

UNIVERSAL social security

Exploring
Key Strategies
for Labour in India



**Social
Security
Now!**

POORA KAAM, POORA DAAM
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Based on the proceedings of the *National Consultation on Universal Social Security in India* held at the VishwaYuva Kendra, New Delhi, on 4-5 November, 2019.

Organized by Centre for Education and Communication (CEC), in collaboration with Social Security Now (SSN) and supported by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS)

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Content

1.	Foreword.....	04
2.	Towards Universal Social Security.....	05
3.	Social Security in India in the Context of the Global Economic Developments.....	12
4.	Social Security and the Problematic Legacy of the Formal/Informal Divide.....	16
5.	Agrarian Crises, Marginal Farmers and Social Security.....	22
6.	National Consultation on Universal Social Security: Rapporteur's Report.....	27
7.	Coordinator's Note.....	53
8.	Appendix A: List of Resource Persons.....	56
9.	Appendix B: About the Organizers.....	57

Foreword

I am happy to present before you the report on the National Consultation on Universal Social Security, organised by Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) in collaboration with Social Security Now (SSN) and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) on 4-5 November 2019 at Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, Delhi. I hope that the report will contribute towards taking forward the ongoing conversation on social security.

As an organisation committed to labour, CEC has always worked towards encouraging conversations on broad strategic questions, by bringing together labour activists, scholars, rights based groups and others into common platforms. The present Consultation was a major part of the mandate of CEC and the program saw the participation of more than 80 participants, representing central trade unions, unorganised workers associations, Dalit rights groups, feminist groups, marginal farmer organisations, landless labourer organisations, fish workers, construction workers, migrant workers and others. One of the most significant part of the National Consultation was the dialogue initiated between the central trade unions and the representatives of various social movements, rights based groups, feminist groups and others, on a whole range of issues, from epistemological considerations regarding the relationship between caste, class and gender to the more immediate questions of solidarity building and organising.

I am grateful to Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung for their generous financial assistance that made the program possible. J John, R S Tiwari, Ambarish Rai and other Working Group Members of Social Security Now were sources of constant support and I heartily thank them as well. I acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of Mayur Chetia and Akriti Bhatia in organising the National Consultation and drafting the report. I thank the entire team of CEC, especially Meena Sharma, Pawan Kumar, Bhawna Salhotra and R Prasad for their tireless efforts in making the program a success.

CEC will continue to encourage such conversations in the future. We look forward to your comments and suggestions on the report.

Warmly,

Lokesh

Executive Director

Centre for Education and Communication (CEC)

Towards Universal Social Security

A summary of the proceedings and recommendations of the National Consultation

The question and the need for a comprehensive framework on universal social security for all the people living and working in India has become one of the most urgent questions today. This question should also be posed in the global context of increasing inequalities of income, wealth and resource distribution. What is being called as "the future of work" is very much the present today, with fast changing work-relations and drastic shifts away from the conventional employer-employee relationship under which labour rights had hitherto been articulated. There has also been significant policy discussions on appropriate forms of social security, both at the national as well as the international level. The latest draft Social Security Code released by the Government of India, as part of the overall stated objective of "harmonization, simplification & codification" of all labour laws into four broad Codes, contrary to the claims, is moving further away from the idea of universality, and has therefore caused another discussion and concern across the country. The two day National Consultation on Universal Social Security took up some of these issues and discussed them extensively so that appropriate strategies for labour can be developed in the coming future.

History of Social Security

Moving towards universalisation of social security coverage entails devising appropriate strategies based on lessons of the past, evaluation of the present and developing a robust yet realistic vision for the future. This in turn depends on a proper appreciation of the "social question", the balance of social forces, law and the logic of capital. The first social security legislations were made at a time when an unbridled form of capitalism reigned much over the Europe. Under the conservative leadership of Bismarck, workers were provided with social security benefits for the first time, not as a measure of rights but to ensure control over them. At the same time, the rising trade union and working class movement ensured that the social security and other rights of the workers - such as the right to form unions, the right to universal adult franchise, the right to a rest day etc. were expanded over time. In the developed countries, social security became universal precisely at a time when capital was facing the biggest threat to its existence and a contract was made between labour and capital for mutual growth and development. Expanding social provisioning for the working people also meant rise in purchasing capacity of the workers and Europe saw the first, and perhaps the only "golden period" of uninterrupted growth in the immediate two decades after the Second World War. The contract came under increasing strain by 1970s when high expenditure on social sectors came to be seen by capital as a cut on their profits. With the rise of neo-liberalism, union busting and global dispersion of production, the system saw a temporary revival of sort in the 1990s, but just after a decade the serious loopholes in the system came to the limelight in the form of the 2008 crisis. The entire global economy today is going through a long phase of slow growth, increasing inequalities, stagnant wages and rising unemployment. For a very long time, the benefits from rising productivity have not been shared with the workers, leading to an acute problem of effective demand in the entire economy. The crisis has also rekindled renewed interest on the social question, including the question of social security, across the globe. Even institutions known for their orthodox neo-classical recipes, are beginning to advocate some modicum of resource distribution. Various proposals are being mooted- such as universal basic income, wealth tax on the super-rich etc. A new contract between labour and capital is on the horizons.

As far as the Global South is concerned, in countries like India, social security coverage has always been restrictive and it was justified in the name of lack of adequate resources. The continuation of the division of the workforce (created by colonial law) into two sectors - organised and the unorganised - has proved to be a serious stumbling block in developing any coherent strategy towards universalisation of social security coverage. While the presence of relatively decent social security coverage for the organised workers has at least created a *standard of aspiration*

for the unorganised workers, peculiar provisions like Provident Funds - remain a cause of disagreement among the activists and the trade unions. It remains unclear whether universalisation of social security in the Global South should entail elimination of all such colonial relics and building an altogether new system from the scratch or whether it should entail expanding the existing social security provisions for the rest of the working class communities.

Social Security in India Today

Social security has been a privilege available only to a small section of the workforce - numbering no more than 6 percent of the total - in India. Benefits like EPF and ESI are primarily available only to a minuscule section that comprise of the so called "organised sector" which itself is shrinking at an unprecedented rate through processes of contractualisation, privatisation of state entities & increasing ease in hiring-firing. Larger economic indicators reflect continuous fall in real wages, high unemployment rates and worsening performance on indices like hunger. In such a context, a strong demand for universal, non-targeted and non-contributory social security protection for all becomes imperative - with due attention on informal workers, including women, self-employed and 'non-workers', who have long been excluded from all kinds of protection. Struggles for justice with respect to issues around agrarian, housing, land, wages, dignity and equality will have to come together and identify the demand for universal social security as a starting point and as one of the common minimum demands for all.

As India has entered a distinctly identifiable phase of slow growth, executing a generous social security regime can contribute towards expanding effective demand and through various multiplying effects, enhance economic growth and employment. This also entails a progressive taxation policy, with imposition of a wealth tax and an inheritance tax on the super-rich. It is a big myth that India does not have the resources to fund universal social programs. What is required is a vision and will to link universal social programs with a regime of progressive taxation. Additionally, this would also require a radical reorientation of the Indian economy. Despite immense sacrifices of the farmers, the SEZs in India have failed to take off. Despite great efforts towards *Make in India*, manufacturing in the country remains stagnant. Perhaps it is time to rethink the strategy of export-led growth and reorient the economy towards fulfilment of the needs of the domestic market. This in turn will also de-escalate the fear of capital flight, as capital in this situation will be anchored firmly towards production for the domestic market.

Unionising for Universal Social Security

At a time when the labour law reforms are being used to dismantle even those protections once conferred on the organised workers, it is only fitting that the trade unions too should orient their strategies around the idea of universality of social security for all the workers. The struggle for organising workers is a global one today and it is important for the existing unions to dwell deeply regarding their strategies of worker and resource mobilization, responses to anti-worker policy regimes, exploring possibilities to ally with other on-going attempts at movement building and learning from successful models that have worked in India and elsewhere. There is an urgent requirement of further cooperation, coordination, cross-share and cross-learn from unions of diverse enterprises within and outside the category of unorganized workers - be it domestic workers, brick kiln workers, fish workers, rural and agricultural workers, construction workers, street vendors and so on - being cognizant of the specificities of each workspace, yet building cross alliances. Moreover, the long-standing debate between the labour-centric and citizen-centric approach also needs to be addressed clearly by approaching holistically the various issues faced by the workers in factories, homes, neighbourhoods and (increasingly) app based platforms.

A new conversation is also emerging regarding the suitability of the *rights based approach* as opposed to *an approach committed to expanding workers freedom*. While the former may ensure generous social security and job

security for the workers, it painfully relies on state bureaucracy in ensuring the proper implementation of the law that also has the danger of immobilising the workers and their class organs. An approach committed to expanding workers' freedom on the other hand, works towards elimination of those obstacles that hamper free mobilisation and movement of labour. In fact, some left wing scholars even go to the extent of saying that after independence, while labour bought the idea of state-led industrialisation, and accepted many limits on their own action (especially in the state owned enterprises), capital refused to follow the *rules of the game* and profited immensely through sheer corruption and by abusing the various safeguards meant for supporting the nascent Indian industry. Those areas that private capital left empty, the state was forced to take up the burden. State enterprises not only went into the sectors that were considered unprofitable, but the way they were run, it was almost an implicit subsidy to private enterprises by providing inputs at very low cost. By being an artificial source of demand, they were never run in such a way that would constitute a threat to the private sector. It was a massive transfer of public resources into private pockets. They also never invested adequately in latest technology or become dynamic in their protected sectors.

Labour on the other hand, was forced to accept many restrictions on its actions. For instance, as per the Industrial Disputes Act of 1947- a legislation otherwise considered progressive- a rule was imposed that the unions could resort to a strike or a lockout only after providing notification of at least fourteen days. Moreover, in the case of public utilities, the government was given the power to compel the parties to resort to an arbitrator if it saw fit. This immediately foisted compulsory arbitration onto workers in the postal service, the railroads, and the power industry. But the Act also gave state governments the power to declare any industry a public utility for a period of six months; this meant that compulsory arbitration could now be extended to virtually all sectors of industry. The combined effect of these two aspects of labour law was this: when faced with an intransigent management, labour was forced to contemplate a strike only if it provided a two-week notice to the appropriate government. But the moment it got whiff of any such impending action, the government could simply intervene and refer the dispute to an arbitrator- labour thus had the right to strike but very little ability to do so¹.

A vision for universal social security also entails revisiting the experience of the labour movement in India and devising suitable strategies for the present times. Labour cannot afford to aim towards going back to the regime of *dirigisme*, as an alternative to the current regime of *laissez faire*. The crucial question is to expand the mobilising and maneuvering capacity of labour and the issue of social security will have to be seen in that light.

Agriculture and Social Security

Agriculture and allied activities often get missed out in the conversations on both workers rights as well as social security. With farmers crisis getting severe, manifested in debt bondages, rising incidents of suicides, dwindling earnings, crashing rural demand, crop failure due to climate change (droughts, floods, cyclones and uncertain weather conditions), unfavourable output prices, high input costs and skewed landholding patterns indicate why the agrarian question should be taken up as an urgent priority while talking of universal social security.

Nearly 80 percent of Indian farmers can be considered as marginal farmers, who cannot support their lives from farm income alone. At the same time, there has been a consistent decline in the share of land owned by big landowners, as demonstrated in a recent survey conducted by Amit Basole and Deepankar Basu, published in *Economic and Political Weekly*². Today, the Indian agriculture is characterised by self cultivation by small and marginal farmers, with low productivity, declining returns, meagre resource base and declining availability of institutional credit and assistance.

¹Vivek Chibber has elaborated on this question in much detail. See Vivek Chibber, *Locked in Place, State Building and Industrialisation in India and Korea*, Princeton University Press, 2003

²Amit Basole and Deepankar Basu, "Relations of Production and Modes of Surplus Extraction in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 46, Issue No. 14, 02 Apr, 2011

All this means that the old slogan of *land to the tillers* cannot be considered as the central slogan for agrarian transformation anymore, as adequate land for redistribution is not available today. Serious reorientation of the classical agrarian strategy is required at present. Among other things, the situation demands that various forms of agrarian collectives will have to be formed by pooling the resources of different marginal farmers. With appropriate assistance of institutional credit, building of forward and backward linkages with food processing and other industries, the productive forces in agriculture will have to be developed, even as ensuring social justice for all, through the cooperative model. This also entails strategic investment in agro industries, food processing, cold storage etc by the collectives of marginal farmers, with active state assistance.

A generous regime of social security will create an enabling environment for such development of the productive forces. As most of the marginal farmers have a very small resource base, investing in any new venture - such as collectives - sounds prohibitively risky. A generous social security regime will ensure that the farmers have a resource base to fall back upon, in case of failure in new initiatives. In other words, it will give a huge boost to a whole range of productive activities by the marginal farmers in India. At the same time, within the agrarian sector, the specific social security requirements of the landless agricultural workers, seasonal migrant (rural to urban to rural) workers, women farmers and forest workers will have to be addressed adequately and separately. A new agrarian program coupled with a robust social security regime will be the key in finding a long lasting solution to the agrarian crises.

New forms of Work and Social Security

With technology and global capital seeping into our lives like never before, the nature of work-relations, contracts and traditional employer-employee relationships have been changing to a great extent. 'Flexible' work time, legitimized through policies like fixed-term employment, moonlighting, gig work, freelancing and so on are bringing new forms of insecurities and vulnerabilities for the large majority of working people, who are sold the myth of "self-employment" but indeed are tied to capital and these "aggregator" companies who are in practice the "digital bosses" of these workers - deciding the terms of employment in multiple ways without recognizing them as "employees". There is an increasing tendency among these workers to overwork, given the incentive regime subjected by the companies - and therefore it is meaningful to ask, whether such is a model of self-employment or self-exploitation. Another equally important challenge is of organization, unionization and collective bargaining in these new forms of work, which requires serious rethinking regarding strategies.

Much of the traditional social security regimes rely on clear identification of employer-employee relationships. But with global dispersal of production and the emergence of a whole range of economic activities where it is not always easy to identify such employer-employee relationships, the traditional social security regimes are facing acute crises to remain relevant. This in turn require novel strategies of providing social security for all, even as attempts will have to be made to unpack the underlying employer-employee relationships found in much of the new arenas of work.

Health and Social Security

There has been a consistent decline in government expenditure on health. India spends only a little over 1 percent of the GDP on this sector. According to the National Health Portal (2018), only 34 percent of the population are covered under any health insurance in 2016-17. Even the much touted Ayushman Bharat Scheme plans to provide an annual coverage of up to Rs. 5 lakh per family for only 10 crore poor households for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation, which is grossly inadequate in a country where the vast majority of the workforce is employed in the least rewarding informal sector. As per the WHO's health financing profile for 2017, around 67 percent of the total expenditure on health in India was paid out of pocket, while the world average is 18.2 percent. In a poor country like India, the vast majority of families live on modest incomes and the reluctance to spend adequate public money on affordable health services means that the families are under increasing burden to spend from their own pockets. In

fact, according to a recent survey of NSSO, around 63.22 million individuals or 11.88 million households were pushed to the Below Poverty Line status due to healthcare expenditure. A comprehensive legislation on social security must cover the health needs of the vast majority of the working people of the country.

Women and Social Security

Close to 81 percent of all employed persons in India make a living by working in the informal sector, with only 6.5 percent in the formal sector and 0.8 percent in the household sector. Out of this 81 percent, women constitute nearly one third of all unorganised workers in the country. This figure would be much larger if the unpaid work done by most women is recognized and included. As such, nearly 95 percent of all female workers in India are engaged as unorganised workers. The non existence of adequate social security provisions for unorganised workers therefore means that an extremely large section of women in the country remain unprotected. Whatever little social security provisions exists today, they exclude large sectors of work where women often find employment, such as domestic work, sex work, entertainment workers, street vendors etc. Women workers also face the burden of rampant sexism, discriminatory compensation and sexual harassment at workplace. As far as the question of reproductive health is concerned, the absence of maternity entitlements often means that a woman worker has to leave her job to have a child. With the near absence of any effective primary health care system in the country, most women are forced to have children at home without any medical care. A majority of the women and their families are unable to bear the burden of hospitalization costs. Absence of maternity entitlements also means that a woman is unable to take care of her nutritional needs before and after the pregnancy and get adequate rest, and is compelled to start working soon after child birth. Any comprehensive social security legislation must be able to address these various constraints faced by women living and working in India.

