

# Women's Social Security and Protection in India

A Report



National Conference

6-7 May 2013, New Delhi





International  
Labour  
Organization



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# Introduction

## BACKGROUND

The Programme for Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR), in collaboration with UN-Women, Heinrich Böll Foundation, ILO and UNSW, organised a Conference on Women's Social Security and Protection in India on 6–7 May 2013, at Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. The main objective of the Conference was to identify and unpack various perspectives on the issue of social security for women in India by bringing together a diverse range of participants from the Government, trade unions, women's organisations and UN agencies on a common platform. The Conference was thus the first step towards ensuring that the women's voices are heard and their real-life situations understood when challenges relating to their social security and protection are being addressed.

### ISSUES AT STAKE

The various participants at the Conference also pointed to the existence of a number of Government-sponsored schemes for promoting the social welfare of women and for achieving other goals such as poverty amelioration, reduction in malnutrition and provision of healthcare and basic services, with a special focus on women. However, it was argued, these social security programmes still do not reach the most vulnerable sections of society, especially the marginalised women, because of various factors such as ineffective implementation, prevalence of corruption, and inefficiencies in the system. These systemic failures adversely impact the lives and work of women in both their productive and reproductive domains while underscoring the urgent need for efficiently implementing social security schemes for women in order to counter their vulnerability and marginalisation.

With a view towards addressing the above issues and ensuring the efficient delivery of social security schemes for women, efforts were made to raise the following questions and seek possible answers and solutions to them during the course of the Conference:

- What are the social security needs of women in India? What are the gaps in the social security discourse for women in India? How can these gaps be bridged?

**Social security and protection for women in India is a matter of serious concern as it is an indicator of the status of women in our country today.**

**Krishna Tirath**  
Union Minister  
Ministry of Women &  
Child Development

- How can the social security system in India recognise and honour women's rights to social security in their individual capacities as rights-holders apart from their position in a household, their age or marital status? How can the women have platforms to share their concerns and influence policy-making?
- How can the social security discourse be redefined and restructured to address both the strategic as well as practical needs of Indian women and girls, especially those from the socially and economically vulnerable groups?
- How can the existing statistical systems and survey designs be used to inform policy-makers regarding the number of women working in the informal sector as paid and unpaid workers, and those supporting the care economy?
- How can social security concerns promote livelihood security for women and help them move up the value chain of production and marketing?
- How can social security systems in India redistribute the burden of caring for the family, children and the elderly that is exclusively shouldered by women?
- How can we ensure that social protection programmes deliver women-friendly outcomes on the ground?
- How can we break gender stereotypes while also designing programmes that are acceptable and serve practical interests?
- How can we monitor social security programmes on gender advancement and institute an effective gender-sensitive grievance redressal mechanism?

## **FRAMEWORKS GUIDING THE DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL SECURITY FOR WOMEN**

The definition, parameters and approach to social security are primarily guided by national priorities and constraints while also being shaped by the international standards on the subject. India has ratified the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the ILO Convention 202. Social security is a concept enshrined in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and articulated most prominently in General Comment No. 19 on the right to social security, of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR, the Committee). The General Comment 19, also clearly elaborates

that the right to social security includes the realisation of basic rights including nutrition, healthcare, housing, education, water and sanitation. With reference to gender equality and social security, the Committee specifically emphasises the equalisation of compulsory retirement age; equal benefits for women in both public and private pension schemes; recognising the differential in life expectancy between men and women; and guaranteeing adequate maternity, paternity and parental leave.

CEDAW advises its signatory States to introduce temporary and permanent measures to re-shape the socio-economic environment for enabling women to enjoy their human rights in the fullest measure. In addition, according to the International Labour Convention (ILC) 102, social security must secure workers and the elderly through nine principles, including healthcare (especially with regard to HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria); sickness, old age, unemployment (including in the case of part-time, casual, seasonal, and self-employed workers), employment injury, family and child support, maternity benefits, disability, and the provision of benefits for survivors and orphans. However, the ILC 202 continues to turn a blind eye towards women's unpaid and care work, its impact on their livelihoods and their involvement in the labour market and its ramification on the income, kind of work, and social security needs of women during the "working period".

Simultaneously, it is important to address the following underlying gender-blind principles and assumptions inherent in the social security discourse and practice in the country:

- ◆ Social security is based on the premise that all adults in the working age have the capability and opportunity to provide for their basic rights. The model of a worker adopted is that of a *male breadwinner* engaged in the *formal labour force* with pay and benefits. However, this is not the reality of men and women in India (and in most of the developing world) wherein 94 per cent of the population is engaged in informal employment. Also, women workers are disproportionately found in the lowest rung of the labour force, and are predominant in the subsistence forms of livelihoods revolving around food security, contributing to the value chain as invisible unpaid or sub-contracted workers.
- ◆ As opposed to the myth of benevolent patriarchy, feminists have been advocating that social security provisions must accrue to women as individuals rather than as members of a household.
- ◆ Questions relating to women's contribution to the care economy regimes, especially social reproduction, associated policy

The fact that 75% of the people in the world do not have adequate social security is not only a social or ethical issue but it is also a waste of human and economic potential.

Sushma Kapoor  
UN Women

Majority of the women in India are without social security as they are in this vast unorganized sector and it is outside the purview of labour laws and they continue to face challenges in accessing decent work.

Tine Staermose  
ILO

perspectives and entitlement, are also important and need to be examined. Further, compulsory provisions of good water, LPG, toilets and standard childcare services would go a long way in enabling women to continue education and full-time formal employment.

- ◆ Social Security plays a protective, preventive and transformative role. Its transformative potential should, in fact, be unleashed to make lasting change. Social protection interventions that address gender disadvantage earlier in the life course can help mitigate disadvantages faced later.

## WIDE PARTICIPATION

The primacy of the issue of women's social protection in India was emphasised by the participation of more than 170 delegates from over 16 states in the Conference, including Manipur, Assam, Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi. The participants also represented a cross-section of professionals engaged with the issue, including social activists, members of the academia and intelligentsia, grassroots workers, bureaucrats, members of trade unions and NGOs, and political leaders, who discussed their individual experiences and perspectives to contribute to the discourse and offered suggestions following extensively informed deliberations on the subject. This diversity thus facilitated a truly multi-faceted understanding of the theme of social security for women, leading to the presentation of key recommendations and a charter of demands to lay the groundwork for future action.

