investment continued to be the main growth drivers. Growth disparities, however, remain quite large in the region. The Indian economy was affected by tightening of monetary policy to bring down inflation. In the face of rising risks to the world economy, the focus of national monetary authorities has shifted towards supporting domestic demand.

### Member Country News

#### India

#### India is forging ahead to stop child labour

In order to assess, the magnitude of child labour, the Indian Government is gathering statistics of child labour through national censuses. According to a survey report, the number of child labourers has already nose-dived from Rs. 1.25 crores (census 2001) to 19.75 lakhs in 2004- 2005 and recently to 49.6 lakhs as per the reports of National Survey . But some NGO's and UN agencies estimate the number of child labour to be as high 4 to 6 crore. Many children are falling prey to child trafficking, bonded labour, sexual exploitation, and forced beggary, often thousand of miles away from the home. Child labour in hazardous industry is still rampant, especially in industries like carpets, glass, garments, brick kilns, stone quarries, fire crackers. These industries are mostly situated in Misapur, Bhadoy,

Aligarh, Firozabad, Savakis, Tirpur, Virudungar, Delhi National Capital Region in (NCR), Jalandhar and Ludhiana.

The biggest challenges for government are to protect child rights and to rehabilitate 15 to 20 lakh children in age group of 14 to 18 who are employed in hazardous work is to give them proper education. But reality is that children to be rehabilitated cannot be accommodated in the conventional schooling system or any existing special educational schemes. The solution may be to envisage a new programme on a priority basis with essential components of vocational skills to promote employability and entrepreneurship.

The efforts to implement existing legislations to stop child labour should be stepped up. The current laws stipulate imprisonment up to one year and a penalty up to maximum Rs. 20,000 for violations. But the reality is that with 13,60,117 inspections carried out under the child labour law since its inception in 1986, only 49,092 prosecutions were launched and merely 4774 employers were convicted. A meager sum of Rs. 200 to 400 was imposed as penalty for most convictions. The accountability of Supervisory Agencies like the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) for the rehabilitation of children in distress should be strictly enforced. Pressure needs to be put on such statutory committees to ensure quick disposal of pending cases. Formation of People's Vigilance Committees and introduction of Standard Operating Procedures by state governments would be another innovative measure to rehabilitate children in distress. Lastly, state governments should seriously enforce existing legislation with the support of the police and judiciary and enhance monitoring provisions.

### **Sri Lanka**

#### **Putting social integration policy into action In Sri Lanka**

The national social integration policy of the government is the latest in its multi-pronged effort to affirm and reaffirm its commitment to improvement in practices of governance to make Sri Lanka the home for all Sri Lankans. It comes at a time when the flight of boat people from Sri Lanka to Western countries has reached a level that is attracting international media attention that is not complimentary to the country. Less visible is the brain drain that is depleting the country of its best human resources. The launch of the National Policy Framework for Social Integration that took place at the President's House in Temple Trees follows the report of the Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission which was validated by the UN Human Rights Council in March and precedes the National Human Rights Action Plan to be submitted at its forthcoming meeting in November. It was also significant that the launch took place on July 16, exactly a week before the anniversary

of the anti-Tamil pogroms that commenced on July 23, 1983 and spelled the disintegration of a democratic and plural society.

The policy on social integration was prepared under the auspices of the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration with technical backing from the German government. The policy framework document states that it intends to "safeguard fundamental and human rights and promote social and legal protection and foster cohesion, harmony and inclusiveness through the assurance of socio-economic well being and social justice." The government could not have selected a more appropriate person than Minister Vasudeva Nanayakkara to lead the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration and to promote social integration amongst the diverse components of the Sri Lankan population. As a left-oriented politician with a Marxist background, Minister Nanayakkara has been one of Sri Lanka's most respected proponents of universalistic and people centered thinking.

Over-concentrated focus on the ethnic conflict will not be a solution for political success or to obtain wide spread public support. Another alternative approach would be to aim to remedy problems that are common to all communities and not only to the ethnic minorities. (Source- Jehan Perera, National Peace Council News Letter)

## Afghanistan

### Afghanistan is on the path of economic development

Afghanistan's economic development is as important as the counter-insurgency effort. Afghanistan is emerging as a strong and independent democracy with an economy standing on equal footing with the counter-insurgencies. Afghanistan is looking for foreign investment and aid to develop a transportation network to ship to various destinations its \$ one trillion worth of mineral wealth and to establish a comprehensive electricity grid to achieve a productive economy. Afghanistan is endowed with natural resources – copper, iron ore, lithium. International investment and technical assistance for the mining industry and construction of railroads, highways and processing plants will facilitate better employment opportunities for the Afghan people. To reap the benefit of a globalized world, Afghanistan is expanding its internet facilities to provide internet access to its population. At present only 3% of the population has access to the internet.

### Forthcoming conferences





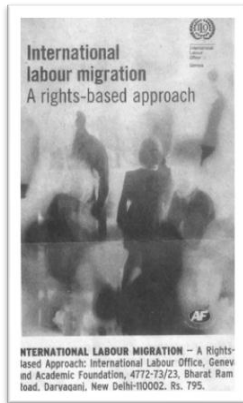
## **International Conference on Social Protection - Perspective and Policies**

The ICSW South Asia Regional Committee, jointly with the Marian College School of Social Work, Kuttikkanam, Kerala, India and supported by UNESCO, is organizing an **International Conference on Social Protection** on 12-15 December 2012 at the School of Social Work, Marian College, Kuttikkanam, Kerala, India. The theme of the conference is “Social Protection: Perspectives and Policies” with sub themes on Social Protection of minorities, elderly, disabled, women, children, mentally ill persons, sex workers and an organized workers

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Conference blog : <http://socialprotectionconference.wordpress.com>



## Book Review



ILO has published INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MIGRATION – A RIGHT BASED APPROACH. This book approaches labour migration from a rights based perspective. The first part of the book provides an overview of international migration trends and emerging patterns. The second part of the book provides a detailed review of the existing international instruments, particularly those evolved by the ILO and the UN to protect migrant workers and to ensure decent work for all. The book also highlights the need to manage labour flows more effectively, by controlling the recruitment process, developing a skills recognition framework and ensuring eligibility for social security benefits in order to promote rights based migration policy development.

Publishers : International Labour office, Geneva and Academic Foundation, 4772 – 73 / 23, Bharat Ram Road, Daryaganj ,New Delhi 110002

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