

The Follow-up of Nagpur Convention Resolutions

The consortium of 14 NGOs organised a National Convention on Social Security for Unorganised Workers from October 26-28 at Morbhawan, Sitabuldi, Nagpur, Maharashtra placing social security as a fundamental right of workers. The convention had been a successful historic event, which registered participation of over 800 participants/ representatives of more than 300 NGOs, Trade Unions, Peoples Movements, community organizations, government authorities, state ministers and intellectuals etc.

We adopted Nagpur Declaration and resolved to hold regional and state level conventions/workshops. Consequently the consortium members are organizing state level conventions.

The Rashtriya Yuva Sangathan, Ekta Parishad , NIWCYD, CEC and various trade unions and others organised a Regional Convention in Adivasi belt (covering eight districts) on 10-11 February 2007 at Umariya in Madhya Pradesh. In this meeting more than 300 representatives of trade unions, NGOs, Panchayats and other organizations were present despite heavy continuous rains. These participants discussed various social security issues, additional social security issues and land rights for adivasi workers, mine workers and agriculture workers. The campaign also began with posters and handouts.

The Indian Social Institute, a consortium member has organised the social security workshop/convention in Guwahati on 12th February 2007. More than 150 participants and intellectuals attended this workshop. The community organizations and workers unions of North-East states have also initiated the campaign movement and it is being intensified.

The NIWCYD Bhopal with other partner organizations along with trade unions and peoples groups organised state level social security convention in Bhopal on 20th February 2007. About 100 representatives of various organizations of Madhya Pradesh, social activists and academicians attended this convention.

FEDINA-Bangalore has organised a workshop on social security at Bangalore on 25th February 2007. In this meeting about 75 people attended and discussed various issues of social security.

The organizations who participated in Nagpur National convention are planning to organise state conventions in Ranchi, Hyderabad, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Orissa and in other states in the month of March 2007. Reports of conventions held in other places like Chennai (organised by NCDHR) are still awaited. The consortium is also planning to hold a meeting in Delhi for putting more pressure on government and to challenge inaction/perfunctory or diluted actions of government.

Campaigning

The consortium organizations and their partners are also engaged in campaigning by displaying posters, distributing a detailed handouts in local languages, post-card campaign, explaining the need of social security in smaller meetings. The activists are visiting industrial areas, villages and mining areas for campaigning. The trade unions are also collaborating in this movement. The campaigning is emerging as a movement in the entire nation. Some other groups on their own campaigning in different ways like cycle rally.

Consortium members have also decided that we will actively support and participate in the Action 2007 on the action programmes on social security for unorganised workers and for livelihood protection. We will also actively participate and support trade unions programmes and movement on social security of unorganised workers.

Submissions to the Government

Consortium members (representing ISI, NCDHR, PWESCR, NCC-USW and CEC) personally submitted the Letter of Demands with Nagpur Declaration and other papers to Ms Sayeeda Hameed Member Planning Commission after discussing with her for 30 Mts. on 11th December 06.

Consortium members submitted personally the Letter of Demands with Nagpur Declaration and other papers to Mr B C Mungekar, Dr Abhijeet Sen, and Dr B N Yugandhar, the Members of Planning Commission and to Honorable Mr M V Rajasekharan, Minister (Planning) & Ex Officio Member and discussed all the issues etc. for more than half an hour on 13th December 2006. In these meetings Mr Wincent of NCDHR was also present. We also met Ravi Shrivastava, Member in NCEUSW and submitted him the Letter of Demands with Nagpur Declaration and other papers on 13th December 2006.

In these meetings members of the planning commission and NCEUSW suggested us for building up continuous pressure particularly before or in the beginning of budget session as otherwise government i e the finance ministry and the labour ministry would ensure that the bill is not introduced in the parliament.

RESPONSE TO THE 'UNORGANISED WORKERS' SOCIAL SECURITY BILL, 2007' PLACED ON THE WEBSITE BY THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The consortium members decided to oppose this new Bill of Ministry of Labour on the ground that it ignored the demands of trade unions, demands raised in the Nagpur Declaration and the demands submitted to the Labour Ministry by the consortium. We submitted following points to the Ministry vide letter dated February 15, 2007.

i) The draft 'Unorganised Workers Social Security Bill 2007' is not comprehensive; the provisions of employment regulation, livelihood protection and dispute resolution are deliberately taken out.

ii) The draft bill is merely charity handout rather than a document that affirms the rights of workers based on the principle of social justice.

iii) The term Social Security has not been defined in the current Bill. The components of social security as in ILO definition together with security needed immediately after disaster like earth quakes, flood etc and additional social security needed for dalits, women, tribal and other marginalized workers with decent work should be the necessary components of definition of 'Social Security'.

iv) The definition of 'worker' excludes those getting above Rs. 6500/- and unpaid women workers. The wage ceiling for different social security benefits could have been left to the powers of boards in the schemes so as to make it flexible.

v) The bill deliberately avoids affirming the rights of unorganised workers; their right to organise, rights of women, dalits, tribal and other marginalized workers, right to social security and other labour rights.

vi) Accountability of the government has not been established. a. Accountability from Consolidated Fund of India. b. Accountability of the Board to the Parliament.

vii) Representation of dalits, women, tribal and other marginalized workers in the Social security boards and in administration of social security is ignored.

viii) Affirmative provisions concerning these marginalized sections have not been incorporated.

ix) The bill undermines the autonomy of the Social security boards.

x) The role of the Social Security Boards and the government are confusing and overlapping. The bill does not prescribe clear autonomy of the Board.

xi) The government has blatantly ignored the demands of trade unions, peoples' organizations, this consortium and other community organisations. This Bill is a shell without content; a very diluted, narrow and rejectable attempt of the labour ministry.

In the light of the points given above, we strongly reject this bill in its present form.

Moreover, the manner in which this bill has been floated on the net giving very little time for the citizens to respond to it throws serious doubts on the intentions of the government. We wonder whether there is a deliberate attempt on the part of government to create confusions and further delay a comprehensive legislation for unorganized workers.