# Proceedings of the Conference

## INAUGURAL SESSION

The conference started with a **Welcome Address by Ms. Sushma Kapoor**, followed by various presentations by different speakers during the Inaugural Session to help set the context, as delineated below.

**Ms. Sushma Kapoor**, Deputy Regional Programme Director in the South Asia Sub-regional Office of UN Women, New Delhi: She pointed out that the conference was perhaps the first of its kind in India that brought together diverse perspectives from the Government, the unions, women's organisations and UN agencies to chart the common goal of strengthening women's right to social security and social protection in India. Contextualising social protection in India, she said, "Gender-responsive social protection in India cannot only be about women in labour markets. It also has to be about women at home and women in the farms, forest, fields because that is really where women are. The declining child sex ratio, growing violence against women, increasing human trafficking, breakdown of rural economy and lack of decent jobs, are the huge concerns in India". She concluded her address by highlighting the role of UN Women in advocating for gender-responsive social protection in its work with home-based workers, with migrant women farmers, single women and feminist economists, along with their partner Gender at Work.

**Tine Staremore**, Director of the ILO Decent Work Support Team for South Asia and Country Office for India: Averting that the conference was being held at an appropriate time when the issue of women's social security and protection have become critical in policy-making, she asserted the importance of the informal economy, as in India, a majority of the women workers





**The discourses on social security needs a paradigm shift in the way women are profiled, framed or portrayed.**

**Priti Darooka**  
PWESCR

are engaged in it, and therefore outside the purview of labour laws. She stated that the concept of women's social security and protection includes a vast canvas of issues such as equality of wages, occupational safety and health, protection from sexual harassment and discrimination, and maternity benefits. She also highlighted the key issues raised in the recently held SAARC International Labour Conference in June 2012, which adopted a new instrument called 'Social Protection Floor Recommendation No. 202' to provide guidance to member countries for establishing and maintaining an applicable social protection floor and progressively ensuring higher levels of social security to as many people as possible. She ended her presentation with a suggestion to constitute a UN task team on social protection and employment.

**Priti Darooka**, *Founder and Executive Director of Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR)*: She asserted that social security issues have become much more visible during the last decade and critical to the current economic, political, and social environment, as people, particularly women, are losing livelihoods and are being pushed into situations of poverty and vulnerability. She also pointed out that various stakeholders are involved in this issue from different standpoints, including people from labour unions, workers' rights groups, academicians, and women's organisations. Therefore, this conference, provides a platform to see how an interactive session can be developed by sharing and learning from each other so as to develop some kind of consensus on common non negotiable understanding on women and social security in India. She also emphasised that the talk on social security needs a paradigm shift and larger policy discourses need to recognise women as economic agents—workers, producers and gatherers—in addition to seeing them as a vulnerable group that needs to be protected and taken care of. She finally argued for making women's entitlement to social security as an individual right, independent of her marital status, thereby making her the primary claimant.

**Smt. Krishna Tirath**, *Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry for Women and Child Development*: While delivering the Inaugural Address, the Minister argued that social security and protection for women in India is a matter of serious concern as it is an indicator of the status of women in the country. While discussing the various national level schemes for women introduced by the Government of India and the initiatives of her Ministry, she highlighted the fact that the Government is sensitive to the need for creating safe public spaces and better infrastructure for women. She concluded that the Twelfth Plan takes cognizance of the fact that policies and programmes have a different impact on women and men, highlighting the unique economic and social status of women, which necessitates strengthening of gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting by the concerned ministries and departments of the Government of India.

The Inaugural Session of the conference concluded with **Dr. Axel Harneit-Sievers**, the Country Director for Heinrich Böll Foundation's (HBF) India Office, proposing the Vote of Thanks, and thanking the Government of India for safeguarding the interests of women, in terms of both social and physical security, as also women's empowerment through various administrative means.

## DAY 2, SESSION 2 SETTLING THE CONTEXT AND UNDERSTANDING FRAMEWORKS

*Following is a brief description of the various presentations and points raised by the speakers during the Second Session of Day 1 of the Conference, which was chaired by **Dr. Axel Harneit-Sievers**, Country Director for Heinrich Böll Foundation's (HBF) India Office.*

The session began with the address of **Marcus Ruck**, a Senior Social Security Specialist on the Decent Work Team for South Asia ILO, India. While discussing the Social Protection Floor Resolution 202, he emphasised the importance of a social protection floor as a tool to





Gaps in social protection coverage reflect particular power hierarchies in which women tend to be disempowered.

Markus Ruck  
ILO

prevent and reduce poverty, inequality, social exclusion and social insecurity, and to promote equal opportunity and gender equality. He noted that social protection floors, through an emphasis on universal access, can serve to integrate more women into social protection systems, which is of special significance for women likely to work in the informal economy, including casual, temporary or part time employment.

Pointing out that much of the work undertaken by women such as household work, care for children and other dependents in the family is not formally recognised as such and therefore ineligible for inclusion in social protection programmes, he said that ultimately, gender equalities and gaps in social protection coverage reflect particular power hierarchies in which women tend to be disempowered. He concluded by stressing that gender inequalities can be tackled across the board only through the national forces of social protection, for which purpose, the social protection floors must be conceived of as guaranteeing human rights. “It is evident that political will is required to support the adoption of gender mainstreaming for the process of designing, implementing and monitoring all aspects of social protection floors”, averred Mr. Ruck.

**Beth Goldblatt**, *Visiting Fellow at the Australian Human Rights Centre in the Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia*: She contended that though women in both the developed and developing countries face discrimination, they have managed to counter the disadvantages, to some extent, through education and work participation. However, she claimed that this has not been the case in India, where literacy levels among women are still alarmingly low. She also expressed concern at the fact that despite increased access to work opportunities, women still tend to predominantly work in the informal sector, in unpaid work in family enterprises, and in other low-scale jobs, which is why women in all the countries of the world generally earn less than men. She also cited the World Bank’s statistical findings to show that while employment of women has generally increased all over

the world, still less than half of the world's women are engaged in income-producing works as opposed to four-fifths of the world's men. Highlighting the need to engender the right to social security for women, she insisted that this would involve a substantive equality approach that identifies and combats the underlying structural issues which make women disadvantaged. "Can we actually design social assistance programmes that will change the way gender stereotypes operate in the households and communities?" she asked.

