UNESCO Forum of Ministers in charge of Social Development from South Asia

Social Protection Policies in South Asia

Third Ministerial Meeting
Ministry of Social Services, Government of Sri Lanka

20-22 February 2011
Cinnamon Lakeside Hotel
115, Sir Chittampalam A. Gardiner Mawatha
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

Agenda
### Sunday 20 February 2011

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>19:00-20:30</td>
<td>Inaugural Session: World Day of Social Justice (King’s Court)</td>
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**Welcome Address:** Ms. W. Yamuna Chitranganie, Secretary, Ministry of Social Services, Sri Lanka  
**Guests of Honour:**  
Ms. Pilar Álvarez-Laso, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences  
Hon. Felix Perera, Minister of Social Services, Sri Lanka  
**Chief Guest:** Hon. D. M. Jayaratne, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

Through this inaugural session, the participants of UNESCO Forum and other invitees will celebrate *World Day of Social Justice* as per the resolution first passed by more than 100 political leaders in the World Summit of Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, and reiterate their common resolve to achieving justice in social development by the means of complementary social protection measures. It is hoped that the celebration of *World Day of Social Justice* in Sri Lanka for the first time will contribute to raising the profile of the social science community in Sri Lanka and highlight its relevance for the development of research based social policies in the region.

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<tr>
<td>20:30-22:30</td>
<td>Welcome Reception and Dinner hosted by the Government of Sri Lanka</td>
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### Monday 21 February 2011

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<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>9:00-9:15</td>
<td>Opening Remarks: Mr Armoogum Parsuramen, Director and UNESCO Representative to India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka (Earl’s Court)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:15-10:30</td>
<td>Session 1: Recommendations of UNESCO-ICSSR Research Meeting on Social Protection Policies in South Asia (Earl’s Court)</td>
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**Chair:** Prof. Javeed Alam, Chairperson, Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)  
**Presentation:** Prof. Ravi Srivastava, Chairperson, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), India  
**Panelists:** Prof. Achin Chakraborty, Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata, India; Mr C. Upendranadh, Asia Governance Coordinator, ActionAid; Prof. Hettige, Professor and Chair of Sociology, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka
The purpose of this session is to provide inputs and suggestions on possible content for the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted at the closing session. Discussions will be based on the Summary Report of the UNESCO-ICSSR Research Meeting on Social Protection Policies in South Asia, organized on 18-19 March 2010 in New Delhi, India, and notably on its Recommendations. The meeting brought together over 40 researchers and scholars across South Asia, providing a platform for discussions on country-specific social protection policies and initiatives and identification of best practices. Recommendations included extending benefits of social protection to the most neglected and vulnerable sections of society, promoting employment led development strategies to facilitate inclusive and redistributive growth, identifying gaps in design modalities, coverage and implementation quality of social protection programmes, prioritizing financing of social protection measures and advancing the agenda for a social protection floor in the region. Similarly, the Summary Report of the UNESCO – NSF National Symposium on Social Protection Policies in Sri Lanka, held on 30 November – 1 December 2010, will provide inputs and suggestions.

Presentation: 20 minutes
Panelists: 15 minutes each
Discussion

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<th>10:30- 11:00</th>
<th>Tea/Coffee Break (Group Photograph)</th>
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<tr>
<td>11.00 – 13.00</td>
<td>Session 2: Country Experiences - Learning and Sharing : Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India (Earls Court)</td>
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**Speakers:** Hon. Ms Amena S. Afzali, Minister of Work and Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled, Afghanistan; Hon. Mr. Enamul Hoque Mostafa Shahid, Minister of Social Welfare, Bangladesh; Mr. Tshewang Tandin, Director General, Ministry of Education, Bhutan; Dr Narendra Jadhav, Member, Planning Commission, Government of India;

**Moderator:** Mr. Armoogum Parsuramen, Director and UNESCO Representative to India, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka

Each country presentation will focus on the most innovative, exemplary or successful national social protection schemes. A comprehensive description and list of social protection schemes in each country is not required here and goes beyond the scope of this session. The session will entail discussing each country’s experience with a few selected schemes, while keeping a particular focus on means of implementation, provisions for transparency and accountability, and results achieved. With references to country experiences, though Afghanistan is confronted with civil strife, the consolidated National Social Protection Strategy, along with other workfare and cash transfer schemes are attempts at institutionalizing social protection. Bangladesh has demonstrated an array of social protection interventions such as the Female Secondary School Assistance Programme, the Vulnerable Group Development Programme, the 100 Day Employment Generation Programme and the gamut of microcredit programmes. In Bhutan, in the absence of formal safety nets, traditional forms of social assistance such as inter household
transfers in cash and kind and welfare (Kidu), have been predominant. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in India has generated immense interest because of its rights based approach to delivering social protection. This paradigm shift has been supported by the passing of the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, emphasizing the need for providing socio-economic security to the large proportion of workers engaged in the unorganised sector. Policies such as the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) and the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP), focusing on the marginalized strata, have been operational for more than three decades and are being reformulated to make them more effective.

