



Newsletter 5: June - September 2009 Annual Conference

Welcome to the 5th Newsletter of the Social Protection in Asia (SPA) Research and Policy Networking Programme www.socialprotectionasia.org

"Social Protection in Asia: Experiences, Lessons, and Barriers to Extension" -

The annual policy and research conference of the Social Protection in Asia programme was held in Hanoi, Vietnam on June 1-5, 2009. Organised by the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi and Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, the conference brought together policy makers and researchers to share understanding, experiences, lessons, and barriers to the extension of social protection policies across the globe - Latin America, Southern Africa and through diverse regions of Asia. A panel of experts from Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa discussed the implications of the economic crisis for social protection needs and responses in these regions. Country specific challenges were raised, and common trends and concerns in extension of social protection across regions were identified. The conference included key note presentations from Vietnamese officials, providing an informative overview of Vietnam's social protection challenges and policy responses. The context of the discussions also revolved around the global economic crisis and the implications for poverty, vulnerability and the future direction of social protection policies. The conference allowed for developing of a broader social protection agenda, through different learnings and experiences.



Key messages emerging during the conference included the need to:

- Move towards greater universalism and inclusivity in extension of social protection
- Focus on basic needs to ensure key dimensions of capability enhancements
- View social protection policies in a holistic fashion as ‘developmental’, as against current thinking of their ‘residual’ role (in meeting shocks)
- Locate social protection within the overall human rights and human dignity framework, and recognize its transformative potential in reducing poverty, enhancing livelihood security and human development, and strengthening voice and citizenship rights.
- Emphasize the political context in the transfer of social protection as weak governance and institutional arrangements, limited fiscal capacities and ‘developmental politics’ often hamper the delivery of well intentioned social protection schemes.

Following the policy conference, a two-day research workshop was conducted to present progress and initial findings of the 13 projects underway within the SPA programme. This spurred detailed discussion on a number of themes - rural-urban migration, rights based programmes, social support for the aged, shelter security, health care programmes, conditional cash transfers, impact of natural disasters, ‘graduation’ models and problems in design, evaluation and delivery of social protection schemes. Informality, gender, and political contexts were emphasized as important cross cutting themes for all the projects. Feedback on project findings was sought from peers for placing the research in a wider ‘policy context’, while examining other issues relating to methodology, dissemination and advocacy. Attempts were made to identify cross-country and sub-regional level agendas while drawing theoretical conclusions, policy implications and addressing gaps in knowledge.

Details of the conference and research workshop and related background papers/ conference presentations, are available at http://www.socialprotectionasia.org/June_Conference-programme.asp

"National Rural Employment Guarantee in India – Lessons from Implementation" - As part of ongoing networking, advocacy and dissemination

efforts of the Social Protection in Asia programme, ISST and IHD, New Delhi organized a two day National Workshop on at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bangalore during September 8-9, 2009. The workshop brought together over 60 scholars and practitioners from across South Indian states, who shared their field experiences of the NREGS and helped in identifying recommendations for its effective implementation. Participants discussed progress of the NREGS and



highlighted issues and concerns for better delivery of scheme benefits. Findings of field research studies carried out by IHD and ISST were also discussed at the workshop. Additionally over 15 papers were presented which discussed process dimensions, state-wise issues and problems of implementation and thematic aspects like reaching poor women, Dalits and innovative experiences of social audit. A brief summary of conference proceedings will be shared soon. For further details on conference programme, participants and presentations, see

<http://www.socialprotectionasia.org/Conference1.asp>

"The Impact of the Global Economic Slowdown on Poverty and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific" - A high level conference discussing implications of the global economic slowdown on the people in Asia and the Pacific, especially the poor and vulnerable, was held in Hanoi, Viet Nam on September 28-30, 2009. The event was jointly organized by the State Council Leading Group on Poverty Alleviation and Development of the People's Republic of China, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Government of Viet Nam, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the ASEAN Secretariat, and was supported by a number of partner organizations. The conference also served as the 3rd China-ASEAN Forum on Social Development and Poverty Reduction and the 4th ASEAN+3 High-Level Seminar on Poverty Reduction. This was attended by Dr. Naila Kabeer, one of the directors of the Social Protection in Asia programme.