**Subhalakshmi Nandi**, *Women's Economic Empowerment Specialist, UN Women Office for India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka*: She emphasised the need to set the context of social security within the women's rights' perspective, and to ensure substantive equality for women in opportunity, in access and in outcomes. She cited the three core pillars of CEDAW, viz. gender equality, non-discrimination, and State obligation as the bases for strengthening the gender dimensions in social protection systems. While reflecting on the specific gender vulnerabilities of women in India, she argued that the human rights framework, whether in global conventions, or national Constitutions, is a powerful tool for any discourse, though the interpretation of the human rights approach also depends on other ideologies such as the principle of universality and its analysis from a gender perspective. She also pointed out that so far women have been viewed in policies for social protection as members of a household, and not as individual rights-bearers or citizens in their own right, which is why their access to social protection measures is mediated by the household as the basis for entitlement. Thus, when there is talk of universality within this framework, there is very little analysis of women's unequal status within the household. This impacts their access to social protection and other economic benefits since men are viewed as the primary earners. She concluded her presentation by citing some solutions for this conundrum such as adoption of a gender-responsive social protection approach for identifying vulnerabilities, addressing socio-cultural specificities, the need to understand the politics of



**The three core pillars of human rights i.e. equality, non-discrimination and state obligation are most useful to strengthen the gender dimensions in social protection systems.**

**Subhalakshmi Nandi**  
UN Women

designing social protection, and identifying ways of capitalising on the women's abilities and roles to provide for a gender-responsive Social Protection Floor.

### DAY 1, SESSION 3 VOICES FROM THE GROUND

The Third Session of Day 1 of the Conference was chaired by **Mridul Eapen**, *Professor, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram and former Member, Kerala State Planning Board*. While defining “social security as a social means to prevent the vulnerabilities of social well-being”, Professor Eapen claimed that the biggest challenge lies in the fact that most women work, but their work is neither recognised nor appropriately compensated for. Expressing concern at the fact that the work being currently generated for women, especially with regard to the hazardous occupations, makes them highly vulnerable without giving them a decent wage, she said that it, therefore, becomes critical to examine how social security for women can actually be ensured.

*Following is a brief description of the various presentations and points raised by the speakers during the third session of Day 1 of the Conference.*

**Anita Das**, *Convener, National Hawker Association*: While revealing that the National Hawker Association works for and with hawkers and street vendors at a pan-India level, she cited some significant figures—hawkers and street vendors rank second in the unorganised sector labour force, next only to workers from the farm sector; and the population of hawkers in India is about four crores, out of which 40 per cent are women. Apart from bearing the burden of poverty, these hawkers also face pressures from municipality officials and police personnel, and have no access to social security of any kind. She said that though the Hawkers' Federation of Jharkhand has managed to get a law enacted for hawkers, which provides for old age pension, widow pension and maternal benefits in the form of cash payment during pregnancy, there are no provisions for healthcare. She also promised that the



Federation would continue its struggle for obtaining social security for hawkers.

**R. Geetha**, *Additional Secretary, Nirman Mazdoor Panchayat Sangam*: Claiming that migrant labour today constitutes a very important segment in the working population, especially in the construction industry, she revealed that the Nirman Mazdoor Campaign Committee struggled to get laws enacted for migrant workers for over a decade before getting two Central laws implemented for them in 1996. She also rued the fact that though welfare boards have been instituted in 35 places and the Union Territories, even in states which have a large number of workers registered in these welfare boards like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the interests of the migrant workers are not being adequately protected. She cited some incidences of atrocities against the workers and their families in these states, and also pointed out that women workers continue to be paid wages much below those paid to their male counterparts, besides which they are also denied maternity, pregnancy and childcare benefits, and lack access to other facilities like immunisation, crèches, housing, and education for their children. She concluded her address by urging the Government to provide social security benefits and inclusion in anti-poverty programmes for the more than two crore bonded labourers engaged in various sectors in the country.

**Shubha Chacko**, *Director, ANEKA*: She commenced her address by highlighting the plight of workers who are 'invisible' or 'hyper-visible', that is, sex workers, who simply do not exist, and thus represent the epitome of victimhood. "They have no agency no ideas, ... we don't have to discuss about them, talk to them", averred Ms. Chacko. She insisted that sex workers need decriminalisation because the criminalisation of their profession exposes them to violence and injustice meted out by the police, by brokers, and even the general public. This underscores the need for getting these workers organised into some sort of union like other workers whereby they can start demanding their rights,



The realisation of social security for vulnerable groups should also be prioritised. Secondly, the social security entitlement [should be given] to women as individuals or as collectives of women, and not with the household as a unit.

Ruth Manorama  
NAWO

gain access to social security and health services, and ensure some sort of dignity in their lives.

**Vanguri Prameela**, *SAMPARK*: While pointing out the problems faced by the construction workers in Copal and Bangalore in Karnataka, she revealed that they live in highly unsanitary conditions in the labour colonies, which exposes them to numerous health risks. They also have no documents of proof of identity of any kind, nor do they enjoy access to Primary Health Centres (PHCs) or the Public Distribution System (PDS), or services for institutional delivery in the case of female workers, or immunisation and *anganwadi* facilities for their children. Further, they have no bank accounts, nor are they members of any Self-help Group (SHG) or a collective which would enable them to access financial services. Ms. Prameela questioned why the Construction Workers' Board in the state was not doing anything to provide social security and other services to these workers, and demanded and urged the Karnataka government to utilise the amount of Rs. 800-900 crores currently lying in its possession for the benefit of these construction workers.

**Shreema Ningombam**, *Human Rights Alert and Extrajudicial Execution Victims Families Association (EEVFAM)*: She argued that the imposition of AFSPA 1958 in many parts of the North-eastern region of the country has had a devastating impact on the lives of people in the region, especially women, who are among the worst victims of militarisation in states like Manipur. Alleging the perpetration of extra-judicial killings in the state, she focused on the woes of women whose husbands and sons had been killed in these incidents, and who are denied even State support or assistance because they are branded as the 'wives of terrorists'. The organisation EEVFAM has been formed exclusively for protecting the interests of such women, for channelising the women's movement into efforts to deal with State persecution, and for helping the women secure basic human rights, as also access to financial support and education for their children.

