



Social Security Now

National Working Group Meeting

YUVA Centre, Mumbai

June 09, 2009

Participants of the meeting:

<u>Name of the Participant</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
Ambarish Rai	Lok Sangharsh Morcha
Duarte Barreto	FEDINA
J John	CEC
K T Suresh	YUVA
M A Sekhar	Cornerstone Trust
Mckenzy Dabre	YUVA
Pratibha Sinde	Lok Sangharsh Morcha
Rajesh Malviya	NIWCYD
Raju Bhise	YUVA
Ranjan Kumar Singh	NIDAN
Priti Darooka	PWESCR
Sarita Bhoi	CEC
Vinay Kumar	National Federation for Dalit Land Rights Movement

Summary of Discussion

The meeting began with welcome note by K T Suresh, YUVA. He recalled that YUVA hosted an earlier National Working Group of the Social Security Now, which had an outcome in the form of the Campaign song. Explaining the agenda of the meeting, Sarita Bhoi, CEC said that it is the right time for the civil society particularly for 'Social Security Now' to strategise and plan for a nation wide campaign for social security for the unorganised workers. J John from the National Secretariat of SSN observed that though the Social Security Act was passed prior to the general elections, it never became part of the campaign strategy of the Congress government. He said that it would be interesting to examine why the state is willing to promote NREGA and not social security for unorganized workers.

Priti Darooka, PWESCR said that we should look beyond the purview of the labour ministry for social security. Giving the example of the right to food, she put emphasis on universalising social security by providing it to all those who are needy and vulnerable and not just workers. She further said that eight categories of those who have been left out, e.g. critically ill, should be provided with social security. Working group in the Planning Commission is working on providing conditional cash transfer in some government schemes. Direct conditional cash transfers have been successful in Brazil, South Africa etc. and would help in plugging the corruption. Cash transfer should be opposed because it does away with government responsibility of building infrastructure, she added.

Duarte Barreto, FEDINA raised the concerns over provident funds and gratuity of the workers. He said that the funds in the PF and Gratuity heads are not deposited in the right place. Citing the example of one factory in Bangalore, where Rs. 50 Lakhs for the PF and Gratuity Funds of the Workers have been stolen, he emphasized on the need for proper implementation of the laws to regulate the process.

Raju Bhise, YUVA is of the view that NREGA is supported because the conflict with capital is less. He said that legal identity and social protection would increase accountability of the capital. If the investment is beneficial to farmers and workers, there will be political and economic benefit too. According to him, to get out the liberal economy framework is difficult. We should also think how we should pose the issue of social security in the post economic crisis period.

During the presidential address Rajesh Malviya, NIWCYD mentioned that the emphasis should on rural development, women's development, livelihood development etc. he said that we should review the bill and prepare papers on social security. There is a need to create awareness among people about social security provisions. People know about NREGA, but they are not aware about social security. It is outside the ambit of the poor. Documents should be prepared in regional languages too. There is a need for campaigns to make the Act stronger, clearing its deficiencies. We need to develop a strategic plan to influence the government.

K A Sekar, Cornerstone Trust said that their organisation translated the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 in Tamil. In the Act, trade unions and labour

department does not have a role to play. Moreover health and safety is not incorporated in the Act and there is no social security provision for the fish workers. No funds have been earmarked to implement the Act which implies there is a huge gap between policies of the government and the Act, he stated.

Ranjan, Nidan gave the example of Bihar regarding the implementation of various government schemes such as NREGA. The central government has sanctioned money for implementation of NREGA in 22 districts of Bihar, but the state government said that it would be applicable to all the districts. So, the state level models should be pursued. He further emphasized that we need to make the issue a political agenda at the national level. The issue has been taken up at the state level. In a positive framework, we should propose an act. When state government takes care of the fund, it will become a political issue.

Intervening in the debate, J John said that the slogan of universalisation is intended to restrict social security to a few characterising them as the most vulnerable, needy, old and disabled. 'Universalisation' in reality, gets restricted to these groups; and not achieved by extending the benefits to all citizens. Such a distinction has already been incorporated in the Act, by limiting the benefits to only BPL workers, thereby denying the benefits to more than 90 per cent of the unorganised workers, though the term universalisation is used liberally. He recalled that this has been the strategy of the planning commission sponsored schemes for the most vulnerable, calling it universalisation, but denying benefits to everyone. We should be careful not to fall into this trap. Moreover, we are demanding social security as a right and not as schemes for the most vulnerable. 'Social Security Now'(SSN) campaign has always emphasised that the unorganised workers are contributing to the national income and therefore it is their right to get social security, which is collective measure to meet contingencies in life, when a worker is out of work and when workers' dependents are in vulnerable situations. He also said that the Indian ruling elites have a deliberate strategy to divide between workers and people and deny rights to both workers and non-workers.

