

## COMMUNIQUE

By Network for Transformative Social Protection

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Even before the global economic meltdown and the recent natural disasters that deepened the crisis in many countries in Asia, the poor have already been reeling in poverty. These crises impacted heavily on the lives and livelihood of people—depriving millions of their basic human rights to guaranteed jobs and livelihood, adequate food, and essential services like healthcare, housing, education, safe water, and electricity. Hungry, homeless and without access to services, the poor are usually at the receiving end of any state or non-state effort to get them out of misery; they are often seen as part of the problem but ironically, the decision-making and implementation of the solution do not involve them.

With the increasing number of poor and vulnerable groups in deplorable condition needing urgent and humane response, we members of social movements in Southeast Asia have come together on 12-13 October 2009 in the “Southeast Asia Roundtable Strategising Meeting on Transformative Social Protection” to collectively build a people-centered agenda based on the principles of human rights.

As a Network for Transformative Social Protection, we are concerned that the age-old chronic problems of the poor and the vulnerable sectors of the society have not been strategically addressed by our governments. The poor lack not only material needs to live with dignity but also opportunities to participate in shaping their future, as the corporate-led economy view people as either forces of production or as potential markets, not as humans with basic rights including right to social protection.

Especially in this period of crises, every individual’s right to a transformative social protection has to be respected, protected, and fulfilled. People are not passive recipients, they must be central in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the programs to get them out of poverty. Putting into the hands of the few, through privatization, the responsibility of fulfilling the rights of the people to social protection cannot address chronic poverty and inequities.

Transformative social protection demands that the state fulfill its role both as duty bearer and facilitator to ensure that every human being will live with dignity. People will be the driving force in making sure accountable, transparent, participatory, and transformative programs are directed towards this goal. The poor and vulnerable shall be empowered to act for a better future.

**TO OUR GOVERNMENTS**, we strive to present a democratic and rights-based agenda for transformative social protection that advance the principles of equity, inclusion, solidarity, and sustainability.

**ADOPT A LABOR INTENSIVE GROWTH STRATEGY** which does not only create employment, but also nurtures and protects worker’s rights as human rights. State and non-state actors must assist in job placement, job training, and achieving fair and decent wages and social protection measures (like pension for those who have been disabled, displaced, or retired) in accordance with the standards of the International Labor Organization.

### **COMMITMENT AND DECISIVE ACTION ON WOMEN, RURAL AND FARM WORKERS’ RIGHTS**

Under pressure from corporations, women workers’ rights including the rights to guaranteed maternity leave and job return, rural and farm workers should enjoy the same level of rights to employment and social protection; pension is usually forgotten or compromised.

**ENSURE FOOD SECURITY** (also known as food sovereignty, food sustainability, right to food) through universal access to resources (land, forests, sea, farm inputs, capital, extension services). Stop crops conversion to biofuels. Democratise land distribution through farmer cooperatives and grains/crops through grain banks. People’s collective rights to the use and management of resources that sustain their lives must be respected, protected, and fulfilled.

## **ENSURE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SAFE AND QUALITY ESSENTIAL SERVICES**

**Water for all.** Stop the commodification of water, and ensure that everyone has access to clean and potable water to live a decent life.

**Humane shelter and housing** that is decent, affordable, quality, environment-friendly, and with access to other essential services such as water and electricity. Poor people's right to the city must be recognized; towards this goal, draw up a democratic, people-driven development plan that integrates the poor and prioritises in-city housing for low-income settlers. Forced eviction must be immediately stopped. And humane shelter must be ensured in times of disaster.

**Education for all.** Free education must be provided until university. Six percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) must be allocated for education, following the standard set by UNESCO.

**Universal health care.** The same budget allocation of 6 percent of GDP for prevention and cure, for health education, and for reproductive health must be ensured.

One way of ensuring budget for health and education can be by reducing the budget on military and defense.

**Access to affordable and quality electricity service.** Electricity should be made available to all. There must be no discrimination in the access to electricity.

**UNIVERSAL PENSION FOR OLD AGE**, where old people are provided health services and opportunity to be productive citizens who contribute to society's well being. Initiate programs that ensure social inclusion for old people. Extend retirement age for old people who volunteer as productive individuals as long as he/she is willing, fit, and able to work.

**TO THE ASEAN**, we ask that civil society participation and its input in "Development for a United ASEAN" be recognised. We ask the ASEAN Human Rights Commission to conduct a review in all ASEAN member countries on the protection and fulfillment of rights of people to social protection, and to establish mechanism for educating people on human rights at national and regional levels. Lastly, we urge ASEAN and dialogue partners' governments to work out a fair and just mechanism on shared resources management so that people will enjoy their lives with security and development. In the light of heavy flooding in the region, many of which are allegedly caused by big dams, we call that the construction of big dams be stopped and that those whose lives and livelihoods have been negatively affected by these floods be immediately and justly compensated.

**TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE NORTH AND SOUTH**, cooperate with each other in removing barriers among peoples, including policies like the "Return Directive" in Europe that discriminate against migrant workers in their countries. The rights of the workers to form and join trade unions and to negotiate in a collective manner for their rights are crucial. States must immediately adopt, implement, and enforce pro-labor policies.

Recognizing that this is a collective effort, **WE COMMIT** to establish working groups at national and regional levels, and work with other progressives in formulating and pursuing country-specific studies and strategies for transformative social protection (as national policy with guaranteed budget). We also commit to link with Latin-American civil society for best practices on such a campaign.