Key messages emerging during the conference included:

- Countries and agencies are more geared up to undertake 'real time' monitoring of impact of the crisis on different sectors and groups than earlier
- Countries with social protection systems in place (initiated during the East Asian financial crisis) appear to have responded more effectively to the present crisis
- The move towards universalism in social protection in some countries was noted through 'guarantees' to certain forms of social protection, though 'rights' around social protection still need to gain currency

- ‘Developmental social protection’ was found to have a considerable degree of acceptance within official circles, though ‘transformative social protection’ was less in evidence

Details of the programme, participants, background papers and conference presentations are available on the ADB website <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Events/2009/Poverty-Social-Development/default.asp>

"Women's Empowerment through Guaranteed Employment: A Case Study of NREGA Implementation in Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh" – The findings of a UNIFEM sponsored study done by Ashok K. Pankaj and Rukmini Tankha of IHD were discussed at a one-day consultation workshop on August 31, 2009. The study explores the extent to which women's participation in the employment guarantee scheme has enabled their empowerment. Empowerment aspects have been examined vis-a-vis income-consumption effects, changes in intra-household decision making, increase in choice and capacity of women workers and increased participation in community development processes. The long-term implications of these changes in terms of gender relations have also been explored.

In addition to the study, 4-5 papers were also presented at the workshop on similar themes. A large number of participants including members of the Planning Commission of India, senior officials from the Union Ministry of Rural Development and Department of Rural Development of various states, leading academicians, policy makers, representatives of civil society organizations and international organizations like UNDP, ILO participated in the workshop.

Key messages emerging during the conference included:

- NREGA was originally not intended to be a women oriented scheme
- However, it has turned out to be a great source of paid employment, not available earlier, to rural women.
- Regional variations in women’s participation, non-enforcement of women-specific provisions like crèche at worksite, types of works permitted under NREGS, and low participation of women in collective decision-making processes are matters of concern that need to be addressed so that rural women can realize the potentialities of the scheme.

For more details see <http://www.ihdindia.org/pdf/A-CONSULTATION-WORKSHOP.pdf>

News and Forthcoming Events:

UNICEF Social Protection Training 2009 - A participatory learning course for UNICEF Staff across the world was presented by the Centre for Social Protection, IDS, July 13-24, 2009. For more details see

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/research-teams/vulnerability-and-poverty-reduction-team/centre-for-social-protection/training>

A workshop – “Policy Coherence in ICTs for Development” was held in Paris on September 10-11, 2009, jointly organized by the World Bank/infoDev and the OECD. The workshop shared and highlighted best practices in coherent approaches to meeting development objectives using Information Communication Technologies (ICT). For more details see

http://www.oecd.org/site/0,3407,en_21571361_42740239_1_1_1_1_1,00.html

An interregional training course –“HIV /AIDS and the World of Work: A Social Protection Perspective” was held in Turin, Italy on September 7-18, 2009. It was aimed at strengthening the capacity of planners and social actors to develop and implement workplace policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS. For more details see

<http://www.worldaidscampaign.org/en/HIV-AIDS-and-theWorld-of-Work-a-social-protection-perspective-7-18-September-2009-Turin-Italy>

The Asia-Europe People’s Forum (AEPF) organized a Southeast Asia Regional Roundtable Strategizing Meeting with the theme "Building Southeast Asia Peoples’ Agenda on Transformative Social Protection as a Democratic and Human Rights Response to the Crisis " on October 12-13, 2009 in Manila, Philippines. The SPA programme is involved in supporting this event.

Professor Naila Kabeer, one of the directors of the SPA Programme is the lead author of the new UN report on the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, to be launched at the UN headquarters in New York on October 26, 2009. The theme for the World Survey in 2009 is "Women's control over economic resources and access to financial resources, including microfinance". The report dedicates an entire chapter to social protection. For more details, see the UN DAW website- <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/ws2009>.

The Department of Personnel Management and Industrial Relations, Patna University, Bihar and IHD are organizing an International Seminar on “Women, Employment and Poverty in Bihar” at Patna during 7-8 November 2009.

[For more details](#)

The 51st Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Labour Economics (ISLE) at Punjabi University, Patiala (India) is to be held on 11-13 December 2009.