Excluded communities and social security

Among the excluded communities, the Dalits (Scheduled Caste) constitute 16.2 percent of the total population of the country (2001 census). Eighty one per cent of the Dalits live in rural areas and mostly depend on work in the primary sector, agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, fishing etc. Dalit workers are doubly discriminated against: first, as a worker of the unorganized sector and secondly as a member of a socially discriminated group. There has been a consistent rise in violence against the Dalit communities across the country. The representation of Dalits in niche jobs in the formal sector is abysmal. Dalit workers often face untouchability and discrimination at the workplace both by employers and fellow workers of upper caste communities. The situation is similar in the case of Adivasis, another excluded and marginalised community. According to one estimate, around 85 per cent of the Adivasis live below the official 'poverty line'. The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes found that 83 per cent of the total bonded labourers come from the ST communities. Adivasis who often work as forest workers are paid extremely low wages and have no social security benefits. While forest workers are entitled to minimum wages, in most cases the wage is far below than what is necessary for survival. Any effective social security legislation must be able to address the various constraints faced by the Dalit and Adivasi communities of the country and place the questions of dignity and equality at the forefront.

Migration and social security

Rough estimates suggest that there are over 400 million migrant workers in India who have left their home districts, and moved to other states in search of livelihood. There are over 30 million cross border Indian migrants who are working in other countries. The nature of such migration is predominantly temporary and their nature of employment, casual. They migrate for six months to three years per year and move back home during the agricultural sea-

son. Migrant workers are among the most vulnerable class of workers. Authorities, employers, local people, politicians and even trade union leadership ignore the hardships and challenges they face. They often face xenophobia, hate politics, and often labelled as criminals, making their living and working conditions more precarious. Social security entitlements like health protection for individual and family members, maternity benefits, wage-protection during leave, compensation for employment related injury or accident, income protection on untimely death of earning members, old age pension etc. are hardly present for migrant workers and their families. The existing legislations on social security do not protect them. Migrant workers move from one state to another whereas various state labour authorities have jurisdiction in their own state only. The Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979 is not of any use to them because of absence of coordination among states. All these workers are vulnerable and they are disowned even by the authorities. The state policies and laws on social security do not provide any specific provision for migrant workers. Cross border Indian migrant workers and workers of other countries in India are equally deprived of protection of social security laws or schemes. Neither sending countries nor recipient countries express any concerns for them. The International Convention on the *Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* is a United Nations multilateral treaty governing the protection of migrant workers and families. Signed on 18 December 1990, it entered into force on 1 July 2003. Earlier to this UN convention, *ILO Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97)* and *Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)* prescribed social security standards for migrants and states are to ratify and implement them. In a world of manifold increase in labour migration, there is an urgent need to address the social security concerns of the migrant working classes.

Social Security and Social Movements

The question of social security has been discussed by the civil society and grassroots movements since decades. Whether it is the question of health access and benefits, movements around education and literacy, demands for local self governance, transparency in resource mobilization and allocation, rights of migrants, excluded and invisibilized communities, women and unpaid care work, the issue of social security lies at the core. It is therefore important to galvanize all old, new, existing and evolving movements around this urgent demand for universal social security. The critique of movements having undergone "compartmentalisation" needs to also be addressed, by sincerely collaborating towards common causes and objectives away from narrowly conceived 'sectoral approaches' - towards a radical demand and campaign for the entirety of the working people. The appeal should also be aligned with global conversations and strategies in response to increasing global inequalities. At the same time, the analysis of the class formation in India also needs to be placed within the wider social context of the country. How gender, caste and other social relations inform the formative processes of class relations and the implications they have for the trade union movement needs to be thrashed out and the lessons be internalised by the entire trade union movement of the country.

Provisioning Social Security

When it comes to the issue of universal social security, the first objection raised by the critics is of the ways of funding and financing social security for not just around the 50 crore workforce in the informal economy but also across other demographics entailing the category of "non-workers", for whom contributory social security just can not work. Another question that arises is whether such an extension of social security benefits to all would come at the cost of existing schemes. Another ongoing global debate is around the idea of Basic Income for all through cash transfers (which has also been seen by many as replacing and dismantling the existing social security regimes and opening up those sectors to private and market forces). At the same time, many studies have indicated how various unused funds and corpus are lying with government institutions - such as Rs. 11 trillion with the EPFO, that could be rationally utilised for the maximum segments who cannot contribute towards their own social security. Finally, innovative ways of raising finances through progressive taxation, wealth tax, inheritance tax, tax on financial trans-

actions etc will have to be discussed in order to come up with a model of universal social security for all.

Many economists, including Indian economists have shown that the argument of not having enough resources to finance universal social programs is an eyewash. People advocating generous social programs have always been countered by the argument of money; they are always asked to make hard choices. This constant invocation of lack of funds, lack of money requires unpacking. In reality, the question of funds has always been a question of priorities. Moreover, this is not just related to the choices that the governments make regarding their priority areas -i.e. where the money will be spent - but also the question of will -i.e. whether there is a will to tax the rich. In fact, globally too, this has been an issue. Of late, many important figures- such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren have argued strongly in favour of imposing wealth and inheritance taxes on the super rich. These demands are receiving increasing popularity. In fact, the inheritance tax already exists in many parts of the world, especially in the rich European countries. This means, these are not impossible, utopian ideas. Rather, they are very much practicable and implementable. As per one estimate, with a mere 2 percent wealth tax and 30 percent inheritance tax, India will be able to fund universal programs on health, education, jobs and nutritious food for all. What is required today is a comprehensive framework that links universal social programs with a progressive taxation system.

Key Presentations - 1

(Keynote Speech)

Social Security in the Context of the Contemporary Global Economic Developments

Jayati Ghosh, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning,
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We must realize that our current situation is much worse than the situation of 2008. We have already been battered by a global crisis and another crisis looms over us today. It is also important to remember that India's own economic slowdown predates the current global slowdown. India's economic slump began much earlier because of domestic causes. If there is going to be another global economic crisis, India will be in a much more vulnerable situation than she was in 2008. India doesn't have the capacity it had in 2008, to combat its implications.

Generally in times of crisis, the working people are affected the most, as owing to job loss they lose their bargaining power. And things have been very grim on this front for some time now. In the last seven years, the aggregate job loss has been close to nine million, affecting mostly women workers but also all other categories of workers. In the current situation, jobs are being lost every day, even in the formal sector. This is nothing but a tsunami coming to grip us all. This is not to sound alarmist but only to highlight how important it is for us to understand what is coming at us. It is not justified to retain the optimism that we have already seen the worse and the things will only improve in the coming future. Rather, the situation is bound to deteriorate in the future.

India already ranks very low in the aggregate delivery of social services. 98 percent of the population enjoys no effective social security cover. Other indicators, such as nutrition and global hunger index have also fallen and they continue to fall even today. Our health indicators have fallen even below our poor South Asian neighbours. Given

this situation, a targeted approach towards social security is certainly not recommendable. In fact, targeted schemes have hardly ever worked. A targeted approach generates considerable error of exclusion and inappropriate inclusion, owing to various kinds of political lobbying etc. Moreover, when the poor is targeted in any scheme or program, the service delivered is also found to be poor and inadequate. The fact remains that only the middle classes possess effective voice today and only when they are included, via a universal system, we will find them making noises and demand adequate provision. Only when you have adequate voice, you will find adequate fulfilment of that provision. Further, contrary to the common sense, universal coverage will be cheaper and more cost effective, as it would not entail the huge administrative costs, pillage, corruption and monitoring processes otherwise associated with targeted schemes.

Definition of Social Security

As far as definition is concerned, *social security* is an expansive concept and includes many diverse elements. Social security includes job security, food security, health security, human security and so on. Social security should be provided to all citizens, as it is their fundamental right. It is another matter that today even citizenship rights of many are being questioned across the globe. Nonetheless, it is important that we retain the idea of universal social security, accessible to all citizens, as a matter of right.

The Question of Money

Every time the governments are asked to implement generous social security measures, the standard answer has been that there are no funds. This has been the situation for a very long time now. Even during the time when the Right to Education was introduced, the Prime Minister of that time had told in a meeting with economists and activists that "we cannot bankrupt the country by trying to put every child in school"!

In other words, this excuse of money has always been there. People advocating generous social programs have always been terrorized by this argument of money; they are always asked to make hard choices: "if you decide to implement this, you will not get money to implement that". This constant invocation of lack of funds, lack of money requires to be exposed.

The question of funds has always been a question of political choices. This is not just related to the choices that the governments make regarding their priority areas -i.e. where the money will be spent - but also to the question of political will -i.e. whether the government has the *will* to tax the rich. In fact, globally too, this has been an issue. Of late, many important figures- such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren have argued strongly in favour of imposing wealth and inheritance taxes on the super rich. These demands are receiving increasing popularity. In fact, inheritance tax already exists in many parts of the world, especially in the rich European countries. This means, these are not impossible, utopian ideas. Rather, they are very much practicable and implementable.

Let's see what we can achieve through such a taxation regime on the super rich. Let's be ambitious and try delivering on five major arenas: Right to Work, Right to Food (healthy, nutritious at an affordable price), Unemployment Benefits, Universal Health Service (certainly not through an insurance-based scheme), Universal Pension and Universal Quality Education. Let us take these six basic rights and imagine a country in which we actually tried providing these basic rights and make an estimate at the current cost and see what it will actually take to do that kind of a thing.

Right to Food

Let us say we implement the National Food Security Act (with 7 kilos food per head with the addition of other things which right to food campaign has been demanding for). Suppose we do that, what is the additional spending going to be? Basically, the universalization is going to cost another 1 lakh crores. Right now, the spending is 80 thousand crores, and with universality it will cost an additional 1 lakh crores.

Right to Work

Let's say - we extend MGNREGA to every adult (not just every household); ensuring 100 days of work to every willing adult (since it is a self-selective program, not everybody wants to work under MGNREGA). Suppose, we extend it to every adult, including skilled and semi-skilled workers (with training elements inside the program) and assuming higher wages for skilled workers. Let's also assume that we extend MGNREGA to the urban areas as well, with a minimum wage of Rs 200 per day. (By the way, extending MGNREGA to urban areas will also address many environmental concerns as the program will be open to projects such as 'greening' this or that area, as per the requirements of the local communities). What would all these additions cost us? It would be somewhere around Rs. 4.5 lakh crores.

Right to Education and Health

Let's say 6 percent of the GDP is to be spent on education; right now it is only 3 percent. Let's spend 3 percent of the GDP on health; at the moment, it is less than 1 percent. Then the total additional amount will be around 11.5% of the GDP.

Many people might say - such huge expenditures are impossible. But it should be remembered that many of the activities listed above also entail generation of new money. When we spend more money in social sectors, we generate more income for people. In all these sectors we will generate more economic activities, we will hire additional people (for building the additional infrastructures etc) and additional employment will be generated. It is found that many of the employment generation schemes have very high *multiplying effects*, sometimes as high as 4, in the rural areas. That means, when we spend Rs. 100 for MGNREGA, another Rs. 400 as income is generated, because the person who receives that 100 goes and spends the money, which in turn encourages further economic activities and income generation. Even if we assume that the multiplying effect is only 2 (which is quite reasonable), and a tax rate of 15 percent (a very modest rate), we will end up getting back the money. The government too will get some of this money back. The GDP will see an addition of 2.50 percent. The net deficit increase will be only around 9 percent, after doing all of these incredible things that would transform the entire economy.

Some might say, even this 9 percent is very high. So let us then forget all other taxes and consider only wealth tax. 1 percent of the population owns 58 percent of the (recorded) wealth in India. Let us impose a wealth tax of 2 percent, on this lot of 1 percent people. And let us have 30 percent inheritance tax (a moderate rate, considering many countries have as high as 60 percent inheritance tax) on this same lot.

What would be the result? It would result in the government recovering 11 percent of the GDP. Now let us assume that the government is not able to collect this 11 percent. Let's assume that this lot of 1 percent would be able to pay only 6 percent of the total GDP in the form of taxes. Now the government will only have a 3 percent deficit.

There might be some who may say - even this 3 percent is really high for the government to bear and it will invariably lead to inflation! This obsession with *deficit leading to inflation*, this concern of *not allowing the deficit to become more than 3 percent* is also a complete eyewash! In fact, as per a recent CAG report, the current fiscal

deficit of India is not 3 percent but 5.8 percent of the GDP (many public companies and utilities have not been paid their bills, money has not been spent on the MGNREGA, FCI has not been paid its due and so on. All these have been shifted to off-budget). As per theory, a deficit of 5.8 percent should lead to terrible inflation, but we are witnessing nothing of that sort. Things become inflationary when you have a supply bottleneck; but assuming automatic inflation over budget deficit of a particular percentile is complete nonsense.

When we demand universal social security, we will have to demand wealth tax on the super rich at the same time. These two things cannot be separated. We need to have universal social security and we need it right now. The inequalities that we are experiencing today are beyond anything reasonable or acceptable, in any society. These inequalities are also producing dysfunctional societies. They are giving us societies that are full of hatred and violence, because people are angry today and when people cannot do anything to the real source of their anger, they look for a scapegoat - who is generally a person from an even more vulnerable community. In other words, social security is necessary today not just from the perspective of economic justice, but also from the perspective of social justice and peace.

Key Presentations -2

Social Security and the Problematic Legacy of the Formal/Informal Divide

J John, Founding Member, Social Security Now



One of the principal tasks we have today is to understand and analyse the Social Security Code presented by the central government - its basic premises, assumptions and contradictions. But that in itself is not sufficient; we also need to delve into the historical trajectory of the discourse of social security in the country. Only through such a historical analysis, will we be able to understand the predicament that we face today, when the large majority of the working people - more than 94 percent - continue to remain outside of any social security system and yet, even the limited social security enjoyed by the very few workers is now being sought to be undermined.

Let me begin by making a few brief observations on the Social Security Code:

The Code is extremely patriarchal- not just because it uses the words "he" or "him" all the time, but also because it is absolutely insensitive to the reality that the concept of "male breadwinner" no longer exists today. And yet, the entire Social Security Code has been drafted with this assumption - i.e. it is the men who will earn livelihood for the family, it is he who will provide for the family and so on. In the times - we are living in, when there has been unprecedented expansion in the participation of women in paid work, such archaic notions of men as breadwinners are absurd.

The Code violates the principle of non-discrimination. Social security should be there for everyone who is working

and/or living in India, irrespective of her/his employment status. Unfortunately, that principle of universality is missing in the Code; it is rather discriminatory. The discrimination begins from Section 1.4 of the Code, which deals with its applicability. The section 1.4 makes it clear that the Code is not applicable for all workers, most importantly, for those who are having an employer-employee relationship. The Schedule-I says which of the provisions in the Code applies to which category of workers. The Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) will not be applicable for those who work in establishments with less than 20 workers. Employees' State Insurance (ESIC) and Gratuity will not be applicable to employees in establishments employing less than 10 workers. Maternity Benefits will also not be applicable to everyone. We must recall that these are basic laws of social security for workers in India, which the Code says, will not be applicable to all workers in an establishment or factory. This is a matter of great concern when the labour engaged through contractors are increasing in establishments. A recent study by Azim Premji University reveals that the share of contract labour in manufacturing increased from 15.6 per cent at the end of the 1990's to 34.7 per cent in 2011-12.

These exclusions and discriminations are integral to the structuring of the Code. Unfortunately, even those of us who are otherwise quite critical of the Code, often fail to appreciate the true scale and nature of these problems. I would argue that this is because we all have become habituated to a particular framework of understanding labour. This framework was historically given to us by our colonial masters; after independence, we accepted the same framework without questioning; and applied the inherent logic in defining the status of labour and in extending social security. Today, we have become so accustomed to it that we consider it as given, normal and natural. That's where the problems begin. I would argue that unless we challenge this very framework and its logic, we will not be able to make any real progress in the implementation of the idea of the universal social security.