**Ruth Manorama**, *President, National Alliance of Women's Organisation (NAWO)*: Focusing on the issue of inter-sectorality and the Dalits or Scheduled Castes (SCs), she contended that the Dalit community comprising an estimated 165 million people constitute the poorest of the poor in the country. Further, they are the victims of communal prejudice, social ill-treatment and State level neglect. She alleged that the untouchability that the Dalits are subjected to fosters other forms of injustice and inequality manifested in various other practices such as manual scavenging, the *devadasi* system or forced prostitution of young girls, and bonded labour, in addition to routine incidences of violence,

rape and arson. Thus, she reiterated, the Dalit workers, particularly women, need social security in the form of land and financial support in addition to social upliftment.

**R.S. Tiwari (Discussant), Labour Resource Centre:** Elaborating on the concept of social security, he asserted that it can be defined as an amalgamation of measures for the fulfilment of basic human needs such as adequate nutrition, shelter, healthcare, and childcare, and protection during contingencies like childbirth, illness, disability, and unemployment. He also emphasised the need for taking into account all the work done by women within and outside the household, especially in the unorganised sector, as their invaluable contribution to the nation's GDP and fiscal growth.

## Day 1, SESSION 4 WOMEN AND SOCIAL SECURITY: CONCEPTUAL UNPACKING

This session was chaired by Dr. Navsharan Singh, Senior Programme Specialist at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and an expert in women's rights and peace-building in South Asia. She highlighted the impact of globalisation on women and their lives, and remarked that though the neo-liberal regime has led to an expansion of women's employment, it has also intensified their workload both in the market and within the family. This necessitates an unpacking of the issue of social security for women, especially in terms of the State's role in regulating public and private spaces for guaranteeing their safety and well-being.

*Following is a brief description of the various presentations and points raised by the speakers during the fourth session of Day 1 of the Conference.*

**Professor Ravi Srivastava, Professor of Economics, Centre for the Study of Regional Development, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; and Member of the Core Group on the Right to Food with the National Human Rights Commission:** He stated that despite the recognition of social security as a human right by



**Without livelihood and the employment protection the social security right becomes meaningless.**

**R.S. Tiwari**  
Labour Resource Centre



**The treatment of unpaid work is not an easy job but not an impossible one.**

**Ravi Shankar Srivastava**  
Jawaharlal Nehru University

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant, “the fight for social security is not easy in a neo-liberal regime which actually has no faith in social protection or social security. The State has receded and privatisation takes up many things which we expect the State to take up” such as the issues of basic income and universal healthcare. He also highlighted the need to deal with the vulnerabilities of women in terms of the unpaid work rendered by them. He stressed that this was possible by relying on the CEDAW framework to treat human rights as inter-related and each right as an inalienable one, and then using the rights-based approach for the realisation of all rights including the right to social security, healthcare and education. He also argued that while social protection comprises both public and private measures to deal with deprivation and vulnerabilities by using the life-cycle approach, social security deals with risk, vulnerability and deprivation from the standpoint of remunerative work. He further discussed the concept of a social protection floor that has been elaborated upon by the International Advisory Group of the UN as a set of certain essential social and legal guarantees. Within this framework, preference must be given to more vulnerable groups, and both the social protection floor and social protection system must be synchronised with the wider goals of social and economic policy with the aim of achieving equitable development and the expansion of formal decent jobs for women.

**Sejal Dand**, *Feminist Activist and Founder-member and Director for Advocacy and Research, ANANDI*: She pointed out that the lack of recognition of women’s work is not limited to women’s unpaid work within and outside the households, but extends to all unpaid care work including domestic work, and the direct care of persons carried out in homes and communities, as also minimisation of the importance of women’s labour during female-centric activities like reproduction, breastfeeding and nurturing. She also expressed concern at the fact that increasingly, most government programmes are now relying on women’s groups for ensuring community mobilisation, awareness, and

participation and monitoring, without compensating for their time, labour or skills. The violation of women's right to security and civil and political rights thus combines seamlessly with the violation of their economic and social rights. Arguing that the current conceptualisation of social protection does not take into account women's vulnerabilities, she cited the example of a pilot scheme offering maternity benefits that was launched simultaneously in 52 districts across the country in 2010. By imposing restrictions of the two-child norm and age limit of 19 years, this scheme disregards the social condition wherein most women in the country have no control over decisions concerning the age of marriage or fertility.

Ms. Dand further asserted that social security measures are often targeted at families/households without taking into account the intra-household gender inequalities, and there is no mechanism whereby the State can ensure that the entitlements would be distributed equally within the household, or that women would have equal access to and control over these resources. The lack of documentation in the names of women such as registration of property ownership, bank accounts or electricity connections also prevents them from asserting their entitlements or citizenship rights. Ms. Dand concluded that the challenge of countering the patriarchal norms that hinder women's progress thus lies in the implementation of a system of uniform social assistance to tackle the multiple vulnerabilities faced by women, and in organising them to fight for their rights, especially the right to social security and protection.

## DAY 1, SESSION 5 WOMEN AND SOCIAL SECURITY: THE MISSING DIMENSION

*This session was chaired by Aasha Kapur Mehta, Professor of Economics and Economic Policy at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA).*

*Following is a brief description of the various presentations and points raised by the speakers during the final session of Day 1 of the Conference.*



**Some part of the social security needs to go into organising women. Otherwise it will be impossible to challenge all the kinds of patriarchal norms that affect family, community, state and markets.**

**Sejal Dand**  
ANANDI

**Development that is  
'violent' and destroys  
resources and  
livelihood should  
not be allowed.**

**Nalini Nayak**  
SEWA

**Ashim Roy**, *General Secretary of the New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI) and President of Chemical Mazdoor Panchayat*: While choosing to integrate the idea of gender perspective, especially the protection of women workers, into the larger framework of the trade union movement, he touched upon certain concrete issues from the perspective of a trade unionist. Among the various aspects of social security that he discussed was the need to invoke to industries the provisions of maternity benefit subsidies such as leave and nursing breaks that are enshrined in the Maternity Benefit Act. The other issue highlighted by him pertained to the extension of women's social security to the global supply chain, especially because the products made by women are now being exported. He also suggested the imposition of an export tax or transaction tax to fund social security on the lines of the global security fund mooted by the International Trade Union Confederation of Congress for supporting this process. Finally, he urged unions to make worksites into sites of socialisation for gender sensitivity, which would change the mindset of workers by instituting mechanisms to increase women's participation in the trade unions.

