

National Working Committee Meeting

Centre for Education and communication; August 28, 2009

The day long National Working Groups' meeting was organised in at SSN Secretariat in the Centre for Education and communication New Delhi. The meeting was attended by more than 30 representatives, representing 19 organisations from ten states, who deliberated on issues and took important decisions. List of participants is at Annexure I.

Key Points in the Discussions

- After introduction of participants unanimously elected Vinay Kumar chairperson for conducting the meeting. The group considered the progress in the last National Working Groups' meeting and meeting with the Minister for Labour Mr. Harish Rawat & ministry officials the group discussed the Agenda of the meeting.
- Participants considered the concept note 'National Convention on Social Security for Unorganised Workers, Patna, November, 2009. Ranjan from Nidan, Patna gave details of important guests for the National consultation, participants and logistics.
- Chairperson Vinay said the planning commission created discrimination between organised and unorganised workers and their social security needs. He said organised workers are getting gratuity, pension, reasonable medical care and other protections. When organised worker goes on one month leave, he continues to get wage/salary income but unorganised would not get such income protection.
- John said ILO has pointed out that 3.9 per cent of GDP would be sufficient for taking care of social security needs of the workers in India. He gave details of lacunae of existing Act and clarified that we have three strong reasons for the National Consultation are: (i) We have an Act on social security which is inadequate, weak and worthless. (ii) The trade unions in series of meetings with government, in successive ILCs, in joint meetings of CTOs etc; the CSOs and campaign groups and the stronger campaign of Social Security Now; the NCL-II, NCEUS and Parliamentary committee all demanded for a comprehensive social security protection. The government ignored all such suggestions, recommendations and demands. Now the chief justice of supreme court raised the questions on various provisions and basic structure of the Act supporting our position (iii) Social security should be the issue of people. Working people should demand social security in their language and tone.
- Shaktiman Ghosh suggested that the National consultation should be held in Delhi after thorough preparations so that its impact would be felt by all, He suggested that this important issue should be taken up more seriously with due preparations. Net-works are addressing only legislation and doing academic work. The campaign documents should be precise, in the language of workers and shorter.
- Ambarish Rai said that social security for unorganised workers is a big issue, particularly when nation is witnessing shrinking of agrarian economy. He said National consultation should not be organised hurriedly. He suggested if the academic works generated by SSN is taken to grass root level and peoples movements should accept it.
- Mecanzy Dabre of YUVA said the National consultation should be early; there is no other way to say No to the existing legislation, the 2008 Act. Begin at National level then go to state level meetings and then to grass root level.
- Shashi Pandit said National convention is not the end. After passing of the Act in December 2008 there was a silence from campaign groups, trade unions and movements for many

months. Now it is most appropriate time for intensive campaign, national convention and to say No to the existing useless and weak Act of 2008.

- Anup Srivastava suggested that we should demand for universal social security for all and not for workers alone. Thematic area need to be considered.
- Vijayan MJ said we have not got social security for unorganised workers, let us first get it for workers then we will demand for universalisation of social protections. We need to do a Dhamaka at National level after passing of the Act. We need to prepare a small handout in strongly worded but in peoples' language.
- Ambarish Rai said there need to be appropriate atmosphere of convention; it should be made effective by popular slogans and posters etc; the Act of 2008 should be burnt throughout the country to convey that we have rejected it. Mass organisations, students famous writers should be invited.
- Rajesh Kumar Malviya said we will be able to identify workers and make groups of those who will burn the Act. Shaktiman Ghosh said we will burn it in ten states.

Decisions:

After considering various suggestions and the discussions the group reached to following consensus.

1. Why a national convention

Despite pressures from trade unions, SSN, other campaign organisations, NCEUS and the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour, Government of India came up a extremely meaningless Act in December 2008.

Chief Justice of India criticised the Act on many grounds.