Let me try to elaborate this further.

When we seek numerical information on labour in India, whether they fall under the category of organised or of the unorganised - we largely depend upon data derived using two methods. The first method is, as usually called, the residual method. As per this method, first the 'formal workers' are sought to be counted and identified i.e. workers who are employed in the 'formal sector' and then the rest are assumed as the 'informal' or 'residual workers'! As per the existing laws, enterprises which employ more than 20 workers and are registered under the Factories Act, are considered as formal enterprises. Workers in these enterprises enjoy certain social security benefits such as ESI, EPF etc. As we all know, these workers constitute less than 6 percent of the total workforce and the rest are considered as informal or residual workers. It is as if the law implicitly accepts that only formal workers are proper workers i.e. workers with proper numbers, rights and benefits. It is as if the formal workers are destined to define and shadow over the informal workers and the latter are condemned to remain undefined, unaccounted and overshadowed, notwithstanding their relative numbers. This consideration of the vast majority of Indian workforce as 'residual' has been a characteristic feature of our understanding of labour, unfortunately of the Indian State and of the labour economists too, from the colonial times onward and we have failed to understand its immense and continuing implications.

The second method is the direct method - i.e. assessments based on NSSO figures - household survey data and so on- to count the number of workers in India. As per this method, households are enumerated and the nature of work that the household members are engaged in are ascertained. One could say that it is an improvement on the first method but even here, there lies an interesting twist. First, NSSO presumes the existence of 'organised' and 'unorganised' sectors by way of practice, derived from the provisions of various laws - laws which have their roots in colonial period and accepted by the independent India uncritically. This is how NSSO provides the definition,

"The organised sector comprises of enterprises for which the statistics are available regularly from the budget documents, annual reports in the case of Public Sector enterprises and through Annual Survey of Industries in case of

registered manufacturing. On the other hand, the unorganised sector refers to those enterprises where collection of data is not regulated under any legal provision and / or which do not maintain any regular accounts."

NSSO has effectively maintained the 'residual' definition of unorganised sector. To arrive at this residual category, NSSO defines organised sector as those for which statistics are available. Statistics are available for enterprises covered under various laws, in particular social security laws and the factories act, 1948. Kindly recall the 'EPFO Pay Roll Data' being released by the *Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation* and government claiming that it reflects job creation in the organised sector. However, it must be kept in mind that the EPFO data covers only establishments in which 20 or more persons are employed. Employees Provident Fund is a social security measure and therefore, the availability of social security is a criteria for the NSSO to categorise workers into organised or unorganised. Further, the NSSO also uses the data being provided by the Annual Survey of Industries. Annual Survey of Industries defines 'factory' as one which is registered under Sections 2m(i) in which 10 or more workers work with the aid of electricity and 2m(ii) in which 20 or workers work without the aid of electricity as per the Factories Act, 1948.

NSSO defines 'informal sector' as "all unincorporated enterprises, which operate on either proprietary or partnership basis constitute the informal sector." The unincorporated enterprises are which are 'not incorporated' (i.e. not registered under Companies Act, 1956) and which have a separate identity from the individuals who set it up. If this definition would have been followed, India would have the categories of only formal and informal enterprises and would have included all enterprises irrespective of the number of workers engaged.

This dualisation of labour in India has been, in a way, naturalised, nay systematised even by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS). The Commission worked within the framework of unorganised sector and therefore, rather than critically looking at the concept, offered meticulously worked out definitions for 'unorganised sector' and 'unorganised worker'. NCEUS defines 'unorganised sector' as "*The unorganised sector consists of all unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households engaged in the sale and production of goods and services operated on a proprietary or partnership basis and with less than ten total workers*". This is almost similar to the universal definition of informal sector except the compromise by adding the clause, "and with less than ten total workers", which brings it back to the inherited and assimilated categorisation of labour. NCEUS further defines 'unorganised worker' as "*Unorganised workers consist of those working in the unorganised enterprises or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits, and the workers in the formal sector without any employment/ social security benefits provided by the employers*". Clearly, NCEUS uses the availability of 'social security' as a defining criteria for unorganised workers. It is a sort of circular logic where you say that unorganised workers are those without social security and social security is not available for unorganised workers.

As such, these definitions are quite comprehensive and all of us use them - to define who are organised workers and who are unorganised workers. But at the same time, such dualistic definitions, such attempts at defining labour by criteria such as social security coverage - end up normalising the duality, rather than questioning their basis (after all, why don't we question the restricted nature of social security coverage itself and demand universalisation, rather than using it as an objective, non-value laden, normal, standard criteria to define informal labour?).

One cannot help but note that such confusion exists not just in the government reports and legal documents but also in the discourses found in the academic and activist circles. Labour is not inherently dualistic, it is not inherently divided into organised and unorganised realms; rather, such divisions are created through legal and material practices. It is these practices that require to be unpacked, exposed and re-articulated. Ensuring universal social security can be achieved only if the dualism in the understanding and practice of labour into organised and unorganised in India is eliminated.

Such rigid dualities does not seem to exist in other countries - be it Germany, UK, Netherlands, or the USA. Then, why is it a norm in India? Where does the roots of this duality lie? How did we inherit it, uncritically, into our cognitive processes? Why the large majority of workers in this country have been left out of social security provisions for so long? Why do the division of labour into organised and unorganised appear so normal & natural to us? Let us discuss two points, which I call (1), political pragmatism and (2), colonial deception.

Political Pragmatism

In this context, I would like to raise two further points. The first one is a historical one - often camouflaged under the garb of political pragmatism. Just to be sure, this has had a long career and traces of it can be observed even today. Prof. Jayati Ghosh has mentioned that many years ago, when a different regime was in power, a proposal was made to the government for free universal education. To this, the PM at that time retorted that "we cannot imperil our economy by sending all children to school for free!" Unfortunately, this was not an exception to the rule. Similar statements were made even by the former PM, Jawaharlal Nehru himself!

Jawaharlal Nehru and his economic policies were responsible for the perceptible economic development India has achieved after independence. Nehru gave credence to socialism as a goal, emphasised scientific and technological development as a method and stood for developing India as a classless society as well as in eradicating poverty and inequality from India from a libertarian framework. At the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress (1929), Nehru announced the goal of the Congress as 'Purna Swaraj', to be attained through civil disobedience. In his presidential address, in Lahore, he clarified unequivocally that he is a socialist and emphasised the need to evolve programmes to "do away with the domination of any one class over another." However, he did not force his socialist views on the country, and he recognised that he would have to move gradually. He was more a pragmatic than an idealist when it came to implementation of his ideas regarding India's economic development. Planned development, setting up of the planning commission, emphasis of scientific and technological development, mixed economy are important components of Nehru's economic policy. But Nehru insisted that socialism cannot be achieved in India, all of a sudden and that India cannot aspire to be a welfare state. He strongly emphasised increasing production, which will result in the augmentation of India's wealth. Delivering a speech at the Industries Conference, New Delhi, December 18, 1947, he said, "We talk, and rightly so, of the problems of distribution. In fact, most of our troubles and conflicts and vital ideologies are concerned with distribution. But important as that is, there must obviously be something substantial to distribute before we can start the process of distribution. Therefore, we come to the problem of production. Production becomes the first essential, but with it is intimately associated distribution. You cannot really separate the two." He resisted strikes by industrial workers because that will affect production. Nehru further emphasises the relationship between production, wealth creation and distribution in a public broadcast on the "Need for Industrial Peace" from New Delhi on January 18, 1948, "Production means wealth. If we do not produce we have not enough wealth. Distribution is equally important, so that wealth cannot accumulate in the hands of a few, nevertheless, before we think of distribution, there must be production."

Nehru does not seem to have dealt with the concept of social security; rather he talked extensively on socialistic pattern of society and welfare state. He extensively discusses whether India can aspire to be a welfare state, at that moment, during his intervention at the 60th session of the Indian National Congress at Avadi, Tamil Nadu on 22 January 1955 in support of the resolution that he moved on 'the socialistic pattern and proposing what objective should be there for the second five year plan. He says,

"We cannot have a Welfare State in India with all the socialism or even communism in the world unless our national income goes up greatly. Socialism or communism might help you to divide your existing wealth, if you like, but in India, there is no existing wealth for you to divide; there is only poverty to divide. It is not a question of distributing

the wealth of the few rich men here and there. That is not going to make any difference in our national income. We might adopt that course for the psychological good that might come out of it. But from the practical point of view, there is not much to divide in India because we are a poor country. We must produce wealth, and then divide it equitably. How can we have a Welfare State without wealth? Wealth need not mean gold and silver but wealth in goods and services. Our economic policy must therefore aim at plenty. Until very recently economic policies have often been based on scarcity. But the economics of scarcity has no meaning in the world of today."

One wonders whether it is the same concern that gets reflected in Article 41 of the Indian Constitution on the rights to work and social security, which says, "The State shall, *within the limits of its economic capacity and development* (emphasis added), make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want."

Absence of a universal social welfare programme in India has been attributed here to absence of wealth to distribute. The Prime Minister's statement also recognises the distributive aspect of social welfare programme. Nevertheless, India opted not to be a 'welfare state'.

In the name of pragmatism, in the name of an impoverished economy, the large majority of working people have been kept deprived of social security from the time of the independence itself. What is not recognised in such frameworks is the other possibility that ensuring universal social security itself can give boost to economic growth and progress, by enhancing purchasing capacity of the vast majority of the working people.

Colonial Deception

The second point is about "colonial deception". It is interesting to note that in Britain, the first substantial discussion on welfare state and the concept of social security was held in 1942, in the British parliament. The discussion there was led by Sir William Beveridge, a liberal economist, who had produced a Report on the question. The Report says that social security should be universal. It should be applicable to all the citizens of the British empire - and Beveridge reminds his audience that it meant not just in Britain but also that it should be introduced in all her colonies.

As per Beveridge, basic security entails an assurance of income to replace loss of earnings, interrupted by unemployment, sickness, accident, to provide for old age retirement, to protect family in case of loss of support and so on. Beveridge's Report played a major role in the construction of a generous welfare state in Britain after the second world war.

But nothing of that sort happened in the colonies; the Beveridge plan was not extended to them.

What did the colonies like India get in its place? The Provident Fund (PF), something that all of us have learnt to instinctively defend at any cost! Instead of providing for universal social security, what Britain did was to introduce the Provident Fund as social security in her colonies. Here lies the colonial deception! One cannot overemphasise the fact that PF is found only in the ex-colonies of Britain. More importantly, PF doesn't entail division or redistribution of wealth, or division of profit generated by the capital or the state. Neither is the national income incorporated in it. PF is merely the contribution of the employer and the employee. PF was introduced by the state in colonies like India, precisely to escape from the responsibility of the State to provide for universal social security!

It must be recognised that the system of Provident Fund entrenched a dual labour market, instead of ameliorating it. Instead of introducing universal social security as a means of creating wealth, what India did was to perpetuate a form of cognitive dualism, after independence. Key social security laws in India have been enacted immediately after India got independence including Employees State Insurance Act in 1948, Employees Provident Fund And

Misc. Provisions Act in 1952, Maternity Benefit Act in 1961, all of which underline the dualistic approach to labour.

This also needs to be repeatedly emphasised that wherever Universal Social Security regimes have been established, they have been introduced not in times of great prosperity but in the times of the greatest want, the greatest turmoil. In between world wars and economic depression, the world saw the emergence of the first welfare states. So the argument that universal social security couldn't be established in India after independence because of lack of economic prosperity, doesn't hold any ground.

Seventh Schedule

The long term results are for everyone to see. Today in the latest draft of Social Security Code, we have Schedule 7 - which compiles the various already existing government schemes and presents them as the social security for the majority of the working people. Unfortunately this is just a list of schemes for different segments of labour without any sort of integration. Most of them are restricted to those below poverty line, further reducing the reach of the schemes and undermining the principle of universality. Though the Code is being proposed by the Ministry of Labour, the schemes are implemented by various ministries including Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Textiles, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries and Ministry of Agriculture raising serious questions on effectiveness and efficiency of implementation. Dismayed as we are, one cannot help but notice that this is in direct conformity/continuity of the dual labour regimes established in India since the colonial times.

What is the way out then? To be sure, there are no easy answers. But one must begin by recognising that universal social security cannot be ensured by clinging to forms of social protection that are themselves responsible for continuous production and reproduction of dualities in forms of labour. It also requires that social security provisions must be made independent from the employment status of a person and be provided to all, on a non-targeted, non-discriminatory basis.

Key Presentations -3

Agrarian Crises, Marginal Farmers and Social Security

Jaya Mehta and Vineet Tiwari, Joshi Adhikari Institute of Social Studies



Much has changed in the agricultural sector and yet many things have remained constant and have not changed at all. The agrarian crisis today is the result of the failure of the Indian government since independence to address the *agrarian question*. The question has often been discussed theoretically, but many problematic assumptions remain, even to this day.

Take for instance, the idea that when a country begins to get industrialized, the surplus is taken from agriculture to industry and at the same time, the surplus population also gets transferred from agriculture to industry. The assumption here is that industrialisation is creating enough jobs to accommodate those who have been displaced from agriculture, as a result of the transfer of the surplus. This has been the standard academic discourse. The reality however is that even though there is a shift of surplus from the agrarian to industry in India, the labour force has not shifted accordingly. As per the NSSO data available for the years 2009-10, (the latest and unfortunately the last ones to have reliable and adequate data) 50 percent of the workforce is still agrarian but its share of contribution to the National Income has come down to 12 or 13 percent. This invariably means that people who depend on agriculture for their livelihood don't have enough resources to be able to survive. Unless this basic question is addressed, the agrarian question and the agrarian crises cannot be resolved.

It is often said that the roots of the agrarian crises lies solely in the neoliberal turn of the economy. But after going through data after data on the agrarian sector from 1995 to 2005, I must say that blaming neoliberalism alone would be superficial and inadequate. Of course the neoliberal policy frame has aggravated the situation. But the root cause still lies in the fact that the labour force that is primarily dependent on agriculture for its livelihood simply does not have the resource base to get dignified livelihood. The main resource base is still land, and it is shifting rapidly and continuously away from agriculture.

Let's have a look at some statistics.

In 1992-93, the land available for household operation holding was 125 million hectares. In 2002-03, it came down to 107 million hectares and in 2012-13 which is the latest data, it has come down to 94 million hectares. In three decades alone, the household operational land holding has come by 31 million hectares, a massive figure!

Today, 50% of the total workforce is still in agriculture. Out of a total of 466 million workforce, 244 million people (with 156 million men and 88 million women) are still dependent on agricultural operations. For this massive workforce of 244 million, only 94 million hectares of land is available for them, to engage in agriculture. Moreover, the distribution pattern of ownership is also massively skewed.

For the year 2012-13, 5-6 percent of rural households do not have any land. The next 35 percent have only home-stead and no farmland. That means, 40 percent of rural households have no farmland at all. The next 30 percent have an average farmland holding of only 0.2 hectares. The next 13 percent have an average of 0.7 hectares farmland and the next 10 percent have an average of 1.3 hectares. Together, this makes 93 percent of rural households who do not have enough land to generate adequate income to support themselves. Only 7 percent of rural households have land of more than 2 hectares and this 2 hectares is the minimum requirement for a family of five, to be able to sustain itself on farming. Think about these figures again: 40 percent of rural households have absolutely no farmland and only 7 percent have the minimum land to sustain themselves, based on farming.

Remember these figures when you consider the questions of farmers' debt, institutional support and minimum prices for agrarian products. Actually, most of the time, you are not even covering the majority of the rural households. The much touted loan waivers declared by different governments at different times do not even reach the majority of the rural households. Most of them do not have any access to institutional credit, because they do not own farmland and thus are not considered as farmers on paper! In other words, given the vast disparity in land holding, it is simply not possible to address the agrarian crisis in a meaningful way, unless we address the agrarian question itself.