Presentations: 15-20 minutes each
Discussion

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<tr>
<td>13:00-14:15</td>
<td>Lunch Break</td>
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<td>14:15-16:00</td>
<td>Session 3: Social Protection Schemes for Migrants and the Urban Poor (Earl’s Court)</td>
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Chair: Mr. Denys Correll, Executive Director, International Council on Social Welfare
Panelists: Dr. Asad Sayeed, Collective for Social Science Research, Pakistan; Dr. Darshini Mahadevia, Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology University (CEPT), India; Dr. Shiva Sharma, Executive-Director, National Labour Academy, Nepal; Mr. Andrea Rossi, Regional Social Policy Advisor, UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia; Mr. Richard Danziger, Chief of Mission, IOM, Sri Lanka

This session wishes to highlight the complex case of migrants and urban poor, as a population especially vulnerable and excluded of most social protection schemes in South Asia. In particular, the focus will be on the lack of access to portable social protection benefits for moving populations. The Human Development Report (2009) reveals that Asia displays the highest intra regional migration in the world, with 35.49 million persons moving across Asian countries. Migrants constitute a “floating” population, as they alternate between living at their home and host location, and in turn lose access to social security benefits linked to the residence, and other informal social networks. The urban poor are another neglected group, faced with insecure housing and poor access to social services, health and education opportunities. The session intends to highlight the plight of these excluded groups and identify the new areas of research needed and recommend specific measures.

Chair: Introduction
Panelists: 15 minutes (each)
Discussion

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<td>16:00-16:30</td>
<td>Tea/Coffee Break</td>
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Session 4: Ministerial Roundtable on the Ministerial Declaration
(Closed Session – Queen’s Court)

Chair: Ms. Pilar Álvarez-Laso, UNESCO Assistant Director-General of Social and Human Sciences
Participants: Hon. Ms Amena S. Afzali, Minister of Work and Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled, Afghanistan; Hon. Mr. Enamul Hoque Mostafa Shahid, Minister of Social Welfare, Bangladesh; Mr. Tshewang Tandin, Director General, Ministry of Education, Bhutan; Dr. Narendra Jadhav, Member, Planning Commission, Government of India; Ms. Mariya Ali, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Family, Maldives; Ms. Bindra Hada, Member Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal; Hon. Mr. Felix Perera, Minister of Social Services, Sri Lanka

The purpose of this ministerial roundtable is for the Ministers and their delegation to discuss and approve a draft Ministerial Declaration to be adopted at the end of the Forum. The objective of the Declaration is to highlight the issues of inequalities in social justice and the means of mitigating them through social protection policies. This draft aims to outline concrete measures, which reflect the recommendations proposed by researchers and the key national and regional priorities identified by the participating Ministers.

Tuesday 22 February 2011

9:00-11:00  Session 5: Panel Discussion- A Social Protection Floor for South Asia?
(Earl’s Court)

Chair: Mr. Markus Ruck, Senior Specialist on Social Security, Decent Work Team, International Labor Organization (ILO – South Asia)
Panelists: Dr. Firdosi Rustom Mehta, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Sri Lanka; Mr. A. S. Shenoy, National President, International Council of Social Welfare, India; Dr. K.P. Kannan, Professor and former Director, Centre for Development Studies, Kerala, India

The session will be devoted to discussing the principles supporting the Social Protection Floor Initiative and its practical eligibility in the South Asian region. The UN Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPFI) promotes universal access to an essential set of services (such as education, water and sanitation, food and adequate nutrition, health and housing) and transfers (in cash and in kind) to provide a minimum income and livelihood security for the poor and vulnerable populations, in line with human rights treaties. This session proposes the exchange of ideas...
and experiences of the participating countries in building, expanding and re-orienting existing schemes towards the realization of a social protection floor for South Asia. It will entail raising awareness, identifying viable policy options, elaborating country specific measures to facilitate ownership of the initiative by national governments, social partners and NGOs.