**Mittal Shah**, *Coordinator, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)*: She elucidated the fact that 94 per cent of the workforce belongs to the informal sector, of which a large section is accounted for by women workers, whose contribution in terms of GDP, exports and national savings is thus quite remarkable. She stated that SEWA has for long been fighting to earn recognition for workers, as also to empower them by allowing them to take critical decisions in their lives. She revealed that the key social security interventions that need to be promoted include livelihood security, health security (including occupation-related health hazards and mental health), housing and sanitation, childcare, disaster insurance and old age pension. She also claimed that research undertaken at SEWA shows that childcare interventions have brought about a 50 per cent increase in income for women workers as also an enhancement in both the quality and quantity of work undertaken by them by facilitating peace of mind in mothers that their children are well taken care of. Finally, she suggested that Government programmes must be linked with cooperative-based organizations or self-help groups (SHGs) for women to promote both work security and social security.

**Nalini Nayak**, *Activist, Feminist and Trade Unionist*: She argued that social security does not simply imply the provision of healthcare and maternity benefits as that would allow the State to offer women workers merely employment as per the right to livelihood without considering issues of insurance and work security. What is more important is the

need to improve the quality of life for the workers. She also urged that development which can be described as 'violent' and one that destroys resources and livelihood should not be permitted, and that women should be imparted the same professional training that men receive so that they can be brought at par with the latter at the workplace.

**Shalini Sinha**, *Discussant, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)*: While summing up the issues discussed during the session, she averred that firstly, all the three speakers represented trade unions with a new approach in terms of organising and addressing workers needs. Secondly, the prevalent working conditions in different sectors were highlighted, covering various issues including inadequate employment, low level of earnings, lack of social security and healthcare, and importantly, the absence of a clear employer. The other issues that were expounded upon during this session touched upon the primacy of work in the livelihood of women workers, income security, the significance of a habitat for women workers, especially for those working from home, occupational health and safety, the role of membership-based organisations in promoting policy level changes to address the workers' problems, and derivation of learnings from the implementation of government schemes, wherein social organisations and trade unions like SEWA can play a significant role in spreading awareness among their members. She concluded her summing up by pointing to the need for nuancing the issue of finance in terms of both funding of programmes as also the creation of decentralised and accountable collection systems for facilitating the financing of social security measures for workers.

**Aasha Kapur Mehta**, *Professor of Economics and Economic Policy at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA)*: In her concluding remarks, Ms. Mehta, who was the Chair for the session, cited workforce-related for the last three decades to underscore the biggest missing dimension, especially in the context of trade unions, organizing and bargaining, which is that a huge proportion of women who work are not recognised as workers. This invisibility of the female workforce is compounded by the fact that a large proportion of women who are declared as 'not working' are actually working, performing crucial tasks in animal husbandry, in the fields, in preparing food for cattle, fetching water, cleaning cattle sheds, making and storing dung cakes, and processing milk and livestock products. Such work is included in economic activities as part of the System of National Accounts (SNA). Ms. Mehta also added that since poverty is a dynamic rather than a static condition, it is important to identify and address the factors

**The devil is in the delivery. There may be schemes, laws, but how much of it is actually going to the last person in the line is the key question.**

**Shalini Sinha**  
WIEGO

**The biggest missing dimension is that you are working but you are invisible as a worker and not recognized as a worker even as far as basic statistics are concerned.**

**Asha Kapur Mehta**  
IIPA

that cause poverty among the female workers before planning social security measures for them.

Ms. Mehta's address concluded the proceedings of Day 1 of the Conference. Following is a description of the proceedings of Day 2 of the Conference.

## DAY 2, SESSION 1 WOMEN AND SOCIAL SECURITY: SPACES IN CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

This session was chaired by **Kavita Srivastava**, *General Secretary of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) based in Jaipur, Rajasthan and Member of the Advisory Group for the 'Right to Food Campaign'*. Kavita Srivastava, a feminist, human rights activist and writer, is committed to fighting human rights violations across India. She welcomed the participants and explained that the speakers during this session would examine and attempt to conceptualise the current struggle, the policy framework, and the spaces relating to women and social security.

*Following is a brief description of the various presentations and points raised by the speakers during the final session of Day 2 of the Conference.*

**Anuradha Talwar**, *West Bengal Advisor to the Commissioners of the Supreme Court in the Right to Food and Work cases, also National Secretary of New Trade Union Initiative, at the National Trade Union Centre for Independent Trade Unions*: She pointed out that activists in the Right to Food Campaign had drafted a model Bill in 2009, which was based on two important principles—decentralised, guaranteed procurement of foodgrains by the Government at competitive prices; and a guarantee of nutritionally sufficient quantities of cereals (including millets), pulses and cooking oil at subsidised prices for all the people in the country. The logic was that such decentralised procurement would help farmers get an assured income besides incentivising them to produce more food. This would also encourage growth in the poorest regions as pulses, millets and oil seeds are generally grown by



small and marginal farmers in the dryland areas. This, in turn, would help revitalise agriculture, which has a growth rate of only 1–2 per cent and accounts for only 28 per cent of the GDP though it employs 68 per cent of the country's workforce. Ms. Talwar criticised the current Food Security Bill on the ground that though it says how food would be distributed, it fails to throw light on where this food would come from. In addition, it reduces entitlements from the present 7 kgs per head per month of cereals to 5 kgs per month per head. She also predicted that farmers, without guarantees of procurement, would opt out of cereal production, thereby making the country more and more dependent on multinational grain traders, and impacting its food sovereignty.<sup>1</sup>

Ms. Talwar claimed that a major problem with the present rationing system is that it guarantees provisions only for those who are BPL (below the poverty line) or those belonging to the Antyodaya group (the poorest of the poor), and that this kind of targeting leads to partisan politics in the choice of beneficiaries. She also argued that since only 67 per cent of the population is to be covered by this legislation, with an exclusion percentage as high as 33 per cent, it would exclude the hungriest—a poor, landless widow; a mentally retarded man; and, a senior citizen without any bread-earner to support her—because they are voiceless. The other drawbacks of the proposed bill, according to her, include its weak grievance redressal system, and its purported bias towards the corporate sector, whereby it lays down standards for the food to be supplied that can only be met by machine-made, packaged food made in corporate factories.