Moreover, the surplus population migrating out from agriculture due to low remuneration and productivity, do not have any alternative avenues for decent employment. We have failed to make much progress in industrialisation, we have failed to expand manufacturing. An alternative labour market has not been created for this large percentage of people, outside of agriculture. The result is - they are being forced to work in the informal sector in the urban areas, under terrible work conditions and meagre remuneration. In other words, the labour shifting from agrarian to the service sector, is not really leading to any meaningful transition, to a modern, industrialised society, unlike what is taught in the textbooks of economics.

I must say here unequivocally that in the entire history of capitalism, the agrarian question has never been resolved internally, anywhere in the world. The theories that we read in our textbooks omit the fact that all the surplus labour from agriculture that had emerged in Europe due to the enclosures, primitive accumulation and industrialisation, were sent off to settler colonies of America, New Zealand and Australia where land was available for the displaced white farmers and so industrialization could take place smoothly in Europe. This path is simply not available for the newly industrialising countries today, because there are no colonies available in the contemporary world, to send people off! So perhaps it is time to realise that under a capitalist framework, the agrarian question cannot be resolved meaningfully.

It is essential today to find employment for the men and women who are displaced from agriculture, outside of agriculture. But the development path that we are following and the existing production relations that we have are not conducive to ensure large expansion of employment. This requires revolutionary steps, outside of the existing

framework. Vineet will talk more regarding this and so let me get back to the question of social security briefly.

I must say that only when you have a generous welfare state and only when a relatively fewer number of people are not being able to secure employment, social security can address the problem. But in an economy where the majority of the population, i.e. 93 percent of the workforce is in the informal sector, who have no means of finding meaningful employment, the capacity of social security to address the problem is very limited.

The trade unions maintain that the social security issue is an issue of class war. But in an economy where 93-94 percent of the labour force is unorganized and hardly have any organisational and institutional representation, the question of class war will also have to be visualised creatively. It's details will have to be worked out.

Crop Insurance as Social Security - a highly untenable approach

The crop insurance program which was introduced about four years ago requires that if a farmer wants institutional loan from a bank, crop insurance is a prerequisite. After registering for the insurance, there is a premium for which the farmer is responsible for and that ranges between 1.5 percent to 2 percent. The central government on the other hand will take care of the 8 percent and the state government will also take care of 8 percent of the premium. But notice something here: the task of insuring the farmers was given to the private insurance agencies! There was this case study of Maharashtra, where the farmers went to register for their crop insurance to a private insurance agency. They were told by the agency to pay their premiums via online! Since most of the farmers didn't have digital literacy, going online was out of question for them. So what they did was to line up in front of the banks. The scene was reminiscent of demonetization and the attendant chaos and eventually violence broke out in many places. After forcing the farmers to go through all these ordeals while paying their premium, when it came to providing compensation to the farmers by the insurance agencies, it was found that the amounts were too little, too meagre. On the other hand, the insurance companies ended up making huge profits at the cost of the farmer's legitimate claims.

Let me give you some statistics. In the Parbhani district of Maharashtra, there were 2.79 lakh farmers growing soybean who had registered for crop insurance. 19.27 crores were paid by them to the company. The central government and state governments respectively paid 77.09 crores each. The total came up to 173.4 crore as premiums, received by the company, for the financial year 2016-2017. But when crops got damaged and claims were put by the farmers, out of 2.79 lakh farmers only 48,000 farmers received compensation and the total compensation received by all of them was 30 crores. In other words, 143.4 crores were the profit of the private insurance company - owned by Reliance- that administered the scheme in the name of social security for farmers. Some farmers received compensations as low as Rs. 40 to Rs 135 whereas the risk factor was as large as Rs. 40,000.

Let me give you another example. The crop insurance under HDFC got an award for "excellent performance". There were 13.5 lakh farmers. They paid 55.4 crores as premium and 443 crores was paid by the central and state governments. So HDFC received a total of 500 crores and out of the 13.5 lakh registered farmers, only 6 lakh received compensation of 232 crores. Rs. 272 crores directly went to HDFC as profit.

Apart from these, there are other problems too. The claim forms are long, tedious and many farmers did not even put up their claims as they were finding it difficult to understand the process. Some of them didn't even know that they have to make a formal claim. This is the ground level truth of the crop insurance scheme.

Another scheme that was talked about was that Rs 6000 would be paid to the marginal farmers just before the elections. This announcement was made during the interim budget when the government had no mandate to start new

schemes. So as a workaround, it was predated! Rs 6,000 a year for a marginal farmer is highly inadequate and the land holding requirements of whether the 2 acres had to be operational or self-owned was also not mentioned. This excluded many farmers from the scheme. Rs 6,000 per year translates to Rs 500 per month for a household of five, which means 100 rupees per month per head which falls short of any plausible social security measure.

Another scheme introduced by the current administration is the pension scheme for farmers. Under this scheme, the farmers between the age group of 20 - 40 years must pay Rs 100 per month. The claimants become eligible when they turn 60 and then they will start getting Rs. 3,000 per month. The problem is, even in today's terms Rs. 3000 per month is grossly insufficient and the amount will further lose its real value thirty years down the line. Inflation and the rise in the cost of living haven't even been considered! Additionally, at the rate of Rs. 100/month, calculating at a compound interest rate of 8 percent, the farmer has already paid one lakh fifty thousand rupees. If the farmer lives for only five or six years beyond 60, the state needs to pay nothing because the farmer has already paid for his pension.

In conclusion, after examining these various social security measures, it can be safely concluded that all of them without exception fall short of fulfilling the required social security. Rather, in contrast, many of the schemes end up becoming an additional burden. In view of everything that has been discussed, there is much left to be desired, at the level of policy making and implementation in regard to the issue of social security for the agrarian sector.

Vineet Tiwari began by saying that the agrarian crises cannot be addressed meaningfully within the capitalist framework. The dominance of small holdings in Indian agriculture create serious obstacles towards agrarian growth and prosperity. At the same time, land distribution patterns remain extremely skewed with the majority of the rural population having no effective cultivable land. Those with the largest landholdings are also the ones who control over the other resources such as water, machinery etc. So any definition of the category called 'farmer' that solely relies on land ownership as the criteria will effectively exclude the large majority of the rural population. This has been a serious problem in all farmer centric policies of the government.

Vineet further said that he was part of the team led by Jaya Mehta that conducted an extensive survey of marginalized farmers in eight states in 2010. The survey shortlisted about 15000 farmers and collected details of about 1000 marginal farmers. In 2010 when the research team reached Kerala, it found that people there had no interest, even awareness about the MGNREGA scheme because the open market labour rate in Kerala at that time was Rs. 400-500 and MGNREGA was offering merely Rs. 120! The study also found that Kerala is the only state where the cooperative movement found significant success in comparison to other states of India. When the team returned to Kerala four years ago to further study the cooperative movement, it found out that MGNREGA was the most talked about scheme at this time!

Explaining the phenomenon, Vineet said that this happened because of the will of the Kerala state to utilize the scheme in the most effective way. Kudumbashree, which is a state sponsored poverty eradication program, made MGNREGA the primary vehicle to implement its work. Kudumbashree works in all the 14 districts of Kerala and is an exclusive program for women. It was a BPL only program when it was first introduced but now it is for all women regardless of the BPL status. One woman from one family can be part of the program. Its primary mode of operation is forming Self Help Groups and micro financing, but it also has a rural component of collective farming. Under the collective farming scheme, according to the guidelines of NABARD, they form teams of about 8-10 women and the group identifies such land that is available in the area for lease or vacant government land. With the aid of the *gram panchayat* the women collectives take the land on lease for one to two years. The land can even be barren, but there are provisions under NABARD that if they augment the barren land, even if it is their own land, they can get paid under MGNREGA. So they utilized this scheme and made barren lands suitable for cultivation and within a period of one to two years, the women groups under Kudumbashree brought back up to 1.5 lakh acres of barren land

into agriculture. Nearly two lakh women are part of this project and they work together across the caste, religion and other social barriers. This was much in line with what Hugo Chavez once said in a different context that cooperatives are not just means for production but also preparatory factories for revolution! Because of the government's will to implement the scheme to its full potential, today 98 percent of eligible women in Kerala are making full use of MGNREGA. They have also worked with MKSY and trained close to 10,000 women farmers who also operate machinery like tractors, cutting machines etc. With the example of Kudumbashree one can see that if a state really wants to implement MGNREGA, ways can be found. Usually schemes are enforced by governments under pressure from campaigns, trade unions and social movements but creative use of schemes to ensure social transformation is also possible.

Jaya added that until the cultivators combine their labour and resources and work together, addressing the agrarian question will be very difficult. It is nearly impossible for individual farmers to tackle the huge problems of inadequate resources, price volatility and monopoly of corporates in the input (and increasingly) the output markets. This means that in addition to collective farming and other forms of cooperation, the input and output markets should be protected for the peasant collectives. Addressing the agrarian crises would involve moving beyond cultivation and developing input and output linkages for the peasant collectives which will also create non-agrarian jobs for the workforce. Coupled with steps to address the skewed patterns of land ownership, the development of cooperatives and other forms of cooperation would in the long term ensure change in technology, cropping patterns and trade relations. Until such a transformative process makes progress and the current system is dismantled, we cannot move beyond the agrarian crises.

National Consultation on Universal Social Security - The Rapporteur's Note

Ms Lokesh (Executive Director, Centre for Education and Communication) welcomed all the participants to the National Consultation and hoped that the conversations generated through the program will assist in moving forward the idea of universal social security. She also drew attention to the continuing slow growth across the global economy and rising inequalities and opined that a generous regime of social security should be seen as part of the solution that addresses these malaises. She noted with satisfaction that even researchers at global institutions such as International Monetary Fund and World Bank are beginning to recognise, albeit only occasionally and haltingly, the limits of the pervasive free trade doctrine.



Ms. Lokesh further noted that while the idea of universality is getting increasing traction, considerable differences of opinion still remain regarding the exact meaning of the term. There are also debates regarding the *mechanism* that would be able to ensure universal cover of social security. While according to some, universal social security necessarily means formulating appropriate schemes and boards for the different segments of the unorganised workers, according to others universality of social security coverage will become meaningful only when social security is delinked from employer-employee relations and be provided to everybody living and working in the country, irrespective of their employment status. While the advocates of the first position fear that if social security is delinked from employer-employee relations it will absolve the employer from all their responsibilities towards the employees, the advocates of the second position criticize the former for their inability to identify the dual regime of social security - one for the organised and the other for the unorganised - as a serious problem. Nowadays, there is also the added problem of identifying the actual labour-capital relationships as capitalism itself is going through significant transformations, with increasing 'flexibility' of labour regimes, global dispersion of production, platform based work and increasing automation.

Ms. Lokesh also pointed out how narrowly conceived employer-employee relationships often fail to capture the immense diversity of work performed by women, tribals and many other communities dependent upon *community commons* for their livelihood. In the case of women, the unpaid work they perform at their homes still remain under-

recognized and undervalued. The many degrading forms of labour that the Dalit communities are forced to perform also require special attention and this cannot be captured adequately by narrowly conceived economic calculations. Questions of social justice, equality and rights for all - will have to be adequately addressed and included in any progressive system of social security.

She hoped that the present Consultation will take up some of these issues and try to thrash out the differences through dialogue and conversations. A united and effective voice for universal social security can only be built by coming together of different segments of the society- the labour unions, activists and groups working with different segments of unorganised labour, feminist groups, Dalit rights organisations, farmer associations and others.

She thanked RLS for its generous financial assistance which made the program possible. She also thanked the various constituent organisations and individuals associated with SSN and beyond for coming and participating in the National Consultation.

Setting the Context

Rajiv Kumar (Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung) said that the present National Consultation is highly significant, as the country is going through a process of conversion of the existing labour laws into four Codes. He hoped that the Consultation will contribute significantly to the ongoing conversations happening in the country on these questions. He expressed a desire to have similar programs organised in the future as well. He thanked all the distinguished and experienced activists and scholars coming from across the country to participate and contribute in the Consultation. He hoped that a very fruitful, constructive and productive discussion will take place in the next two days.



Session: Universal Social Security: Situating the Conversation

Facilitator- RS Tiwari

Speakers: J John, Prabhu Mohapatra and Bobby Kunhu



Initiating the session, facilitator **R S Tiwari** said that Social Security Now (SSN) has been campaigning since 2005-2006 for universal social security for all the working people of the country. Perhaps the time has come that one should demand the inclusion of social security as an economic right, in the Constitution. Mr Tiwari lamented that even though the Unorganized Sector Social Security Act was enacted in 2008, it was not being implemented in any meaningful way. After this, many other initiatives and ideas also gained popularity, such as Universal Basic Income, Social Protection Floor etc. The ground situation however remains more or less as before, with the vast majority of working people remaining outside of any meaningful social security measure.

J John made a provocative but comprehensive argument that universal social security cannot be ensured by clinging to forms of social protection that are themselves responsible for continuous production and reproduction of dualities in forms of labour. He came heavily on the continuous and non-critical usage of the concepts of formal vs informal workers, even by the activists and trade unionists and showed how this division was actually the creation of law and other material practices that had their origin in the colonial era! This duality in turn led to dual forms of social security, a legacy that is being carried out even till today. This needs to be changed, social security should be provided to everybody. Instead of clinging to provisions such as Provident Fund, the workers should demand that social security must be made independent from the employment status of a person and be provided to all, on a non-targeted, non-discriminatory basis .

Taking a slightly different approach than John, **Prabhu Mohapatra** looked into the way the very concept of social security came into the existence in the nineteenth century. In fact, it was known not so much as the *social security question*, but rather as the *social question*, a broader category than the former. The social question emerged precisely when the unbridled sway of market capitalism was prevalent in the Europe of nineteenth century and social security emerged as a reaction to this system. It certainly didn't not emerge from any *rights based discourse*. The second aspect of the social question was that it emerged as a way to address the question of class struggle - not just between the workers and capital, but also between colonially exploited people and the metropolis, at various levels. These two aspects are important, and the question of social security will have to be rethought in this context. Looking at this issue as a merely *rights-deficit issue*, will be grossly inadequate. In fact, when one looks at the trajectories of how the issue of social security emerged across the world, one can see very clearly that everywhere it emerged as a response to the unbridled capitalism, and as a way to address the question of class struggle. He said- let us not forget that it was the intensely conservative Bismarckian regime of Germany that introduced social security for the workers for the first time! So the same Bismarck who was literally putting Social Democrats into jail, was also providing social security to the working class, lest they turn against the entire system!

Many people were thinking that after the victory of liberal capitalism in the Cold War, the social question lost its relevance. But it was not to be the case. Recently Jan Breman edited a book on the *Social Question in the Twenty First Century* and there he has shown that the social question has come back with a vengeance. Why has this question re-emerged today? And why policy makers across the world are finding interest in it? This is because - addressing the social question has always been seen by those in power as a means to *avert* the crisis of capitalism and today's capitalism is in deep crisis. So it is not just an innocent mechanism of giving rights, although we would want them too, but a mechanism to avert the crisis that capitalism has found itself in.

Another related question is - whether social security should be based on citizenship or whether it should be based on employer-employee relationships. It is pertinent to remember here that it was the labour movement that made universality *possible* in a lot of arenas- universal adult franchise being the most striking example. So they are not necessarily antagonistic to each other. But at the same time, the tension between the two is unmistakable.

One can find institutional expression of that tension in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 or the Philadelphia Declaration of ILO, 1944. Both spoke of labour rights as a *social question* and then spoke of the *universal rights*. So this distinction made between the two has been here for a long time now and it is very crucial. This also explains why today, the question of social security has become mostly about the employed; the unemployed, the unorganized still remain outside of it. It is a continuum of the tension existing between citizenship rights and labour rights. They aren't contradictory, but clearly not the same.

