

REGIONAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER – SOUTH ASIA
OCTOBER- NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2012

Special Issue on Social Protection Floor

HAPPY NEW YEAR AND BEST WISHES TO ALL OUR READERS!

UN SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR INITIATIVE

Social Security is a basic human right enshrined in many international legal documents like the 1944 ILO declaration of Philadelphia or the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The term Social Protection is often inaccurately treated as being synonymous with 'social security' and 'welfare'. In fact, modern understanding of social protection is much broader, signifying a full range of protective transfers, services and institutional safeguards aimed at protecting population segments that society deems worth protecting, also diminishing people's exposure to risks.

The Social Protection Floor (SPF) initiative was adopted by the Chief Executive Board of the United Nations in April 2009 as a response to the global financial and economic crisis. It is supported by 19 UN Agencies and other partners such as development banks, bilateral organizations and organizations of civil society, including ICSW. Already at the joint world conference in Hong Kong in June 2010 of the International Council on Social Welfare, International Association of Schools of Social Work and International Federation of Social Work, the Social Work members resolved to make SPF Initiatives a part of the ICSW Global Programme. The SPF initiative got a substantial boost at the international level in June 2012 when Recommendation 202 concerning national floors of social protection was unanimously adopted by the International Labour Conference in Geneva.

The main objective for a social protection floor in South Asia is ensuring universal access to essential social transfers (in cash and in kind), providing basic income security for children and older persons as well as for those of working age who are unable to earn sufficient income, particularly in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability, and ensuring access to essential health care for all, including such marginalized groups as migrants, displaced and the urban poor.

Providing social security to south Asia's 1.5 billion people is a formidable challenge. Though there have been several success stories in social security through various innovative experiments in the region, many people in the region are still left outside the remit of social protection. To accelerate this process and prepare for their participation in their governments' national initiatives, ICSW is organizing training programmes, workshops and seminars at the regional level. The intended beneficiaries of Social Protection Floor initiative are numerous social groups, including such underprivileged population segments as poor informal sector workers, migrants, disabled persons, and senior citizens.

The South Asia regional committee of ICSW for the last two years has been involved in propagating social protection floor initiatives by organizing various events related to social protection and aimed at uplifting of populations living below the poverty line.

Social Protection Floor Initiatives of ICSW SA Regional Committee in 2010-2012

**NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON SOCIAL PROTECTION OF ICSW
COLOMBO, SRI-LANKA , DECEMBER 2010**

During December 2010, ICSW National Member, National Peace Council, Sri-Lanka organized a consultative workshop on Social Protection Programme, in association with the National Institute of Social Development (Social Science School in Colombo). Mr. Denys Correl, ICSW Executive Director at that time, and Mr. A.S. Shenoy, ICSW SA Regional President, participated in the workshop. In this workshop the history of social security and welfare was analyzed during the post independent period and after introduction of the open ceremony



The issues deserving special attention in the context of social protection were identified: the acute need for poverty alleviation, addressing problems faced by older persons, women and children, as well as to provide greater employment opportunities to youth and graduates. Another major issue which was addressed was providing quick relief to persons who are victims of natural disasters and to displaced persons due to ethnic conflicts and wars.

UNESCO THIRD MINISTERIAL MEETING ON SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICIES IN SOUTH ASIA

COLOMBO, SRI LANKA , FEBRUARY 2011

ICSW supported the third Ministerial Meeting of UNESCO on Social Protection Policies in South Asia held during Feb 2011 at Colombo by sponsoring members of Sri Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan and India to this conference.

Mr. A.S. Shenoy, ICSW SA Regional President, was one of the panelists during the session discussion on "Social Protection Floor for South Asia" directed to address the principles supporting the SPFI and its practical eligibility in the South Asia Region. Mr. D. Correll, Executive Director of ICSW at that time, chaired the Session on Social Protection



**M/s Marina Faetanini, UNESCO, Programme specialist organizer of the forum
And A.S. Shenoy ICSW, Regional President SA**

Schemes of migrants and the urban poor. The session highlighted the complex case of migrants and the urban poor. The participants of this meeting include welfare Ministers from SA Region, researchers, scholars, social activists and representatives of international organisations.