It is time to tell government that we reject the Act

Social Security need to be demystified. It should be translated in words people understand. It should be unpacked as Right to Pension, Right to accident benefit, right to unemployment benefit, right to maternity benefit, right to livelihood right

The campaign needs to reach out to the masses. Workers should start demanding the social security rights.

The campaign has always been inclusive. It needs to reach out to more mass based organisations. Social Security is an issue on which a broad based unity could be established.

2. Concept of social security

The focus is on social security for unorganised workers. Social security is the measures the state is taking to compensate income losses of workers.

Workers demand social security because they contribute to the National Income. It is their right and not a charity by the State.

We demand Social security as a right to all workers assuming that those who work sustain the livelihood requirements of non-workers including children, old, sick and the invalid.

This is not the same as asking for social security for all citizens as human rights.

3. Date & Venue of the National Convention

Proposed Dates: December 3-5, 2009

Proposed Venue: Patna (the importance of being a non-congress, non-BJP state)

4. Tentative Outline of Sessions

DAY 1 DECEMBER 03, 2009

(a) Session I: Inaugural Session

(b) Session II: Mazdoor Ki Awaaz
(Workers speaking on the right to social security)

In this session, workers representing various sectors and states will express the need for social security from their experiences. The depositions will focus on the following rights:

1. Right to old age pension,
2. Right to accident compensation,
3. Right to maternity benefit,
4. Right to unemployment compensation and livelihood rights,
5. Right to health

Sectors, States and Responsibilities for Preparing Workers for Mazdoor Ki Awaz: Annexure II

DAY 2 DECEMBER 04, 2009

(c) Session III: Vulnerabilities of internal migrants and social security for external migrants

The session will deal with the need for the law to address the vulnerabilities as well as the imponderables the migrant workers face while attempting to access social security. It will also address the need for incorporating 'external migrants' within the definition of unorganised workers.

(d) Session IV: Financing Social Security Fund: Reduce Defense Budget

The session will discuss options for financing social security fund including reduction in defense budget and using that money for financing social security for unorganised workers.

(e) Session V: Towards National and Regional Action Plan

The session will discuss in groups and prepare national and regional action plan. It will also discuss issues like how to broaden network and the best campaign structure etc. The group discussion will be in groups divided regionally.

The group discussions will be followed by Plenary in which the group leaders will present their reports.

(f) Session VI: Patna Declaration

The Declaration based on the depositions as well as key inputs from other sessions will be presented

and adopted in this session.

Responsibility for the Preparation of the Declaration: Pallavi Mansingh & U N Mishra

(g) Session VI: Concluding Session

DAY 3 DECEMBER 05, 2009

(h) Session VII: Cultural Programme

This session will have cultural programme, followed by Press Conference

Press Conference

(i) Session VIII: Rally and Public Meeting

Summary of Proceedings

Vote of Thanks

Followed by Representation to Governor of Bihar

Reception Committee

To be constituted by NIDAN, as Ranjan as Convener

Organising Committee

1. R. S. Tiwari, CEC
2. Ambarish Rai, Lok Sangharsh Morcha
3. Pallavi Mansingh, CEC
4. Shashi Pandit,
5. Vinay Kumar, NMDLR
6. Shaktiman Ghosh, Hawkers Federation
7. Sebastian Devraj, FEDINA
8. Mackenzie, YUVA
9. Vijay Kant, NIDAN
10. Rajesh Malviya, NIWCID
11. J John – Convenor

Materials to be Prepared

Background note to the Convention which examines the political economy of the demand for social security

Document that gives the demands of Trade Unions, demands of Social Security Now, what Parliamentary Standing Committee for Labour

A critique of the Act in simple language

History of SSN

Posters on the five demands (Right to pension, right to accident compensation, right to maternity benefit, right to unemployment compensation and livelihood rights)

Slogans on Delegate Card

Pocket Primer on Social Security

Next Meeting

Next Meeting of the Organising Committee to review the materials. The meeting is scheduled on October 9/10, 2009 at CEC office, Delhi.

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Dr. R.S Tiwari

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