Ambarish Rai, Lok Sangarsh Morcha said that we are part of SSN. The need for social security is increasing day by day. There is lack of commitment from the government. Stating that there is a difference between NREGA and UWSSA he said that NREGA couldn't be a substitute for Social Security as the latter is not an instrument to feed the people rather social security is meant for providing security to people who feel insecure in society. He further emphasized on the plight of the agrarian community by saying that the agriculture sector is suffering from loss of employment opportunities because of the new discourses on manufacturing sector. If there is no fund, there is no social security. There is no capital creation by them to provide social security funds. Specific measures should be taken to ensure social security for Dalits and tribal as they are in bad condition. Government should accept the responsibility to give social security. Basic social security for all should be ensured. Increased defence expenditure money should be transferred to social security. Financial allocation should be priority. He said that the Social Security Act should cover the destruction of natural resources and livelihood systems. Mass movements should be involved. This could be a big issue in India. We should look at it from an overall perspective. He is also of the view that though NREGA

was publicized and was helpful in giving a political mandate to the UPA, the social security act was not publicised.

Pratibha Shinde, Lok Sangarsh Morcha is of the view that NREGA has divided the rural and urban workers. Therefore, we have bigger challenges and we should reach out to the masses for the campaign on social security. There are many failures of NREGA such as corruption and lack of job security. We should approach the trade unions, left parties and the leaders of political parties for a national campaign on social security. Government will not popularise the Act. Therefore it is important to explain why we need social security. The forthcoming assembly election in Maharashtra should be targeted.

Vinay Kumar, National Federation for Dalit Land Rights Movement said the presidential address spells out social security or welfare schemes for BPL and persons above the age group of 65. We have to examine the gaps in the present Act and should translate the Act in local languages. In political arena, they are not serious about people's issues. There should be continuous campaign to keep the interest of the people alive and focused to achieve the desired goal. We should target the members of Parliament.

Strategy Session - Decisions:

Ranjan of Nidan moderated the session.

National Campaign

1. It was decided that a critique of the act would be articulated and translated in different languages
 - Uniform printing in different languages. Should be available before the next Parliament session. CEC will prepare it and send it to everyone to add points within this month. Reply within 3-5 days.
2. Lobby with the MPs & Political parties
 - The lobby package may contain promises by political parties on social security
 - SSN could establish a strategic partnership with Sudhakar Reddy, former chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on labour
 - Target MPs from different political parties. SP, BSP, Left parties, NCP, DMK, Meira Kumar, Karia Munda, RJD etc.
 - Target decision-making organs in political parties. Write to Party Chairpersons from the people.
 - Meet Congress MPs.
 - Post card campaign for social security with focused message on amendments. The matter should be sent from the national secretariat. Letter should go from all places within a period of 15 days - from September 15-30, 2009. (Change, if the Parliament session is different.) Target Sonia Gandhi from all places.

Other political parties should be state specific.

- Memorandum to the Prime Minister through the District Collector. Give it to the press also. CEC to prepare the memorandum. This is to be carried out during the period September 1-15, 2009. Memorandum to be given by the local organisation in their name; but should contain the note that we are part of Social Security Now.
3. New Labour Minister to be given a memorandum. Seek eight days prior appointment by CEC and inform the network partners so that they could plan to be present for the meeting.
 4. Organise a meeting of the intellectual group. The responsibility is given to CEC to organise a roundtable on the social security Act. Possible participants could be Jayati Ghosh, Prabhash Joshi, Rajalakshmi, CP Chandrasekhar, legal experts, trade unionists, old civil servants, Sharit Bhowmik, Prashant Bhushan, Yogendra Yadav, Abhijit Sen. The dates could be in the end of July or in the beginning of August 2009.
 5. Target forthcoming state elections
 1. Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, West Bengal,
 2. Target manifestos of political parties in the state elections
 6. Social Security Fund. Popularise the following slogans:
 1. Reduce defence budget and increase social security
 2. Avoid tax exemption and tax avoidance; Earmark the funds for social security
 7. Target key political leaders like Rahul Gandhi
 8. Issue to be made a mass issue
 9. Examine the possibilities of filing PIL at state and union level on the uselessness of the social security Act
 - Evolve the idea in the Delhi roundtable.
 10. Talk to Wada Na Todo Abhiyan; Baba Adhav
 11. National Convention
 - Patna; October end or first week of November

(A Planning Meeting to be held in Delhi for the National Convention)

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the participants and to YUVA for the excellent arrangements and hospitality.

Minutes prepared by

Sarita Bhoi
For Social Security Now