How that tension is going to be resolved? And how it was sought to be resolved before? Earlier, it was thought that all the economies are going to become fully '*capitalized*' and no corner of the society will be left unconquered by capital. Once that happens, the universalization of social security will become an option, but not otherwise. This explains why in the colonial countries, there emerged this idea of restrictive form of social security, from the very beginning. It was thought that once these economies will become fully capitalized, social security will also be gradually expanded to all. On the other hand, one may also say that the colonies at least brought the idea of social security; before that, there was nothing! So it was at least something. It is also true that they did it very reluctantly and in a restrictive way and made it applicable only to a certain section of the working masses.

The resultant cognitive dualism of that structure is what we call today *the labour rights vs. the citizenship rights debate*. If the labour question was thought in the way we are looking at it right now, there was no reason why it couldn't have been extended to all. This restrictive structure emerged from the assumption that the colonies are on the certain path towards full development of capitalism. In the context of India too, many - including the policy mak-

ers and the state managers thought that one day the Indian economy will become fully capitalist.

Such patterns of thinking can be termed as schematic ways of thinking. Karl Polanyi becomes very important in this context. He argues in his seminal work "The Great Transformation", as how initially the capitalists wanted to leave everything to the market. They attacked whatever little system was there to provide some modicum of relief to the poor as counter-productive and creator of lazy people, just like the MGNREGA is attacked today! But then the society reacted violently to such forms of unbridled capitalism and the trade union and other movements of the working people came into existence - what Polanyi has termed as "society's spontaneous reaction". On the one hand, the conditions were so bad, social fabric was torn, and on the other, there was the rise of the trade union movement.

It was at this juncture that Bismarck introduced social security in Germany, for the first time. Interestingly, at a later period (during another crisis of capitalism) even the Nazi regime introduced an elaborate system of social security, unlike the liberal regimes of those times. Bismarck was the first one to introduce unemployment insurance, pensions etc. for workers in Germany, from 1871 onwards. This was finally formalized after the First World War, with the formation of the ILO and the arrival of the "formal sector worker", the standard employment relationship and the idea of male breadwinner.

We are living in a new juncture today and we are beginning to rethink the question of social security. We are now demanding universal social security. But it cannot be achieved merely through a rights based approach. Rather, one must look at the overall system, its contradictions, the deep crisis that the system has found itself in and the position of labour in this entire affair.

Bobby Kunhu raised some epistemological questions regarding caste, class, work and non-work. He said - at the heart of the debate is the idea of the "working people" and there are many dissonances within that idea. At first appearance, the term *universal social security* sounds like an oxymoron- because the moment you say social security, it must be universal - what else could it be? But then dissonances appear within the category of "working people", for whom universality is being sought. One important dissonance that appears when one talks of the Indian workforce is caste. Work and labour relations in 98 percent of the cases, including the organized sector, are defined by *caste relations*. The Indian economy is largely driven by a labour force intimately built on caste relationships. It could be artisans, it could be cobblers, it could be landless labourers, the signature of caste is unmistakable. Unless caste is accounted for, the very conversation about ensuring social security for all "working people" would be inadequate and incomplete.

Everyone knows that how with the onset of neo-liberal policies in the 1990s, what was already available as social security for working masses was began to be taken away, by making empty promises of returns in the future. The government began withdrawing pre-existing provisions and put into work frameworks that directly benefitted unbridled capitalism.

But at the same time, resistance is also being organized not on pure class terms but by building on existing community networks. The Fish Workers Federation for instance, has been successfully engaging in collective negotiations- with both central and state governments, to ensure rights for the fish workers. But the traditional notion of employer-employee relationship cannot be used to understand the fishing community and Fish Workers Federation itself makes it very clear. The same goes for agricultural labourers, manual scavengers and so on. Caste works as an organising principle in all these different arenas of work.

The Nehruvian model of labour relations is vastly distant from the lived reality of Indian working people. This model has been very beneficial for the existing brahmanical structures and forces as it doesn't posit caste in the centre stage. It is being said that the Nehruvian model was preoccupied with creation of new wealth, rather than distribu-

tion of wealth. But who benefitted from this formula? Which caste? Which working community? The Nehruvian model of labour relations preserved the oppressive status quo.

Another issue that requires attention is that of un-paid workers, of which women are important part. How many people in this country can actually afford to live without working? Maybe a miniscule minority, who inherit immense wealth, could afford that but the vast population of the country, as a rule has to work in some way or other for their living. The very idea then, to divide the population into workforce and non-workforce is questionable. Again, the imprint of caste is unmistakable here. This means, in the collective articulations and demands, one must include caste relations, so that one does not leave out a large section of people who also fall under the non-paid workers category.

Discussion Points

●How to reconcile *universal rights* and *labour rights* in a single framework of universal social security? Continuing the present division of organised/unorganised and the dual social security regimes would mean no change at all. Even expanding social security via constitution of work specific boards etc. - would still entail acceptance of the idea of duality of social security provisions. Such dualities have been a stumbling block towards developing workers unity. But at the same time, should the trade unions really risk the already existing, albeit very limited, gains of the organised workers and begin from the scratch while demanding universality? The participants remained divided on the question, even as progress was made on clarifying the stakes at hand.

●A crucial question is the question of *trust deficit* between various stakeholders in tripartite consultations. The trade unions fear that the dismantling of the existing schemes and provisions would mean that the money of the workers kept in various funds, EPFO etc will be diverted and misused, without any accountability. Reorienting the trade union strategy towards social security will be effective only when measures are taken to address the *trust deficit*. Only then bold steps will be considered positively by all the stakeholders.

●One participant pointed out that the dualism mentioned by John can be extended to understand categories like undocumented workers, farm workers, manual, unskilled labour - who fall outside the preview of the system, even in countries with significant social security systems. For example in the US, they have this thing called a tax ID, so that everyone is forced made to pay taxes, but many categories of workers are unable to access any of the welfare benefits. Especially the Mexican workers have been organizing around this idea of Undocumented Workers' Rights. So such exclusions are there even in the developed countries. A comparison between them would be interesting.

●Why is it that Dr. Ambedkar himself being the Labour Minister in 1942, omitted the caste question in all the labour legislations he drafted, despite being the strongest voice on caste otherwise? Was it because of his belief that caste could be transcended with workers entering modern employment relations? As we are talking about the caste blindness of the Nehruvian model, the question can be put in the reverse order as well. Perhaps a key can found in the claim of modernity i.e. the idea that with time, modernity would ensure anonymity and all embedded social relations would give way to new relations, formed voluntarily.

Session: Trade Union Perspectives on Social Security- I

Facilitator: Amjad Hassan

Speakers: Gautam Mody, Vidyasagar Giri, Amitava Kumar, Rajiv Dimri, Saktiman Ghosh



The facilitator **Amjad Hassan** greeted the gathering, introduced the distinguished panel - representing various trade union organizations and invited them to provide their perspectives on social security.

Gautam Mody from NTUI began by saying that social security is extremely pertinent to the cause of the workers and in fact all the citizens. But the present Labour Code totally fails to achieve that objective and it's scope is far from universal. None of the Labour Codes presented so far offer any real codification or simplification. After the Wage Code was passed, a former labour minister of Bihar said that from now onwards, there will be double payment for overtime; probably he doesn't know that double for overtime is already a part of existing labour laws since decades. Such is the condition today, with a former labour minister celebrating overtime!

It is time that one goes back to the core principles of social security - of universal pension, universal health, universal maternity benefits and universal workmen's compensation. In the 21st century, this is indispensable for all countries and societies and it is utterly saddening that the Draft Labour Code - a document of over a hundred pages - fails to reflect these principles. If universal access was the centerpiece, this document could have been limited to four or five pages only.

One should be cautious though, while talking about universality. There cannot be a universal access to unlimited social security. There must be a limit to universal access, beyond which it becomes contributory. Now how much would that limit be, requires more discussion. There are some people who earn above 10 crores a year, Mukesh Ambani himself is an employee of RIL. Now whether he avails government hospitals or not, he must necessarily con-

tribute to a social security fund (without any cap), which should be made mandatory, like a tax. Government has to also drastically change its taxation regime. Brazil has universalized access to healthcare and education despite the neo-liberal onslaught. By 2001, Brazil's tax to GDP ratio was doubled from 25 to 48 percent, comparable to European countries. In India, it is only 11 percent, and coupled with low compliance rate, and the recent cut in corporate taxes, it is likely to fall below 10 percent. No universal social provisioning can be made by such a low tax regime. To make any universal social security provisioning tenable, one will have to make thorough changes in the Indian tax system. A movement for social security means a movement for equality, which also comes with a movement for progressive and higher taxation. This brings one to the other side of the challenge i.e. how to check the increasing share of profits rise vis-à-vis wages. This in turn means that the battle of social security must be coupled with a battle for egalitarian society.

Much has been made about the values of speed, urgency, efficiency etc and we are being told that labour laws require urgent changes. But one should also remember that the language of urgency and speed is often rooted in a drive towards undesirable centralization. Some states in India, like Kerala and Tamil Nadu have very good approximations of minimum level of welfare provisions needed, and the current central legislation may end up endangering them.

Vidyasagar Giri from AITUC said that we are facing a very serious and sad scenario in respect to labour rights, especially considering the recent Labour Codes. Capital and labour contradictions are in a very acute stage. They talk of universalisation but the reality is - even the existing social security provisions are being dismantled. ESI and Pension Fund Corpus is being sought to be taken away and there is a danger that the money may be spent without any accountability to the workers. The 2018 version of the Social Security Code had a 21-page codification with no mention of *object and reasons*. The latest one is replacing 15 laws with 8 and is repealing 8 Acts. The latest Code is providing 5 definitions of "worker", and yet at the same time, excluding the large majority of workers. In section 2, the Code provides 144 definitions! How on earth workers are going to understand these? The claim of so called "consolidation" and "simplification" is actually paving the road for greater need of lawyers and experts, who will have to be asked to decode such legalese.

The recently announced health insurance cover may end up collecting more from the workers throughout their lives and provide less in return, sometimes as low as Rs 3000, which the EPFO itself has rejected. Moreover, they want to replace the tripartite system of Consultations and introduce centralized corporatized bodies, handling workers pension funds, led by CEOs. They have created many more categories of skilled and unskilled labour; there are a total of 842 categories of unskilled labourers! And yet, most of them remain excluded from any decent social security coverage.

The idea of social security should be linked to the idea of human rights. The idea of universal pension for all, decent maternity benefits for all will have to be raised again. Today, the concept of welfare has been bid farewell. The expenditure on health and education is very negligible today and will have to be enhanced. With contractualization and other policies, there has been a dilution of international standards of labour. They claim to convert informal to formal but informalization continues to make rapid strides.

On the issue of caste, Vidyasagar was of the view that there has been a history of fragmentation of the labour movement and one must avoid letting that conflict play out to the benefits of the employers.

Rajiv Dimri from AICCTU began by noting that India recently slipped to the 102nd rank on the global hunger index. That means, India is performing worse than her backward neighbours. The economic slump gripping the nation is no less serious an issue. The country is on a path of losing what took decades to win. There is a slowdown today because people do not have the money to spend on even basic needs, like biscuits. The need is to strengthen the

purchasing capacity of the people and a generous regime of social security will be helpful for the economic recovery. The tragedy is - no such intention is visible in the horizons.

The 4 Labour Codes being talked about these days will reverse many of the gains made by the trade union movement; they are no less than "slavery" codes. They are as per the logic of globalised capital and imperialism. Socially, the Labour Codes are casteist, with inherent provisions of exclusion and dismantling existing protections. From the point of view of trade unions, all unorganized workers must be fully covered under social security. All the trade unions reject the current Labour Code on Social Security.

Amitava Guha from CITU said that social security and universalisation are important questions but if the present trend is anything to go by, no universal social security coverage is on the horizons, notwithstanding the claims. Today, the major preoccupation is ensuring *ease of doing business*, rather than ensuring *decent work* and *ease of life* for the working people. Each existing right of the workers are being dismantled. Through fixed term employment, they are easing hiring and firing, and excluding people from the purview of trade union protection. Features of primitive capitalism can be seen today, of extraction of more and more work and paying less and less, with no transfer of benefits going to the workers, owing to growing productivity. Working hours have increased from 9 hours to 12 hours. 8 hours work shift have been done away with, violating international standards. In 2017, at the Labour Standard Committee, 6 recommendations were made. One of them was that the government should also take care of ILO Conventions while amending and formulating the Codes. There was a provision in the 1981 ILO Convention on having labour standard inspections, which was done away with in 2014. Without inspection, how can any legal action be taken? Next was adhering to social standards, which was also violated. In the name of reforms, anti-worker changes in the law are being made for a long time now.

As per the rules, the tripartite format should be followed in all deliberations while formulating labour laws but that has been continuously sidestepped, and the trade union's proposals in the meetings have been repeatedly ignored. Trade unions are apprehensive that attempts are being made to transfer the existing money of the workers from EPFO, Beedi Workers Boards etc, without any accountability.

Saktiman Ghosh from National Hawkers Federation said that since the last 19 years, we have been meeting on the issue of social security. It is also a fact that informal workers have long been neglected by central trade unions. This needs to change now.

The government itself says that they believe in universal social security, aiming at 50 crore workers, and about 5 crore street vendors, particularly. But the current Social Security Code doesn't build any such confidence or optimism. It is being said that there are no adequate resources to fund universal social security, but if 5 lakh crores can be given for SEZs, without any tangible benefits, can't the government spend for enhancing the purchasing capacity of the workers, that would have an immediate positive effect on the economy as well?



When representatives of unorganised workers talk of pension, maternity benefits and social security for street vendors, many people laugh. Peoples' expectations have taken such a low dive that people have even stopped dreaming. For 50 years, street hawkers fought for their rights and finally an Act on protection of street vendors was passed in 2014. But unfortunately, one encounters even more evictions post the Act as compared to combined cases of evictions before the Act.

Now a days, smart cities are being proposed, where there will be no place for street vendors. But one doesn't need such exclusionary cities. Through struggle, the hawker unions have forced the Urban Department and Urban Livelihood Mission to include the question of street vendors. The fight of the street vendors will continue. National Hawkers Federation strongly opposes the current Draft Labour Code.

Discussion

●How to understand the relationship between caste and class? There were strong differences of opinion between the various participants and speakers. It was pointed out that labour in India is often organized around caste. It is not just an accident that the majority of the safai karamcharis are Dalits and thus the question is not just about narrowly conceived class interest, but also dignity of communities. The same goes for the owners of capital and it was pointed out that even in today's India, the capitalists come from a handful of castes. On the other hand, the trade union representatives underlined the fact that they don't discriminate among workers along caste lines and sometimes caste polarisations *do* create a problem for unionizing activities.

●The marginal presence of women in trade union activities was pointed out by Soma and others. Trade unions were also asked to take account of the myriad ways that women's unpaid labour remain unrecognized and how gendered division of labour remains a stark reality. Gautam Mody said that women should not be made solely responsible for child care; such gender sensitive approach should be reflected in our demands as well. On many practical issues, such as the requirement to raise demands for universalization of child care, institutional day care, and conversion of anganwadis into crèche, accessible by both parents etc. - all the trade union representatives agreed in principle.

●It was pointed out that the Code on Industrial Relations will directly attack union activities and will in fact de-recognize unions themselves, if a strike is found to be illegal. This has ominous implications for the trade union movement in India. What should be the response strategies - that remains an open question

●On the issue of financing, it was discussed whether the contribution of employer for worker's social security is paramount or is it the state's responsibility? What about the case of Mathadi Board model? Should one demand expansion of this model everywhere in the informal sector? And how does one finance the social security when funds and budgets are being misutilized, while labour ministry gets the least funds? Some participants stressed that one must not fall into the trap of "contributory" social security and should focus our demand on non-contributory since we are talking about large section of informal workers who are not capable to contribute. Saktiman Ghosh said that the state should be considered as the employer in the case of informal sector workers such as hawkers. Gautam Mody said that India cannot have universal social programs with the current tax-to-GDP ratio. Taxes must be increased. He also stressed the fact that it should be the responsibility of the state to look out for the employer in the case of each worker. If the state fails to identify the employer, then the state itself must pay for the social security contribution of the worker. He also underlined the fact that in many cases, such as app based platforms - identifying the employer is actually not hard. All Ola and Uber drivers, for instance are workers and must be recognized as such. Amitava Guha stressed on the fact that today PF funds are being put in the share markets deliberately. The NPS is also based on the speculative market model and does not allow scope for opting out. The welfare funds and boards like the Building Workers Welfare Board, Beedi Workers Board etc can be expanded and the social security enjoyed by the workers can be increased. But instead, the existing corpus of workers' social security deposited in various boards are being sought to be diverted elsewhere without any accountability.