Presentation of the Chair: 20 minutes
Panelists: 15 minutes each
Discussion

11:00- 11:30  Tea/Coffee Break

11:30- 13:00  Session 6: Country Experiences: Learning and Sharing: Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (Earl’s Court)

**Speakers:** Ms. Mariya Ali, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Family, Maldives; Ms. Bindra Hada, Member Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal; Hon. Mr. Felix Perera, Minister of Social Services, Sri Lanka

**Moderator:** Ms. Elizabeth Longworth, UNESCO Deputy Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences and Director of Social Research Policy

Each country presentation will focus on the most innovative, exemplary or successful national social protection schemes. A comprehensive description and list of social protection schemes in each country is not required here and goes beyond the scope of this session. The session will entail discussing each country’s experience with a few selected schemes, while keeping a particular focus on means of implementation, provisions for transparency and accountability, and results achieved. With reference to country experiences, in the Maldives, the Absolute Poverty Scheme, universal old age pension scheme and vouchers for textbooks and uniforms for children have been noteworthy initiatives. In Nepal, a universal old age pension, grants for building social and physical infrastructure, *Maternity incentive scheme*, and the *Education for All* programme are among the social protection interventions. The *Samurdhi* programme in Sri Lanka is unique since it encompasses different components of social protection in its strategy such as a savings and credit programme, income transfer and development of community infrastructure through trainings, workfare and social development programs.

Presentations: 15-20 minutes each
Discussion

13.00- 14:15  Lunch Break
The predominance of the informal segment of the economy characterized by growing unemployment in the South Asian region provides the impetus for devising social protection policies that are aimed at creating employment. Hence, the importance of social protection policies aimed at achieving higher economic and social development in the region through an increase in employment opportunities. Employment centred public works programmes have been traditionally preferred as they focus simultaneously on investment in infrastructure and creation of employment opportunities. This session proposes to analyze examples of employment-led schemes in South Asia such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, India (2006), the launch of the 100 day employment generation programme in Bangladesh (2008), and the Employment Guarantee Programme in Nepal, amongst others. The session will provide a platform for the participating countries to share their experiences in implementation, administrative modalities, modes of financing and difficulties faced in order to strengthen regional cooperation for such schemes.

Presentation of the Chair: 20 minutes
Panelists: 15 minutes each
Discussion

16:30- 18:00  Session 8: Panel Discussion- Child Sensitive Social Protection (Earl’s Court)

This session proposes the dissemination and exchange of country experiences related to implementing child sensitive social protection programmes. South Asia is home to some of the worst levels of child poverty, evident through high rates of malnutrition, infant mortality, and
lack of or unequal access of children to sanitation, shelter, health and education. Children require specific attention within social protection – in addition to sharing many of the sources of vulnerability faced by their families and communities, children face age-specific vulnerabilities which differ from those of adults or have more serious consequences such as increased vulnerability to malnutrition, disease and abuse. Child sensitive social protection therefore needs to consider these different dimensions of children’s well-being, and address the inherent social disadvantages, risks and vulnerabilities children may be born into, as well as those acquired later in childhood. Indeed, the Colombo Statement on Children of South Asia (SAARC 2009) highlighted the urgent need of social protection policies to address the rights of children to social justice. The International Labor Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) have also jointly declared their support for strengthening cooperation between governments, trade unions, NGOs, local and international communities of the South Asian region for mainstreaming child labor concerns in poverty reduction.

Presentation of the Chair: 10 minutes
Presentations: 15 minutes each
Panelists discussion: 20 minutes
Discussion

18:00- 19:00 Closing Session: Adoption of the Ministerial Declaration (Queen’s Court)

Chair: Hon. Mr Felix Perera, Minister of Social Services, Sri Lanka
Participants: Hon. Ms Amena S. Afzali, Minister of Work and Social Affairs, Martyrs & Disabled, Afghanistan; Hon. Mr. Enamul Hoque Mostafa Shahid, Minister of Social Welfare, Bangladesh; Mr. Tshewang Tandin, Director General, Ministry of Education, Bhutan; Dr. Narendra Jadhav, Member, Planning Commission, Government of India; Ms. Mariya Ali, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Family, Maldives; Ms. Bindra Hada, Member Secretary, National Planning Commission, Nepal; Hon. Mr. Felix Perera, Minister of Social Services, Sri Lanka

Following the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, there shall be a Press Conference open to all participants (tentative starting time: 18:30).