**Annie Raja**, *General Secretary, National Federation of Indian Women:*

Like the preceding speaker, Ms. Anuradha Talwar, Ms. Raja too pinpointed the drawbacks of the Food Security Bill. She said that the proposed bill was mainly intended to address the social reality of hunger, malnutrition and poverty in the country, which trigger infant and maternal mortality. She warned that if the bill were passed in the present form without any amendment, it would take away from the existing benefits. While the provision of cash transfer is not explicitly stipulated in the Act, in the absence of a production mechanism, it is

**Cash transfer cannot ensure food security. The Government will have to think of strengthening addressing the anomalies in the PDS and strengthen it by providing or including all the essential commodities in the rationing.**

**Annie Raja**  
NFIW

The Indian **National Food Security Act, 2013** (also known as the **Right to Food Act**), which was ultimately signed into law on 12 September 2013, aims to provide subsidised foodgrains to approximately two-thirds of India's 1.2 billion people. Under the provisions of the bill, beneficiaries would be able to purchase 5 kilograms per eligible person per month of cereals at the following prices:

- Rice at ₹3 (4.6¢ US) per kg
- Wheat at ₹2 (3.1¢ US) per kg
- Coarse grains (millet) at ₹1 (1.5¢ US) per kg.

Pregnant women, lactating mothers, and certain categories of children are eligible for daily free meals. The bill was highly controversial, and despite its introduction into Parliament in December 2012, was passed only in late August 2013, after initially being promulgated as a Presidential Ordinance on 5 July 2013.

**There should be minimum assured income in women's hands because they are running the household, they are the ultimate providers of food in the family and they have the ultimate responsibility.**

**Govind Kelkar**  
LANDESA and ICRW

also not very clear where the food would come from. Further, the issue of multinational corporations (MNCs) entering India's food sector looms large with the advent of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). She also explicitly opposed the cash transfer on the ground that cash cannot ensure food security, and contended that the would-be beneficiaries are also opposed to it, as indicated by the findings of a recent pilot study in Delhi, which revealed that 99.99 per cent of the families in Delhi do not want cash transfer. Finally, she urged the Government not to ignore the agricultural sector and to continue the practice of announcement of the Minimum Support Price (MSP), as otherwise the marginalised and dalits engaged in this sector would lose out on their livelihoods.

**Govind Kelkar**, *Senior Adviser to LANDESA India and Senior Research Fellow at International Centre for Research on Women*: While outlining the importance of social security, she said that it must facilitate the following three things: (i) a higher and more secure consumption base for women in terms of food, house and clothing; (ii) an increase in the capabilities of the economically poorer, excluded and marginalised groups by augmenting their capability for productivity; and (iii) a rise in productivity of the social security recipient with ownership and management of productive assets. She also emphasised the importance of addressing the fundamental power relations between men and women both within the home and outside in the sphere of food security, otherwise there would be no significant reduction in the poverty of women.

Ms. Kelkar cited the example of the East Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh to highlight the benefits of the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), a nomenclature for cash transfer, as also the impact of other schemes like old age pension and the widow scheme. She said that post the implementation of these schemes, the self-esteem and stature of the women in the household and community has improved due to their control over cash and resources, and that they are now being consulted by the family on important matters instead of being treated as illiterate and backward women, as was the case earlier. Apart from enjoying greater control over household expenditure, the women also have increased access to marketing technology and procurement of food items under the Public Distribution System (PDS), and greater say in matters regarding the education of their children. Thus, though the DBT has not completely eliminated the women's hardships, it has helped to significantly reduce them by ensuring some space for them in the market-centred economy.

**Kavita Srivastava**, *General Secretary of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) based in Jaipur, Rajasthan and Member of the Advisory*

*Group for the 'Right to Food Campaign'*: While wrapping up the session, she underscored the importance of common property resources (CPRs) like land and water in the lives of women, and maintained that without community control over these resources, it would be impossible to realise the right to food. However, though she appreciated the fact that the major livestock economy in the country is still in the hands of women, she warned that the rapid usurpation of CPRs by men from the landed communities would soon take its toll and negatively impact the use of these resources. She also expressed scepticism at the prospect of handing over the complete control over food resources to the banking infrastructure as envisaged under the cash transfer scheme because of the distant locations of banks in most rural areas and other possible logistical problems. She concluded that a more practical solution would be to improve the functioning of the PDS at the local level, to increase the frequency of social audits and to link the current framework of CPRs with human rights in order to facilitate the realisation of social security benefits.

## DAY 2, SESSION 2

### WOMEN AND SOCIAL SECURITY

#### A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SCHEMES

This session was chaired by **Rashmi Singh**, *Executive Director at the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) within the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India*. She inaugurated the session by sharing her experience of being a part of 'Mission Convergence', which attempted to thread the multiple actors together and start the process of examining not just the policy but also the programme delivery. She also admitted that despite all efforts to identify the beneficiaries on the basis of the available empirical evidence, some of them might have been left out. The solution thus lies in encouraging greater participation of and continuous dialogue among all the stakeholders in the delivery mechanism, and generation of feedback from the beneficiaries to ensure the successful implementation of the scheme.

**Yamini Atmavilas**, *Chair of Gender Studies, Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI); Member of various technical groups including the Technical Steering Group for Developing an Index of Gender-discriminatory Social Institutions; the Equity Working Group on Right to Education in Andhra Pradesh*: She commenced her address by citing some alarming statistics regarding the situation of women in India. A whopping 96 per cent of women workers in India, estimated at 142 million in the NSS 64th Round, 2004-05 in India are part of the unorganised sector, and are not covered by labour laws, which makes

**Unless we build institutions, structures and get them embedded in the system, it is very difficult to just build a conceptual understanding of an ideal system which we expect, we wish but which somehow does not happen.**

**Rashmi Singh**  
NMEW



them ineligible for maternity benefits or comprehensive maternity protection. Further, high levels of morbidity and mortality characterise maternity in India for poor women. Every third woman is undernourished and every second woman is anaemic. The practices of early marriage, gender-discriminatory customary norms, and existing gender roles also curtail women's agency and well-being. In view of these grim figures, the State has attempted to address the issue of maternity entitlements in different ways, as demonstrated in Table 1:

Ms. Atmavilas also cited the salient features of the other prevalent maternity benefit schemes including the ICDS Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP), Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahayog Yojana (IGMSY) and the Rajiv Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY). However, in view of the various restrictions operative in these schemes, many women are deprived of their benefits by failing to fulfil some eligibility criterion or the other. For instance, 48 per cent of the women would be ineligible if exclusion criteria as per the IGMSY are adopted; 59 per cent of the women having any one of the vulnerabilities in terms of caste, class or education would get left out; and 56 per cent of the Scheduled Caste (SC)/Scheduled Tribe (ST), 63 per cent of the poor and 66 per cent

**Table 1: Policy Framework for Maternity Entitlements**

| Framework                  | Programmes   |
|----------------------------|--|
| Health/Nutrition Framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICDS supplementary feeding for pregnant and lactating (P&amp;L) mothers</li> <li>• Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)—Institutional deliveries CCT</li> <li>• Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahayog Yojana (IGMSY)—CCT for P&amp;L Women (straddles Labour Framework)</li> </ul> |
| Insurance Framework        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY)</li> <li>• Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS)</li> </ul>   |
| Labour Framework           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESI</li> <li>• Maternity Benefits Act</li> <li>• Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA)</li> <li>• New Guidelines</li> </ul>   |

of the uneducated women would be disqualified for this scheme. She thus concluded that there is an urgent need to ensure that all the current provisions fit and work together for women and the lived reality of maternity within familial, social, and economic contexts. In addition, it is also imperative to evolve frameworks that balance universal coverage with the individual needs of different groups of women, as also gender norms and disparities, and economic and contextual realities.