●The differences of opinion regarding *universal vs. work based social security* was witnessed even in this session. While the trade union representatives agreed that in principle they would all support a universal regime of social security, they would not barter the existing benefits enjoyed by the workers in lieu of a model whose details are yet to be worked out by the authorities or other proponents. *Trust deficit* appears to be the most serious stumbling block towards any radical orientation of the social security regime.

Session: Agriculture, New Forms of Work and Social Security

Facilitator: Korivi Vinay Kumar

Speakers: Jaya Mehta, Vineet Tiwari, Subhash Lomte, Babu P Remesh



Jaya Mehta and **Vineet Tiwari** made a strong case that the *agrarian crises* cannot be resolved unless the *agrarian question* is addressed and the latter in turn has a much longer life than the current phase of neo-liberalism. In classical terms, addressing the agrarian question meant ensuring radical redistribution of land among the farmers. However today, land distribution can no longer be the chief means of addressing the agrarian crises. This is because of the fact that despite skewed patterns of land ownership, Indian agriculture today is characterized by the numerical dominance of small farmers. There is just not enough land to redistribute to all the landless. So innovative approaches are required. A new approach would entail different forms of cooperation, collective building and resource pooling among the farmers. Only by expanding their resource base through cooperation, the farmers can hope to enhance their productivity and returns. Moreover, the dominance of the corporates in the input and output markets will also have to be reversed and farmer cooperatives and collaborative efforts must expand their activities into developing input-output linkages. In the long term, this will also mean expanding cooperative activities into non-agrarian activities and creation of non-agrarian jobs through such cooperation and collectives. Only after developing the productive forces in agriculture in such ways and reversing the expansion of the corporates into the input-output markets, resolving the agrarian crises would become possible .

Subhash Lomte said that the agricultural workers in India receive absolutely no form of social security, none whatsoever. It is not that this is a new phenomenon under the current administration in the last five years. This has been the case since independence itself. Employment Guarantee Act was enacted in Maharashtra in 1978 after much struggle. The farming sector underwent many transformations there. Even after all of this, social security which means an opportunity to maintain a dignified living is still not available to a person who depends on agriculture and farming for sustenance. Whatever little education and healthcare that was provided by the government has completely eroded after the 1990s, not only in Maharashtra but nationwide.

For the 5-6 percent organized labour, one parameter is set in terms of salary and quite a different one is applied for the unorganised labour which is more than 92-93 percent of the total labour. The pay commission is set up to regulate wages for the organized sector whereas a minimum wage is fixed for the informal sector that also includes rural, farm workers. All concerned should reflect on this continuing discrepancy and injustice.

The Seventh Pay Commission has fixed the salary for Class V workers -i.e. the lowest paid in the organized sector - at Rs. 25,000 and the justification given for that was that it is adjusted for inflation to balance the cost of living. But the same government fixes Rs. 200 for a day for MGNREGA workers! That means, even by the government's own account, the MGNREGA workers are not being paid the minimum to ensure a decent life. This is simply blatant exploitation of labour. Another example is that of farm workers. MSP (Minimum Support Price) is declared for farm workers but they don't get even half of the declared MSP. Two years ago, the price of *toor dal* was Rs. 5650 per quintal. When the MSP was declared, the farmer only got Rs. 3500 per quintal, which means a loss of Rs. 2150. At this rate, a farmer lost approximately Rs. 21000 per quintal.

The problems faced by informal workers are multidimensional. There are questions of his living, education of his children, his social status and mobility, his cultural standing. These cannot be adequately captured by narrow economic calculations alone. Unionising in this sector will require taking up the social dimensions as well. For a very long time, informal sector workers have remained neglected by the formal sector. Have the central trade unions ever taken up an exclusive issue of informal workers and raised concerns over it and done demonstrations? This needs to be changed.

The Constitution given by Dr. Ambedkar became official on January 26, 1950. Until the enforcement of the Constitution, it was the *Manusmriti* that reigned supreme in social life. The mentality of *Manusmriti* is not limited to the brahmins, rather it's presence is found in the entire society; no one is exempted from it. Even among the Dalits, the man in the family feels superior to his wife, daughter and mother. That same mentality persists even today, despite having a modern and egalitarian Constitution. The constitutional values of egalitarianism will have to be spread in the society and this must be part of the task of any unionizing effort.

Trade unionism must engage with various other movements, be it those who are involved in questions of gender justice, rural development, climate change, Dalit movement and so on. Adequate solutions can only be found based on such wider engagements.

Babu P Remesh began by saying that he would like to focus on the field of journalism and examine the nature of work there. He further said that this presentation is part of an ongoing study for which he interviewed 120 journalists in Delhi and Aligarh.

Informal work is very common in journalism and in our current times when we have so many media houses and channels, *informalisation* of work in this field has spread more rapidly. There has been a decline in legal protection and decline in collective bargaining. At the time of independence, journalism was largely limited to print media and even back then it was dominated by private and corporate sector. Journalism was also patronized by the government and the Working Journalist Act was passed in 1955. It made provisions to create an environment that encouraged talented people to take up the profession of journalism. The government wanted journalism to be critical of parliamentary democracy and enough freedom was provided in this regard through a policy framework. Through the provisions of the 1955 act, Wage Boards were set up and as recently as 2011, the recommendations of the *Majithia Wage Board* was accepted and implemented by the government. It included many benefits including job security. It also acted as an effective barrier between the corporates and the editors. The corporates were not able to influence the media and the editors were free to exercise their editorial opinions.

From the 1980s onwards, there were many noticeable changes in the media sector including technological advancements. New business models began to emerge where media was supporting paid news, media was carrying advertisements, media was sharing profits with other organizations...all these factors contributed towards diminishing of legal protection and collective bargaining. The report of the Sixth Wage Board was submitted in 2010 and accepted in 2011 and ever since then there has been a protracted litigation. There was a favorable verdict by the Supreme Court in 2014 but even now most of the media work is based on short duration workers.

Many of the issues that the journalists face are not reported properly in the newspapers and media groups. Only a handful of small organizations carry stories about media workers. The number of protected journalists has drastically come down. In 2017, Times of India had only 263 Wage Board employees out of 50,000 employees, among which only 34 are journalists and everyone else was classified as non-journalists. Even if a new Wage Board is enacted, there will not be enough employees to fill it. After the new Labour Code is enacted, the two legislations that protect journalists, the Working Journalist Act, 1954 and the Fixation of Rates of Wages Act, 1958 will be repealed. The justification given is that the Second National Commission on Labour in one of its report had recommended this labour code. But if one refers to the First National Labour Commission Report, it clearly outlines the efficacy of the Wage Boards as a wage fixing mechanism. None of this is taken into consideration and only one report from the Second Commission is being highlighted to justify the Labour Code.

Discussion

- Some of the participants pointed out that while agriculture is increasingly moving towards self-cultivation, many oppressive forms of labour still remain, albeit to a lesser degree perhaps. Bonded labour is still present in the rural areas, albeit increasingly rarely. Moreover, while developing programs for the agrarian sector, how does one account for the existing class barriers between different classes of peasants?
- It was pointed out that while social security legislations themselves cannot ensure resolution of the agrarian crises (which requires separate steps as underlined by the presenters). At the same time - a generous social security regime can also enable many of the productive activities being envisioned for the marginal farmers. If social security can ensure an enhanced resource base for the marginal farmers, the latter will be able to engage in different productive experiments (as mentioned by the speakers) with less risks and thus less inhibitions.
- Some participants said that one often ignores the question of rural workers while talking about the agrarian question. The class situation of the rich farmers and the rural workers are clearly different and separate interventions are required to ensure social security and other needs of the rural workers. How does one anchor both these requirements in a single framework?
- It was pointed out that the Kudumbashree program is also administering social security schemes. They have an elderly care program called Ashraya, administered directly by Kudumbashree. Kerala's history is much different, so many of the schemes from there cannot be copied directly. Still that doesn't mean we cannot borrow some of the principles to replicate in a larger scale.

Session: Trade Union Perspectives on Social Security - II

Facilitator: Sudeshna Sengupta

Speakers: Sunita Rani, T Peter, Ramesh Vats, Tularam Sharma,
Vilas Bhongare



The facilitator of the session **Sudeshna Sengupta** pointed out that the political economy of capitalism doesn't dictate that it should take identical shape everywhere. Even while retaining its essential features, capitalism interacts with the local social, economic and political institutions and produce distinct social formations in different places. This is one of the reasons as why questions caste, gender etc should to be closely investigated, as they give distinct shape to the capitalist system in different places. In this spirit, while social security must be considered as a universal right, one should not assume that the struggle will be caste or gender neutral. Only by including the social dimensions, will it be possible to visualise a universal regime of social security.

Sunita Rani talked about the difficulties faced by the domestic workers and their social security requirements. It is a sector where women outnumber the men. These women are mostly migrants, who come from rural areas to the cities in search of jobs. There are 2 types of women domestic workers, part time and full time. Those who are full time workers are also the ones who are exploited the most. They don't have any proper work schedule and it is expected that they should be available whenever the employer expect them, to work.

Domestic workers face lot of problems while working, such as occupational hazards (hurting herself while dusting, slipping and breaking of leg in slippery floors), they have no facility of crèche for children, they leave early in the morning, spend the noon in a community park and then return late in the evening. They are often not provided even a cup of tea or refreshment, let alone lunch at the workplace. Working in one home is hardly enough and the workers are forced to take up multiple homes and exhaust themselves with overwork. They don't get adequate time to

take care of their own children and household.

Poor women migrating to cities find out that if they don't take up wage work, running the family is not possible. Earlier, the poor used to get subsidized grains but nowadays there are so many rules and restrictions that many workers do not get the full benefit of the subsidized grain. For instance, the government says that if you have gas cylinders, you are not entitled to kerosene! If you have a fridge (which is either a second hand one or gifted) you are not entitled to be categorized as poor! There is an attempt to do away with all subsidies. Now there is a survey being conducted in the slums of Delhi to determine who is rich and who is poor. It is just atrocious that mere possession of an ordinary fridge or television is being used as a criteria to exclude these poor working class women from government schemes.

On the other hand, women who work as full-time domestic workers are exploited the most. Often these women workers enrol themselves with some placement agencies, who send them to different places for work. The government has no proper monitoring mechanism to oversee the functioning of these agencies. These placement agencies resort to all kinds of illegal practices. Often, many girls and women just 'disappear'. Sometimes when the employer family shifts to another place, they also take the worker along with them and sometimes the family members of the worker even lose all contact with the worker. It becomes difficult to find out even the whereabouts and the status of the domestic worker. Young girls are often sexually exploited. A survey conducted in Gurugram revealed that a girl was not given solid food for three years, nor was she paid her salary. Sunita further said that while her organisation rescued the girl, rescue operations by smaller organisations are never adequate. Rather, it is the duty of the government to exercise effective control and monitoring over the placement agencies.

There is little chance that the current Labour Code will be of any help to the domestic worker. They continue to remain excluded from adequate social security coverage. Proper recognition of the labour performed by domestic workers as "work" and recognition of homes as proper "workspaces" remains to be formulated by law.

There was a proposal that the government should form a committee to monitor the placement agencies, work conditions and the wages paid to the domestic workers. It was also proposed that such records be maintained by the local police station. But the proposal was not taken seriously.

It remains to be seen as how many domestic workers actually benefitted from the National Health Insurance Scheme. The same goes for other schemes as well. All organisations working with workers - organised or unorganised - should come together and formulate pro-labour policy proposals together. It should be ensured that the specific needs of different sectors of the workers are taken care of in any such proposals.

T Peter began by saying that the issues faced by the fishworkers are not taken seriously. The conventional employee-employer model cannot be applied to the sector; rather, resources are shared by the community. The fishworkers enjoy no PF or ESI facility, nor is there any minimum wages. There is no labour norm, neither is there any compliance mechanism. The fisherman's family is also engaged in the occupation but their labour remain unrecognized, uncompensated and they remain excluded from any social security provision. The fishworkers protect the coast, the nation, and maintain the coastline; the fishworkers can be defined as the second line of *defense* of the country's coastline. But the traditional fishing communities are increasingly losing their fishing rights and coastal areas. Increasingly, giant commercial fishing companies and industrial lobbies are appropriating the spaces of the fishworkers. In the Sagarmala project, there is a proposal to establish 64 mega ports in the prime fishing areas of the fishing communities. This will deprive thousands of fishworkers from their traditional means of livelihood. What is required instead is security of livelihood for the fishworkers and expansion of social security to them so that they can live a dignified life.



Ramesh Vats began by saying that workers and farmers are looted in the name of pension and insurance schemes and this needs to stop. He also lamented over the fact that no proper consultation on the Social Security Code is being organised and a disturbing trend of privatizing schemes is underway for some time. At the same time, the large majority of the workers remain outside of any social security net. He gave the example of the garment workers, a sector known for its significant contribution to the GDP. Yet, he said, garment workers remain outside of all social security provisions. In fact, in today's time, the formal/informal divide seems to be losing its significance, as hardly any formal sector is left today! At the same time, if unionisation is to have any future, the trade union movement must be able to resist growing informalisation of work. There can be no talk of social security when no job security is left. Both must go hand in hand. Trade unions are also increasingly recognizing the importance of working with the temporary, contract, casual workers and for a united working class mobilization, it is very important that all segments of the working class is organised.

Tula Ram Sharma also focused on the fact that secure, continuous and sustained jobs for the working people will have to be ensured and that must be part of the trade union demand. Already, the MGNREGA movement made important progress in driving home the point that each person has a right to work. Further work and campaigns is necessary in this regard. Food security and affordable health care are also very important for the workers, so that they do not have to spend all their earnings on these two tabs. Gainful employment for women also must be ensured and their participation in different jobs across the gendered line must be ensured.

Vilas Bhongare drew attention to the domestic workers of Nagpur and laid stress on the fact that the caste dimension of the work is also very important. The registration of the workers is very crucial, especially with respect to domestic workers welfare boards. It is often seen that the domestic workers fail to enjoy benefits under different schemes as they fail to register. To be sure, often even the registered workers fail to get adequate benefits; schemes such as Jan Sri Yojana, Antavidhi Yojana etc were launched with much fanfare but it was found that hardly any registered worker received any benefits. Legal awareness among the workers regarding their rights is also inadequate, which further exacerbate their vulnerabilities. In the case of elder domestic workers, it is seen that often they are left with zero provisioning for their old age. Existing pension schemes have failed to serve them adequately. Domestic workers' agencies do not exist in Nagpur but recently a union of domestic workers was registered there. It is hoped that the union will be able to make some progress in taking up the issues of the domestic workers.

The question of occupational hazards of the domestic workers require special intervention as homes are not even considered as proper workspaces, making any monitoring of the workspaces extremely difficult. Moreover, unions cannot afford to take up work related issues only. Proper schooling for children of the workers will have to be ensured. While the central trade unions have done some significant work with Asha and Anganwadi workers, many different categories of work remain neglected by the trade unions. Bringing the different types of workers under unions and ensuring social security for all remains a challenge.

Discussion

- It was observed that despite their great diversity, the problems faced by informal workers are similar to a large extent. Employer-employee relationships are not established, even in those cases where it would not take much effort to do so. Workers are deprived from even the bare minimum of job security, social security and occupational safety.
- Some participants observed that even as we continue to debate appropriate forms of social security (i.e. whether it should be work based or citizenship based), this should not excuse us from demanding proper identification of employer-employee relationships, wherever possible.
- The practical implications of considering questions of caste and gender in analysis of class formation became clear in the session. The way patriarchy and capital play together in non-recognition of domestic spaces as proper workspaces was commented on by many speakers. In the case of fish workers, it was observed that it is a classical case of primitive accumulation by capital, whereby the resource base and the commons of the working people are being colonized, snatched away and appropriated by corporate capital. This in turn means that even if immediate employer-employee relationships may not always express themselves in some sectors of work, the objective working class positions of many of these small producers become apparent when their cases are considered from a wider perspective.