Researchers and other professionals are invited to contribute papers on the conference themes - Labour Market Discrimination, Right to Employment, Labour Regulations in India. For more details see

http://www.isleijle.org/NormalView.asp?m_id=135

The Asia Pacific Scholarship Consortium invites applications for facilitating scholarships in postgraduate courses for individuals from Myanmar, Cambodia and Lao PDR requiring financial support. Scholarships will be for high quality, post-graduate study in fields relevant to development of the Mekong Sub Region, particularly in the following fields - community health, development, education, environment, humanities & social sciences, media, policy & administration and social work. Read more details at

<http://cambodiajobs.blogspot.com/2008/10/asia-pacific-scholarship.html>.

CGAP and the Ford Foundation are partnering to explore how the “graduation model” can create pathways for the poorest out of extreme poverty, adapting a methodology developed by BRAC in Bangladesh. For more details on an overview of graduation models and also experiences of SKS and Bandhan in India, Relief Society of Tigray in Ethiopia and Fonkoze in Haiti, see

<http://www.cgap.org/p/site/c/template.rc/1.11.1925/>.

Useful Links:

[Centre for Social Protection Newsletter October Issue 10: Seasonality and Social Protection](#). As seasons across the world appear to become more unpredictable, the impacts of seasonal shocks and stresses on poor people are increasing. This edition of the CSP newsletter examines ways in which social protection measures can be designed and implemented in ways that can help reduce these seasonal vulnerabilities.

UNICEF Social Protection Training at IDS, Sussex - Reading list, available at

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/research-teams/vulnerability-and-poverty-reduction-team/centre-for-social-protection/training/unicef-2009>

UK's new White Paper on International Development, Building our Common Future available at

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/About-DFID/Quick-guide-to-DFID/How-we-do-it/Building-our-common-future>

Work on the impact of the financial crisis at the Centre for Social Protection, IDS, available at

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/news/social-protection-july-issue-9-financial-crisis-and-social-protection>

ODI Briefing Paper – The Global Financial Crisis: Poverty and Social Protection, available at

<http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=3282&title=social-protection-global-financial-crisis>

ODI Background Note – Putting the ‘social’ back into social protection: A framework for understanding the linkages between economic and social risks for poverty reduction, available at

<http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=3286&title=social-protection-economic-social-risks-poverty-reduction>

"Social Protection in South Asia: A Review", ODI-UNICEF study, available at http://www.socialprotectionasia.org/pdfdoc/Spa_reports.pdf

"Strengthening Social Protection for Children - West and Central Africa", UNICEF study, available at <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/3478-full-report.pdf>

NCAER-PIF STUDY on "Evaluating Performance of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act", available at <http://www.ncaer.org/downloads/Reports/NREGA-report-downloadpage.htm>

"Globalization and Informal Jobs in Developing Countries", a joint study of the International Labour Office and the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization focuses on the linkages between globalization and informal employment in developing countries, and how well designed trade and decent work policies can contribute to more favourable employment outcomes. For more details, see http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/jobs_devel_countries_e.pdf

"Perspectives on Equitable Development", a recently released book by S. Mahendra Dev and N. Chandrasekhara Rao (Academic Foundation Publishers, October 2009), comprises a collection of research papers written by eminent economists and social scientists. Six interrelated themes are explored through the articles in the collection - macroeconomic performance and policies; employment, food security, and poverty; physical and social infrastructure; agriculture and rural industrialization; foreign direct investment in manufacturing and services; and socio-political issues in the reform process. Emphasizing the need for inclusive growth in India and around the world, this volume highlights the necessity of the social protection agenda.

About SPA:

[Social Protection in Asia](#) is a research, networking and advocacy programme that aims to create a regional voice and develop a research base for advocating innovative and informed policy on Social Protection issues.

We welcome your contributions

The SPA Network aims to keep people informed of required and requested information and to facilitate collaboration on social protection. To do this, the network needs you! If you would like to share your experiences, express your views or share information, for example, if there is an event you think network members would be interested in, please contact info@socialprotectionasia.org

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The SPA programme is managed by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (www.ids.ac.uk/go/centreforsocialprotection) at the University of Sussex, UK and the Institute for Human Development (www.ihdindia.org), New Delhi, India.

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