Among the suggestions made in this forum were to promote international migration as a social protection strategy and to introduce social audits to ensure the most vulnerable groups get social benefits. This latter initiative will raise awareness and foster commitment towards the social protection policies based on high quality research.

NATIONAL CONSULTATION MEETING



Christian Rollet , Ex-International President, ICSW with speakers of TISS.

MUMBAI , INDIA, MARCH 2011

In India, the ICSW SA Committee jointly with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences organized a national consultation on the theme "Social protection and Social Justice – addressing poverty and social exclusion" in Mumbai during March 2011. Participants felt the necessity of involving social science colleges in social protection issues by monitoring existing social sector

programmes. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences was appointed by Government to evaluate the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in Kerala. The study highlighted some achievements such as relatively high level of women empowerment, but also the repetitive nature of work in many sectors and lack of awareness by workers of their rights.

**NGO CONSULTATION MEETING
 COCHIN, KERALA, INDIA, APRIL 2011.**

Another NGO consultation was held by ICSW Kerala State Branch on Social Development Policies along with Rajagiri School of Social Sciences, Cochin during April 2011. Major recommendations of this consultation included need for advocacy by NGO'S to develop appropriate public welfare schemes, the entitlement of urban poor living in slums to social protection schemes and the need for transparency and social audit.

**NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION
 KATMANDU, NEPAL, NOVEMBER 2011**

In Nepal, the Forum For Human Rights And Public Health Nepal (Friendship Nepal)



organized an International Workshop on Human Rights and Social Protection in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission of Nepal during November 2011. In this workshop the human rights situation in Nepal, including human rights violations, as well as social protection issues were discussed. The main recommendations of this workshop were that civil society organizations play a more prominent role to

Chairperson Friendship Nepal Bishnu Bastola

protect the rights of people and monitor various social protection programmes introduced by the Government.

**SA REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON SOCIAL SECURITY
 KATMANDU, NEPAL, OCTOBER 2012**

A Regional Symposium on Universalisation of Social Security was organized by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) office of regional co-operation in Asia in association with South Asia Center for Policies Studies (SACEPS) at Katmandu during October 2012. It was stressed there that about 1.5 million people are left outside the social protection schemes and security is lacking. The symposium discussed the possibility of universalisation of social security in South Asia under the framework of SAARC.

The symposium stressed the need to identify existing practices, including challenges in accessing mechanism for regional co-operation to realize universal social security in South Asia. Mr. A.S. Shenoy, ICSW SA Regional President, was one of the discussants in this symposium. The symposium recommended that a range of national and regional social security programmes have to be developed.



Mr. Shenoy with Julia Mueller & Pham Hyong Giang, FES the organizers

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE "SOCIAL PROTECTION – PERSPECTIVES AND POLICIES" KUTTIKANAM, KERALA, INDIA, DECEMBER 2012.

In December 2012, an international conference on Social Protection was organized jointly by the ICSW SA Regional Committee and the School of Social Work, Marian College of Kuttikanam, with support of UNESCO and KILA (Kerala Govt.). ICSW facilitated the Conference by bringing eminent speakers who are expert on Social Protection and Labour Issues, besides our members from India and Nepal.

Dr. Sergei Zelenev, Executive Director of ICSW was the keynote speaker at the Conference and Mr. A.S. Shenoy, Regional President, SA Regional Committee, was the featured speaker on social security in South Asia. The conference brought together a host of participants from academia, civil society organizations and government to share research experiences on the existing programmes on social protection, including best practices. Issues and policies in different part of the world were discussed, especially in developing countries, with the intention to prepare a policy paper to be submitted to the Government of India so that social protection schemes could be improved.



Dr. Sergei Zelenav & Mr. Shenoy on dias

Please distribute this newsletter as widely as possible.

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