Session: Social Security - Voices from Movements

Facilitator: Shashi Bhushan

Speakers: Soma Parthasarathy, Anshu Malviya, Rajendra Ravi, Arun Khote, Dadarao Dongare, Prakash Kumar, Sudhir Katiar, Sandeep Khare



Initiating the session, **Shashi Bhushan** from Harit Recyclers Association said that we are indeed faced with a difficult situation today as there has been a consistent decline in the commitment of the state in ensuring proper execution of social programs for the poor. In the case of the unorganized workers, the problem is even much larger. Today the patronizing attitude of the state towards delivery of social security benefits to be poor is being rightly critiqued; but the reality is - even the patronizing attitude is slowly giving way to apathy and indifference. He hoped that the different speakers in the session will put light into the various issues and problems faced by the unorganized workers and also discuss about appropriate strategies for the field.

Ashok Khandelwal said that during the time when the second Social Security Code Draft was released, the government had also released a PPT and he would like to make some points on the PPT. On the one hand, the PPT accepted all the problems mentioned by the movements - viz. lack of resources to fund social security policies, problems of poor compliance, poor administrative structure, unsystematic identification of beneficiaries and so on but on the other -the PPT is at pains to argue that the companies are bearing very high costs by paying PF contributions to the workers. This is clearly an instance of misguided analysis. Instead of focusing on the first set of problems, too much has been made about the second set of problems. It is time to make it very clear that it is the workers who create all the wealth and all of them deserve social security. Moreover, it is time to resist the attitude that considers social security benefits such as pension provided to the poor as alms; they are not alms, they are the rights of the working people. The ILO Convention 102 mandates certain benefits to be paid to the workers. No dilution of this mandate should be allowed.

Dadarao Dongare said that he has many decades of experience of working with transport workers, construction workers, forest workers and domestic workers. He also played a crucial role in the development of the regulations for the *Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board Act* of Maharashtra. 28 schemes were developed by the Board for the construction workers and 12 lakh workers were enrolled. But the present Social Security Code will endanger it without making clear alternative arrangements. He also talked about the problems faced by crèche workers in Maharashtra. These workers are not considered as proper workers and they only get an honorarium of Rs 1500/-. Dadarao said that to ensure social security for all, groups active with different segments of the working class will have to come together and initiate a united struggle.

Soma Parthasarathy highlighted how the labour performed by women often remain unrecognized and invisibilised. The majority of the women who are not employed under traditional employer-employee relationships are not even considered as workers. This approach needs to change. One must begin by recognizing the question of identity while analysing the class formations; in the case of women, it is especially true. In fact, women have always been the most exploited lot among the labouring communities. They work from early morning till mid night and bear the double burden of care work, cooking, cleaning and so on, without any fixed break time or leave day. Yet, often women do not have tangible properties and thereby bereft of whatever little benefits there is for the labouring people. For instance, most of the women are not recognised as proper farmers because they don't own land. Only 12 percent of women farmers have any land in their name in this country. So they remain deprived of all the farmer centric policies of the government. This is despite the fact that without the contribution of women's labour, agriculture in this country cannot even be conceived. The Makaam initiative began from this recognition and Makaam believes that only landowners cannot be considered as farmers; rather, all the people who work on land and contribute their labour in agriculture should be considered as farmers.

One must begin by saying that all women are workers and all of them deserve benefits under social security legislations. This definition includes all those women who do not work under traditionally defined employer-employee relationships, especially those women who work in commons. One should also remember that it is women's labour and care work on whose basis the labour power of the male worker is nourished daily and they find themselves capable of going to work the next day. Without women's labour, the entire system of production would crumble down. In that regard, unfortunately, the present Social Security Code utterly fails. Not only it continues to hold on to gendered definitions of work and non-work, it also excludes the large majority of women workers. One must seriously ponder -whether the existing definition of a 'worker' is appropriate, given the fact that it excludes the vast majority of working women. Moreover, the very real everyday experiences of sexual harassment and sexual assault also finds no reference in the Draft Code. How could one talk of social security of workers, when the everyday insecurities experienced by the vast majority of the workers are not even recognised? This makes the current Code 'an exercise in delimitation, not inclusion'. Soma made an impassioned plea for such a Social Security Code that recognises the contributions and the needs of various categories of women workers, be it forest workers, women working in commons, peasant women and others.

Soma also focused on the need for cross-learning across movements and campaigns. She said that the model of women collectives engaging in collective farming in Kerala is actually derived from the experiences of the women's movement in Bihar and Tamil Nadu where women collectives were formed to pool together land for collective agriculture, to enhance their resource base and livelihood security. She repeatedly stressed that social security cannot be divorced from questions of identity, social oppression, dignity and paths of development being followed; all of them are interconnected and a holistic approach will have to be found for all of them.

Anshu Malviya started by mentioning about their work with the urban poor - the domestic workers, construction workers and informal workers. Attempts are being made to unionise the different categories of the unorganised workers. Campaigns are also being undertaken on common issues of the urban poor such as housing rights etc. Anshu lamented over the fact that despite so many efforts, the problems remain as they were one decade ago. He

demonstrated the striking similarities between the problems found in the legislation of 2008 for the unorganised workers with those of the present Social Security Code - both of them are exclusionary, both justify the continued separation between the organised and the unorganised sector, both leave the definition of social security vague, both are non-universal! It is as if no lesson was learnt in the last 10 years!

He also underlined the necessity of making analytical literature on social security available in Indian languages. Many of the debates and discussions in programs like this remain localized and half-forgotten and thus instead of beginning from the beginning each time, a strategy will have to be thought out to build on existing knowledge, debates, discussions and experiences.

He also underlined the necessity of envisioning and designing social security programs in such a way that they do not appear as *alms* provided by the government to the hapless but rather as *rights* bestowed to an empowered citizenry. This in turn requires that apart from economic and social considerations, the *designing process* of the social programs should also take into account questions of mobilization and balance of forces in general.

Rajendra Ravi from National Alliance for Peoples' Movement stressed on re-envisioning the very model of development and said - the question of social security must be considered within that re-envisioned model. It is wrong to say that the organised sector is the mainstream; after all - how can one declare a mere 6 percent workforce as the mainstream and relegate the majority of the workforce to the margins? This requires radical rethinking of the categories themselves.

He further said that even if law provides for adequate social security tomorrow, it is near impossible to implement it within the present paradigm of development. For instance, the majority of the domestic workers work in gated societies whose every movement is heavily policed and monitored. On the other hand, access of trade unions and other advocates of domestic labourers to such spaces is heavily restricted. This makes any real execution of pro-labour policies in such spaces nearly impossible. He further said that the fight for social security requires building strong solidarity across the masses. But in today's time, the dominant development paradigm create further division between people on the basis of caste, class and gender and obstructs building of solidarity. Different segments of people are increasingly being forced to live separate lives; it brings down interaction among people and makes people unaware of the pain, suffering and lives of the others. The dominant groups are increasingly resorting to building segregated lives for themselves. For instance, in Delhi only 20 percent people own cars. And yet the roads are constructed only by keeping them in mind. The poor working class cyclists, the street hawkers etc are now considered as nuisances and city spaces are being sought to be cleansed from such nuisances. And yet, these practices are bringing disasters to our lives. Over reliance on private cars is one of the chief reasons of air pollution in Delhi. Today, city planning itself is assuming extensive zoning. People live in one place, go to work to another place. This increases traffic and pollution in the roads. The same goes for the green revolution which removed livestock altogether from agriculture. As a result, farmers today resort to stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana, creating havoc for the environment. Earlier, the agricultural waste such as stubble etc was used as food for the livestock. But as a result of the breaking of the old cycles and organic unities, people are being left with more vulnerabilities today.

Arun Khote began by raising concerns that the campaign for social security so far has not been able to adequately include the Dalit movement. The reason being that for the latter, social security is fundamentally about dignity and an egalitarian life with egalitarian distribution of resources. The entire edifice of caste oppression relies on unequal social distribution of resources. In that regard, the Dalit movement has always been part of various mobilizations for resource redistribution, including movements for land reform, peasant movements and so on. But the participation of the Dalits has more often than not been relegated to the margins and their role, agency and demands have been ignored. For over a decade, the Dalit movement has demonstrated unparalleled energy and initiative for social equality but often they have been left to fend for themselves by other movements and social forces. Unless the



social question is raised by the other forces with equal force, the Dalit movement will forever be condemned to bear the brunt for its boldness and mass mobilizations. The campaign for social security, therefore should include the Dalits as one of the core constituents. It is only then the universality of social security will not remain a distant dream.

Prakash Kumar shared about his experiences with rag pickers and headload workers. He said - much of this work is *forced* and in fact even in Delhi there are thousands of such workers living in slavery like conditions. The role of the middlemen such as contractors is very important here and it is often found that around 70-80 percent of the money that the rag pickers are supposed to get actually goes to the coffers of the contractors. The same is the case with workers who offload fruit baskets in the *fruit mandis* of Delhi. In fact, these workers do not even receive any wages! The transporters receive some incentives and it is primarily on such amounts that these workers rely for their livelihood. The rag pickers also do not receive any proper wage; rather, they solely rely on manually processing the waste (that is generated and collected from the homes) and selling the waste products to certain buyers who reprocess the waste. All these workers bear the burden of extreme market fluctuations and none of them receive any social security, whatsoever.

The struggle today is about *decasualizing* these workers. Currently, a bill is being prepared for these workers in Delhi and hopefully a Mathadi Board will be established soon. Initially it will cover the headload workers and rag pickers and subsequently, the other categories of workers can also be included under its provisions.

The initiative for Mathadi Boards date back to a law initiated in Maharashtra in 1969. In 39 districts both workers and employers are registered under Mathadi Board. The Board also takes care of the working conditions, wage rate and social security of the workers. A crucial point here is that social security is provided to these workers not as alms or doles; rather it is linked with the wages. A certain percent of the wage of the worker is fixed as levy for social security of the worker and it is collected from the employers. Another crucial point is that this levy is an *addition* to the wage received by the worker, rather than a cut from the wage. The levy ranges between 25-50 percent of the wage in different places and in different boards.

Prakash said that these Mathadi Boards can be expanded to the entire country as well, for the workers in the infor-

mal sector. These Boards act as regulatory bodies that monitor the industrial relations in the sector; wages are also decided through collective bargaining where such Boards exist. This way, the problem of organisation of the unorganized workers can be addressed.

Prakash also talked about the problem of pension. While currently, some destitute groups of people such as old people, single women, disabled etc receive some meagre amount as pension, these are grossly inadequate to ensure even minimum conditions of life. On the other hand, many undeserving people receive pension owing to political intervention and corruption. This problem can only be addressed if pension is turned universal and be provided to everyone. The minimum pension should be at least 50 percent of the minimum wage and it should be regularly adjusted to inflation.

Sandeep Khare, representing Vigyan Foundation and Asangathit Kamgar Manch, Uttar Pradesh said that even as we debate about the different ways of envisioning and designing social security for all, there is also a requirement to take our message to the masses. Further, he echoed the words of Anshu Malviya and said that the movement needs to produce analytical literature in Indian languages and be distributed to different corners of the country to develop a common understanding among all.

Sudhir Katiyar began by saying that the debate regarding the *citizenship based universal social security vs. work based social security* can be addressed adequately if we combine key elements from both of them. It is not a question of either this or that. Rather, the question is about combination of the two models. He said that one of the key problems faced by informal workers is regarding their unionization. As employer-employee relationship is not properly recognized, they find it difficult to organize themselves. In that regard, social security can be a key strategy to establish employer-employee relationships for the informal workers, in paper and in law. Once the employer-employee relationship is established, the worker will not only receive social security but also other benefits such as minimum wages, payment in cases of accidents during work etc. Sudhir agreed with Prakash that there are important lessons to be learnt from the Mathadi model that provides employment based social security to the informal workers.

Sudhir said that the success of the Mathadi model has been noted by many, including the government. If this is so, then why the model has not been significantly expanded to other arenas of work and other states? Sharing from his research experience on the Mathadi Boards, Sudhir said that one of the reasons as why the Mathadi model became successful in Maharashtra was because the workers covered by the board were also Maratha, a local dominant caste. It was this *social power* that ensured the survival of the Mathadi model. However, in other sectors and other regions, such a conducive social environment is often lacking, making the task of expanding the Mathadi model more difficult. But in Maharashtra, despite immense resistance of the employers, the Mathadi model survived owing to the social power of the workers.

Discussion

- Many participants said that it is not necessary to define 'social security' in the restricted sense that ILO uses the term. There is no reason not to link the question with universal access to free education, affordable health care, housing rights for all and so on. It was also felt that detailed evaluation of the many basic sectors such as health and education should be carried out and appropriate slogans be developed for each one of these sectors.
- Some participants said that the current Social Security Code also exclude beggars, gender minorities and sex workers and thus display a very traditional understanding of the categories of 'work' and 'workers'. Any alternative universal legislation must be able to take full account of all these different kinds of work and experiences.

●Mathadi model was discussed in detail. It was pointed out that the law itself doesn't restrict it to loaders or ragpickers only. The proposed Mathadi Board being proposed in Delhi is even more expansive and can be made applicable to any category of work with a 3 month notification. Further, in case of ragpickers who are unable to pay regular contributions, it is being proposed that the state should take the responsibility. Further, it is being proposed that a user fee can be imposed on all the users (i.e. homes, offices, shops etc) who produce waste, and the fee should be collected by the municipality from the RWAs and others.

●It was pointed out that many of the informal workers are 'footloose' in nature i.e. they do not confine themselves to any particular occupation or sector of work. The challenge is to ensure appropriate social security models for these workers, as Welfare Board centric social security mechanisms cannot fully capture such mobility across occupations.

Session: Provisioning Social Security

Facilitator: Ashok Khandelwal

Speakers: Prof. Arun Kumar, Priya Dharshini

Initiating the session, facilitator **Ashok Khandelwal** said that without explicitly talking about the mechanism of funds allocation, any talk on social security would remain futile. The fight over social security ultimately boils down to the issue of funding. It is further related to two questions 1) what should be the minimum level of social security? 2) What should be the qualifier for minimum social security? In case of labour, what should be the minimum hours of guaranteed work and who qualifies to get this benefit? On the question of funding, there are four plausible ways of raising these funds. 1) create a tax for social security. 2) create a social security cess. 3) limiting its expenses, the government can introduce an insurance scheme through insurance companies. 4) get contributions from the employee and the employer. The entire movement must try to develop some consensus on these issues. This in turn requires that we move towards developing a Peoples Social Security Bill. Ashok hoped that the discussion in the session will help in clarifying some of these issues.

Prof. Arun Kumar began by saying that the struggle for universal social security will be a long drawn one. The question of finances is also very important in this regard and misleadingly it is being said that enough resources are not there to fund generous social programs. Over the last few decades, there has been a consistent decline in investment in social sectors such as health, education etc. Ideally, India should be spending at least 6 percent of the GDP on education but the real number has never crossed more than 4.1 percent. According to the Kothari Committee, at least 4 percent of the GDP should be spent on health but India has never spent more than 1.3 percent. The examples can be multiplied and it only shows our misplaced national priorities.

In devising macro programs, often the micro dimension is ignored and this has been the fate of the development path we are following for a quite a long time now. It is very important that we put in concrete details the grand plans and objectives we have for the nation. It is necessary to demonstrate "how to make the desirable feasible". In 1994, such an exercise was undertaken under the name of Alternate Budget, 1994, with participation of economists, activists, unionists and others. The Alternative Budget showed where the revenues were coming from and where they should be spent, based on desirable priorities.