**Subhalakshmi Nandi**, *Women's Economic Empowerment Specialist, UN Women, in Bhutan, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka*: While pointing out that social security has been made a preamble of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 (cited as “enhancement of livelihood security”), she claimed that an analysis of NREGA indicated that under the Act, the provision of 33 per cent reservation for women at the worksite, payment of equal wages and other facilities were the enabling provisions for the women. However, the fact that the entitlement is for the household begs the question as to whether the Government actually sees women as equal citizens with men. She also revealed that in order to address some of the gaps in the sphere of gender equality and gender at work, the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality (FGE) supported the Dalit Women Livelihoods Initiative (DWLAI), a project undertaken with Dalit women of Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Uttar Pradesh (UP) from 2010 to 2012, to bring their perspective into social accountability mechanisms and processes as a part of the implementation of MGNREGA. She also stated that the scheme was implemented across 69 Panchayats in five districts, in partnership with four local organisations—Lok Samiti, Parmarth Sewa Sansthan, Sahajani Shiksha Kendra (SSK), and Vanangana. As an illustration, she pointed out that the next speaker, Ms. Pushpa, would discuss the logistics of implementation of the scheme in Bundelkhand, one of the backward districts of UP.





**Pushpa, Dalit Women's Livelihood Accountability Initiative (DWLAI):** While citing the modalities of the scheme, she asserted that initially, the strategy focused on dalits and tribals, especially women among whom the information relating to NREGA had to be disseminated. For this purpose, innovative tools like street plays, songs, slogans and debates were used. Then, job cards were procured for the women and bank accounts opened for them, in a relatively short period. A total of 70 women were then selected to do the work of worksite supervisors, a task for which only 50 women had hitherto been trained. Also, as opposed to the earlier diktat forbidding women from participating in panchayat meetings, as part of this project, they were allowed to attend the panchayat meetings, after which they assessed the needs of the community and obtained permission to dig a canal in the district of Chitrakoot.

Table 2 presents a glimpse of the results achieved in the project:

**Table 2: Results Obtained under DWLAI Scheme**

|   | Baseline    |       |            |     | Endline      |       |            |      |
|---|-------------|-------|------------|-----|--------------|-------|------------|------|
|   | <25         | 26-50 | 51-75      | >75 | <25          | 26-50 | 51-75      | >75  |
| Percentage of women accessing MGNREGA (%)   | 61.7        |       |            |     | 97           |       |            |      |
| Number of Days (%)                          | 87          | 8     | 2          | 3   | 5.9          | 24.3  | 57.3       | 12.5 |
| Worksite Facilities (crèche) (%)            | 1.1         |       |            |     | 2.6          |       |            |      |
| Women worksite supervisors (Mates) (%)      | 1.2         |       |            |     | 20.74        |       |            |      |
| Individual Bank Accounts (%)                | 30          |       |            |     | 70           |       |            |      |
| Non-MGNREGA wages (agricultural work) (Rs.) | Women<br>50 |       | Men<br>75  |     | Women<br>80  |       | Men<br>90  |      |
| Non-MGNREGA wages (non-farm work) (Rs.)     | Women<br>60 |       | Men<br>100 |     | Women<br>100 |       | Men<br>120 |      |

This model challenged stereotypes related to the abilities of women, especially Muslims, to perform 'technical' work. The NGO Vanangana also initiated an all-women's worksite for building a large pond wherein dalit women were involved during all stages of planning and implementation of the work. The various achievements of the project were: (i) an *increase in employment and incomes* for women, both through access to employment under MGNREGA, as well as through an increase in the number of days of work they got; (ii) *greater access and control for the women over financial resources*, as 70 per cent of the women now have bank accounts in their names, and access to economic resources has also allowed 98 per cent of the women to enjoy greater freedom in decision-making; (iii) helping women *trump gender stereotypes* by offering them the opportunity to carry out semi-skilled and skilled work under this project such as measurement of works and filling of muster rolls, which had traditionally been the domain of powerful men; and (iv) an indication of a decline in the gender gap, which signals changes in the lives of the women, and are indicative of their journeys of 'empowerment', by challenging the dominant power structures of gender, caste and class.

Ms. Pushpa ended her address by pointing out that while MGNREGA can be viewed as a successful social protection measure for the most marginalised and excluded, yet from the perspective of making social protection measures more gender-responsive, the learnings from the DWLAI suggest that the mere enactment of the law is not enough and that an alternative bottom-up paradigm with *both rights-based approaches and empowerment processes at its core* is required if MGNREGA has to have the desired outcomes as a social protection measure.

**Anjor Bhaskar**, *Independent Consultant Working on Informality, Social Protection and Sustainable Livelihoods, Particularly in the Waste Sector*: He stated that one of the major organisations in the waste sector that he is engaged with, the Pune-based Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP), found, during



the course of its activities, that old age support was one of the most important and pervasive needs of informal waste pickers. He identified the following *problems* plaguing the design and delivery of pension schemes: (i) a great deal of confusion among both the beneficiaries and officials regarding the eligibility criteria, application procedures, documentary requirements and benefits of the programmes; (ii) documentary requirements that are virtually impossible for the poor to produce, such as proof of appearance of the applicant's name in the BPL List; an income certificate verifying that the applicant's household income is less than Rs. 21,000; proof that the family does not have an able-bodied son; and a domicile certificate, stating that the applicant has been residing in the state for the past 15 years; (iii) compulsion to pay bribes to middlemen if the applicant does not have all the requisite documents; (iv) dependence on the *Talathi's* discretion to verify the claims and award the necessary certificates, which endows him with the power to demand bribes; and (v) irregularity in pension payments and updation of passbooks. On the basis of the above drawbacks, Mr. Bhaskar listed the implementation of the following desirable measures as the way forward as far as ensuring social security for the workforce is concerned:

(i) increased awareness and clarity regarding the differences in eligibility criteria, requirements and benefits from the state and the Central schemes; (ii) a reduction in documentary requirements; (iii) regularisation of pension payments; (iii) improving the spread, reach and capacity of banking systems to respond to the exponential rise in the demand for banking services among the poor; and (iv) mandatory computerisation of passbook updating systems and disclosure of all details of transactions to facilitate verification and awareness generation among the beneficiaries.