The next question is about the will to execute any alternative program and that has been lacking for a very long time



now. A recent report of Oxfam says that the 1 percent of the population of India controls 54 percent of the wealth. No country can sustain itself with such massive inequalities. India's current level of inequality even exceeds that of South Africa and Brazil, two of the most unequal societies of the world. And yet, in policy terms, we hardly see any initiatives. In parallel to growing inequalities and economic injustice, there is also a global rise of authoritarian populisms and it doesn't bode well for the future of the world. One sector of the working class is being pitted against another, creating disastrous social conditions.

The dominant path of development pays little attention to questions of inequalities and social justice. Questions of ethical consumption of the finite resources of nature are also ignored. Production for the sake of production, hedonistic consumerism is the order of the day. The elite class of today's India wants to live a European lifestyle. Trying to reach that goal and to fulfill requirements of the elite 3 percent, we are using 90 percent of our available resources. For the rest of the 97 percent population, we are left with mere 10 percent of resources. It is in this context that the repeated claim of *lack of resources* should be examined. In reality, what's lacking is resources to fulfill the luxury of the elite and not the needs of the common person. The elitist, consumer lifestyle is what is at the root of the disparity in the allocation of funds for programs like social security.

The workers of the world are finding themselves in weaker positions because capital has become truly mobile today across national barriers. In the 1990s, after the Soviet collapse, the East European countries opened their markets for global capital by competitively cutting their taxes. This led to a snowball effect of cutting taxes across Europe in what is now known as the "race to the bottom". The effects of the same process is now felt everywhere. Appeasing capital at any cost has been the priority everywhere for the last many decades. The continuing segmentation of labour into various categories such as organized vs. unorganized or along national and social lines (white workers, American workers and so on) has been a serious roadblock towards envisioning of alternatives to the current system.

The search for alternatives must begin by recognizing that unless long terms visions are developed, short term solutions and quick fixes will not work. Much has been made about inclusive banking these days. But there is a real danger that it will further marginalize the poor. Moreover, the money pumped out of the underdeveloped regions is being invested in already developed regions, thereby further aggravating the existing regional disparities. For instance, the

money deposited in banks in Bihar find their outlay in Delhi, thereby continuing the underdeveloped status of Bihar.

There has been a fundamental shift in the philosophical outlook of the society. Since 1991, everything is being increasingly *marketised* and *commodified* including all the social institutions. The first principle of capitalism is that the more dollars you possess, the more valuable you will be considered (known as the dollar vote). This is in direct contradiction to the democratic principle of one person, one vote. When a democratic system adapts this capitalistic notion of more dollars more votes, it undermines the democratic process and compromises the system in favour of those who have money vis. a vis. the large masses of working people.

The second principle of capitalism is - 'more is better'. Consumerism promotes more consumption as good. For example, we always crave for the latest, the most recent gadgets even though the old ones are working perfectly fine. This leads to extreme individualization and self-centrism in contrast to values of solidarity and social cooperation.

Added to these already problematic concepts is another notion i.e. *homo economicus*. It assumes that human beings are primarily driven by economic self interests and not by arts, culture or history. This approach also claims that humans are rational creatures and are primarily oriented toward profit maximization. This has a profound effect on the moral structure of the human mind as according to this approach, moral values do not matter as long as the profit is maximized because this is the only rational thing that ultimately counts. When we isolate economic activities as the only major activity that sustains a society, all other essential aspects that make human beings multi-dimensional, comes to be subservient to the accumulation of wealth, which leads to extreme individualism and atomization of the society.

The movement for universal social security, therefore is linked with larger questions of social transformation. We need to unlearn the frameworks and categories posited by capital and develop alternative frameworks, visions and values of solidarity.

Priya Dharshini started by saying that in recent times, there has been much discussion regarding the ideas of universal basic income or cash-based welfare assistance. One should however be cautious of the implications of these policies and the larger questions of finance, transparency and accountability should also be considered. One should also be wary of market based social security solutions, as they undermine the democratic process itself and turn the question into a technocratic matter, devoid of contexts and social implications.

It is a hard reality of countries like India that a large number of people have no access to bank accounts and are totally excluded by the banking system. This in turn means that no universal social program can afford to exclusively rely on the banking system to deliver benefits to the beneficiaries. Moreover, the question is not just about opening more and more accounts of those who are excluded but also to ensure true inclusivity and accountability. How do we do that?

Take for instance the question of digitalization. Today there are increasing threats of digital misuse, such as hacking. In a country with such low digital literacy, especially among the elderly, the risk is many times more. Even a minor mistake may lead to loss of lifelong savings by an average person. Unfortunately, this question has not even been adequately discussed in the policy making circles.

There are also the larger threats of failing banks, such as the Punjab National Bank crisis in which the deposits were converted to equity and account holders are now denied access to their deposits because the bank has been

declared insolvent. Moreover, many deposit holders were forced to convert their money to share deposits and fixed deposits. A number of people have already died because they couldn't withdraw their money despite family emergencies.

The basic lesson here is that if we are including the marginalized into the formal banking arena, then they should be given the utmost protection to ensure that their life saving is secure and not prone to unknown risks. And yet, there is hardly any discussion about it among the policy makers.

There is also the added problem of unfair transaction charges. Most banks charge a minimum fee for each ATM transaction and an extra fee if a minimum balance is not maintained. There are also many hidden charges and most of the time the large majority of the customers are not even adequately informed about them. The economically marginalized groups are especially vulnerable to such charges, as often they fail to comply with the complex rules.

The philosophy of banking itself is going through worrisome changes. Earlier, the accounts were a liability for which the banks were responsible, but now they are a source of investment in the market for the banks. One of the fundamental principles of the neoliberal framework is to undermine savings and encourage constant spending. This has a direct impact on the banking system that now sees the deposit holders as investors. This fundamental shift greatly affects how customers are treated at large and especially the marginalized.

Discussion:

- Market based solutions to social questions are inadequate and often lack accountability. The question of transparency cannot be sacrificed at the altar of 'efficiency'. The question of funding for social security cannot be divorced from the larger social setting and the categories provided by neo-classical economics often fail to capture the complexity of social questions.
- We tend to concentrate on immediate solutions for current problems and ignore the long-term consequences. Even as we plan for tomorrow, we must be conscious of their long term implications. Often short term solutions exacerbate the problem in the long term.
- A desirable future cannot be built by a society marred in hedonistic consumerism and extreme individualism. An alternative development path also entails building a society based on mutual respect, egalitarianism and solidarity.

Coordinator's Note

The two day National Consultation on Universal Social Security organised at Vishwa Yuvak Kendra, Delhi on 4-5 November, 2019 was a collaborative effort between Centre for Education and Communication, Social Security Now and Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. The program was attended by more than 80 participants, representing diverse segments of the society viz. central trade unions, unions of fishworkers, domestic workers, agricultural workers, transport workers, ragpickers, garment workers, feminist groups, Dalit rights groups, economists, historians, activists and others.

The National Consultation was organised with a view to analyse the various proposals on social security in India and elsewhere by situating the question in the Indian context. It was also an effort towards developing a common vision and strategy for achieving universal social security in the country.

The National Consultation contributed significantly towards clarifying the different approaches to social security, evaluate their relative merits and moving towards consensus building on some of the broad themes. It also saw detailed discussions about the social security coverage enjoyed by different segments of the working class population, their merits, weaknesses and potentials. Questions of funding, resources, dualities of labour regimes and the larger question of development path were elaborately discussed.

The proceedings of the two day event were underlined by a series of *productive tensions* among the participants that contributed significantly in identifying problem arenas, points of convergence and evaluating alternative strategies. The following were two such arenas of productive tension that resulted in detailed discussion, followed by meaningful convergence of opinion.

1. Citizenship Rights vs. Workers Rights

Much of the discussion in the National Consultation was centered around the question of suitable strategies for achieving universal social security coverage. While in principle, there was a broad agreement regarding the desirability of universal coverage, there were significant differences among the participants regarding the concrete strategy that one should follow. Some of the participants strongly argued that universal coverage is not possible if social security is made conditional on the employment status of the person. A strong feminist case was made that a narrowly conceived notion of employer-employee relationship cannot adequately capture the immense diversity of work that women are found to be involved in. Similar arguments were made in the case of many other forms of work - such as fishworkers and the fishing community - a field of work that cannot be neatly conceptualized in terms of employers vs. employees. It was said that if social security is made conditional on establishing proof of employer-employee relationship, then a huge section of working class women of the country will be automatically excluded. The advocates of the employment based social security, on the other hand, expressed a fear that if social security is completely delinked from the employment status of the person, then the employer will be let off from any obligation towards the employees. Moreover, in policy terms, it would mean dismantling the existing social security systems for the formal sector workers. This would be very dangerous, given that attempt are already being made to scuttle all the rights enjoyed by labour and to turn everyone into unorganised workers.

The same debate was reflected in another form, in discussions about the social security schemes prevalent in the informal sector. A significant progress was made when it was pointed out that some of the models - such as the model of Mathadi Boards can actually help establish employer-employee relationships in fields that are otherwise difficult to organise and unionise. Once the employer-employee relationship is established and social security is provided to the concerned workers through contribution from the employers - it also opens up the possibility for further

benefits for the workers, otherwise available only to the organised workers.

Proponents of both the approaches agreed that it was nobody's case that one shouldn't try to establish employer-employee relationships, wherever it is possible. In fact, in many sectors - such as app based platforms like Uber - identifying the employers and employees is pretty easy, if there is actual will to do so. Further, it was also agreed by all that dismantling the existing social security provisions, especially those for the organised workers would be dangerous if clear alternatives are not already proposed in details. The problem of trust deficit between the various stakeholders in tripartite consultations was also commented upon. The trade unions in turn agreed in principle that they are open to the idea of universal social security on alternative grounds if honest and detailed proposals are made beforehand by the authorities.

2. Class Approach vs. Social Approach

The National Consultation provided a platform of interaction between representatives of trade unions and social movements and the proceedings saw detailed discussions about the relationship between class and other social relations such as caste and gender. The feminist activists and Dalit rights activists made a strong case that class based movements, including the trade union movements have often been blind to questions of gender and caste based oppression. Some participants even raised larger epistemological questions and argued that in a country like India, caste has always been an organising principle of labour and the latter cannot be understood by the purely economic category of class. Furthermore, it was argued that the hostility of the class based movements to questions of social identities has been one of the reasons for the continuous decline of the former.

The representatives of the trade unions on the other hand argued that while unions do not discriminate people based on caste or gender, many a times questions of identity do create problems for trade unions. Trade unions are not the appropriate bodies for taking forward many of the identity based movements - such as movements for reservation. Different organisations would be required for such movements. At the same time, the trade unions agreed, that many sectors of work - such as manual scavenging etc are organised on principles of caste and the question of dignity will have to be placed in such occasions, apart from the economic demands of the workers. The trade unions also talked about many of the recent initiatives to unionise the various segments of the informal workers by taking into account the specific work conditions of the sector.

The conversation about the relationship between caste, class and gender is an ongoing one and it is still in an incipient stage. One of the positive outcomes of the National Consultation was the broad agreement among the participants that these conversations about caste-class-gender inter-links should be continued in the future and cross learning will be beneficial for all.

The National Consultation built consensus around the idea that universal social security is both desirable and feasible in the country. Coupled with a progressive tax regime and innovative instruments such as - imposition of wealth tax and inheritance tax on the superrich - it is possible to garner adequate resources for generous social programs. The National Consultation rejected the proposed Labour Code on Social Security as exclusionary and insensitive to the rights of women, Dalits, Adivasis, fishworkers and others who work in the informal sector. The National Consultation rejected market based solutions to questions of social security and raised concerns about attempts to corporatize the existing social security bodies and institutions.

The National Consultation advocated for an expansive understanding of social security, suitable for the country, by taking into account the specific social security requirements of the different vulnerable and marginalised communities. Furthermore, it rejected the view that social security is a form of charity, paid to the helpless by the government. On the contrary, it advocated for an empowering understanding of social security. The National Consultation

questioned the dominant path of development and underlined the requirement for a radical reorientation of the national priorities around the social questions, relevant for the vast majority of the working people.

The National Consultation made significant progress in building a conversation between central trade unions and unions of unorganised workers, trade unions and social movements, academics and activists. It was felt by all that such conversations should continue in the future, even as collective steps are taken to take forward the campaign for universal social security. It was also decided to publish critical materials in Indian languages, beginning from Hindi, on the question of social security to take forward the conversation to the wider public. It was also decided to take concrete steps towards developing a Peoples Bill on Universal Social Security, based on the inputs of the diverse stakeholders. The Consultation ended with a resolve to take forward the agenda of universal social security by all, across the country.

Appendix A

List of Resource Persons

1. Ambarish Rai, National Convenor, Right to Education Forum (RTE Forum)
2. Amitava Guha, Working Committee Member, Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU)
3. Amjad Hassan, General Secretary, Delhi Asangathit Nirman Mazdoor Union (DANMU)
4. Anshu Malviya, Shahri Gareeb Sangharsh Morcha (SGSM)
5. Arun Khote, National Movement for Land Labour and Justice (NMLLJ)
6. Arun Kumar, Economist
7. Ashok Khandelwal, Trainer on Labour Issues
8. Babu P Remesh, School of Development Studies, Ambedkar University
9. Bobby Kunhu, Legal Expert and Writer
10. Gautam Mody, Secretary, New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI)
11. Jaya Mehta and Vineet Tiwari, Faculty, Joshi Adhikari Institute of Social Studies
12. J John, Founding Member, Social Security Now (SSN)
13. Korivi Vinay Kumar, National Federation of Dalit Land Rights Movements (NFDLRM)
14. Prabhu Mohapatra, Department of History, University of Delhi
15. Prakash Kumar, General Secretary, Rashtriya Hamal Panchayat and Pension Parishad
16. Priya Dharshini, Centre for Financial Accountability (CFA)
17. Rajendra Ravi, National Alliance for Peoples Movements (NAPM)
18. Rajiv Dimri, National Secretary, All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU)
19. Ramesh Vats, Delhi Transport Corporation Workers Union (DTCWU)
20. R S Tiwari, Founding Member, Social Security Now (SSN)
21. Saktiman Ghosh, General Secretary, National Hawkers Federation (NHF)
22. Sandeep Khare, Vigyan Foundation
23. Shashi Bhushan, General Secretary, Harit Recyclers Association (HRA)
24. Soma Parthasarathy, Mahila Kisan Adhikaar Manch(MAKAAM)
25. Subhash Lomte, Secretary, Maharashtra Rajya Hamal Mahapdi Mahamandal (MRHMM)
26. Sudeshna Sengupta, Independent Researcher
27. Sudhir Katiyar, Project Director, Prayas Centre for Labour Action and Research
28. Sunita Rani, Coordinator, National Domestic Workers Union (NDWU)
29. T Peter, General Secretary, National Fishworkers Forum (NFF)
30. Tularam Sharma, Uttar Pradesh Gramin Mazdoor Sangathan (UPGMS)
31. Vidyasagar Giri, All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)
32. Vilas Bhongare, Vidharbha Molkarin Sanghatana (VMS)

Appendix B

About the Organizers

The National Consultation on Universal Social Security was organised jointly by Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) and Social Security Now (SSN) and sponsored by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) with funds of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) is a labour resource centre. Since its inception in 1983, CEC has been promoting the rights, dignity and livelihoods of small producers, marginal farmers and communities dependent on labour. Its activities are strongly informed by the principles of gender rights, dalit rights and social inclusion. CEC organises action research, executes field intervention and provides support for the development and execution of key ideas, concepts and frameworks that improve the capacities and lives of labouring communities.

Social Security Now (SSN) is a network of over 500 organisations including peoples' movements, trade unions, workers associations, civil society organisations and concerned individuals from all over India. Since its inception in 2006, SSN has been campaigning for universal social security coverage for all the people living and working in India.

Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) is a Germany-based foundation working in South Asia and other parts of the world on the subjects of critical social analysis and civic education. It promotes a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic social order, and aims to present members of society and decision-makers with alternative approaches to such an order. Research organisations, groups working for social emancipation, and social activists are supported in their initiatives to develop models that have the potential to deliver social and economic justice.



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