Mr. Bhaskar's presentation concluded the second session of Day 2 of the Conference. This was followed by the Valedictory Session, during which the deliberations of the entire Conference were used to arrive at certain recommendations and suggestions for the way forward.

**The first thing the sex workers are asking for is hear us, listen to us, don't talk on our behalf and stop the talk of good sex work and bad sex worker.**

**Shubha Chacko**  
ANEKA

## VALEDICTORY SESSION

**CONCLUDING ADDRESS BY FORMER CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF LABOUR, AND MEMBER, HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL PROTECTION, SUDHA PILLAI:**

As the Chair for the closing session of the Conference, **Ms. Sudha Pillai** applauded the recommendations derived by the delegates, as they laid out the course for the emergence of gender action in this regard. She also asserted that these suggestions must be implemented and the lacunae addressed immediately. Finally, she averred that the messages of the Conference must be disseminated widely throughout both the organised and unorganised sectors in order to expedite their implementation and service delivery.

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF GUEST, HONOURABLE MINISTER FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT, JAIRAM RAMESH:**

The Valedictory Session concluded with the Keynote Speaker and Chief Guest, Honourable Minister **Mr. Jairam Ramesh** endorsing the argument that social security for women must be 'universal but not uniform'. He also affirmed that it is imperative to establish financially independent women's collectives to ensure the successful implementation of all social security programmes. He further underscored that fact that the sanitation security of women and nutrition security of adolescent mothers are among the most imminent challenges facing the Government. He ended his address by urging the gathering to continue the good work for integrating a new gender focus into the existing social security packages and to stringently monitor the implementation of these programmes for ensuring that the targeted women workers derive the maximum benefit from them.



# Charter of Demands

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants shortlisted certain recommendations and suggestions for future action with regard to ensuring social security for all women workers, on the basis of the preceding discussions and presentations at the Conference. These recommendations are delineated below in the form of a **Charter of Demands**:

- It is the obligation and responsibility of the State to provide social security to its citizenry. Financing social security is an investment, not a burden.
- Social security policies in India should be based on the human rights framework, and the ILO's social protection floor framework, and should ensure *'Prevention, Protection, Promotion and Transformation by incorporating substantive equality framework of empowerment'*.
- Social security should provide protection from the following risks: old age; disability; illness; accident; maternity and unpaid care work; death; all forms of violence and threat of violence including conflict; loss of livelihood and unemployment.
- Social security should augment women's access to and control over productive resources including financial services, technology, better infrastructure, land, water, housing and other common property resources (CPRs).
- Social security should be universal, but not uniform, and should, respectively, address specific and multiple vulnerabilities, and include special temporary measures. These measures must be applied on a priority basis to provide immediate relief to the vulnerable groups.
- Social security benefits should be bestowed on women by treating them as independent rights-holders and not as dependents, or as members of a household.
- Most women work, but they are not seen as workers in the real sense of the word. This situation should be countered by expanding the definition of women's work to include:

- ◆ The multi-dimensional nature of women's work, including unpaid work and care work (looking after the family members);
  - ◆ Women's contribution to family enterprises and farms, and home-based work;
  - ◆ The multiple areas of work in which women are engaged to prevent the limitation of workers' rights only to certain occupations and/or sectors;
  - ◆ The rights of women workers in the sphere of 'intimate' labour, which includes domestic workers, care workers and sex workers;
  - ◆ Promotion and protection of women's right to association at all worksites and in all communities;
  - ◆ Workers' rights and employment security for all para workers, including anganwadi workers, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), mid-day meal cooks, and ayahs (untrained nurses and maids) in hospitals;
  - ◆ Payment of fair wages and provision of skill upgradation opportunities to community mobilisers and service providers like link workers and dais (midwives);
  - ◆ Compensation of the time and skills offered as inputs by women's collectives including Member-based Organisations (MBOs), Community-based Organisations (CBOs), and Self-help Groups (SHGs) that have been volunteering for community mobilisation and programme delivery.
  - ◆ The State should also support the formation of women's collectives at community levels to encourage the participation of women in all aspects of the administrative and decision-making process for ensuring social security benefits.
- There should be a reduction in red-tapism and the need for cumbersome documentary evidence stipulated for applying for State-sponsored benefits, as it is difficult for the beneficiaries, especially poor women, to procure all the requisite documents. Further, the bureaucratic and administrative processes entailed in availing of social security benefits should also be curbed and such processes should, in fact, be made that more women-friendly in design to prevent the alienation of women workers and to facilitate their greater participation in such schemes.
  - The State should provide platforms and mechanisms for raising awareness among women and for organising them on the issue of social security.

**You can have your food security bill but if you are not going to provide proper hygiene for the children you are not going to get the nutrition status as far as the other generations are concerned.**

**Jairam Ramesh**  
Cabinet Minister  
Ministry of Rural  
Development

Now there is a very strong global movement on transaction tax. Why can't we link up the idea that transaction tax should fund the global social security.

Ashim Roy  
NTUI

- There should be a better interface between service providers and citizens, which necessitates gender sensitisation of government officials/duty-bearers on gender concerns that are related to social security, including in the case of workers facing multiple vulnerabilities.
- The State should institute mechanisms for facilitating the greater role of women and women-based organisations in planning and designing social security policies and programmes. It should also ensure that the monitoring mechanisms are clear in terms of the guidelines, including the mandatory Social Audit and Gender Audit, the cost of undertaking which should be provided by the State; and should establish appropriate authority for grievance redressal with the powers concerned to take punitive action at the local level.

The above recommendations were the result of collaborative discussion and conceptualisation by all the delegates at the Conference with the intention of clarifying and unpacking the Definition, Content, Delivery and Implementation of social security measures for women.





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