



GLOBAL COOPERATION NEWSLETTER
June 2013

In this issue:

- **“Social Protection for All: The Disconnect between Global Perspectives and Local Realities”**
- **The Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda released**
- **Useful resources and links**

Feature article: “Social Protection for All: The Disconnect between Global Perspectives and Local Realities” by P.K.Shajahan



The author is Professor at the School of Social Work at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, India. He is currently the Chairperson of the South Asia Centre for Studies in Conflicts, Peace and Human Security. He is also the Coordinator of Social Work Programmes, as well as the Associate Dean of the Social Protection Office at TISS.

Introduction

Social protection is concerned with preventing, managing, and with overcoming situations that adversely affect people’s well-being. In this article I argue that the dominant global discourse on social protection has presented wide gaps in reducing the systemic vulnerabilities of poor and marginalized communities. Secondly, I shall try to situate the appropriate engagement for social work and look for some threads towards future academic and practice engagements in the field of social protection from a social work perspective.

First of all, let me start with an actual case, trying to understand what social protection is through the life experiences of a marginalized woman, Ms. Susheela Bauri¹, from Bauripara in Latulia Block

¹ Name changed to protect the identity of the person. She was interviewed in the context of the Study on Women, Work and Status, part of the project on Right to Work policies in India

in Bankura district of West Bengal, India. Susheela Bauri, 38 years of age, belongs to the Bauri community, which is one of the significant lower-caste communities that account for almost 6% of the West Bengal population. Most of the members of this community live in absolute poverty and with insecure livelihood options.

Susheela was separated from her husband after the death of her nine-month-old baby. The baby was murdered by Susheela's husband because she was a girl-child. Susheela left her in-laws house after the incident and took shelter in her parental home, where her brothers resided. It was her brother who helped her file a case against her husband with the help of a lawyer. She succeeded in putting him behind bars. Susheela felt that she has become an added burden on the extended family, as her brothers had their own families to look after. She, along with her brothers, works in the stone quarry, or she does harvesting work in the fields of the upper castes. Occasionally she takes wage work in her area under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

Even though she works under the scheme, she does not have the mandatory job-card in her own name, because she works as a proxy for her brother. Consequently, the payments of NREGS wages are credited to her brother's account, which he shares partly with Susheela. She has borrowed some money from the SHG in her area and has to repay it through another round of work in the stone crusher site. She feels that she is a parasite in her own parental home.

Now let us look at what social protection means for her...

She cannot get a widow's pension, as she is not a widow. Her husband is still alive but is behind bars. Even in the case of eligible women, one has to be aged between 45 – 65 years to avail oneself of the benefits of a widow's pension. She is neither a widow nor does she fit the age criteria for that status. For those who qualify to be the beneficiaries of that scheme, the amount one would get is only Rs. 200/- per month, which is not even two days of the National Floor-Level Daily Minimum Wage in the country. Even after she turns 65, she might not be able to receive an old-age pension, as she does not have her name on a ration card² to prove her identity. She also does not possess the recently launched National Identity Card known as AADHAR.

The critical questions surrounding social policy measures for ensuring social protection in this case are:

- Is NREGS a tool of social protection for her? She does not have her name in the job-card, but still she works in NREGS and her brother gets the wage. Susheela did not even know what the minimum wage is.
- Does the widow's pension or old-age pension provide social protection for her?
- When she works in the stone quarry, is she protected if an accident happens?
- What does unorganized worker's social security mean to her?

Here policies and programmes remain as stand-alone pieces. They do not address the vulnerability of thousands of women, children and men in the country. NREGS is the world's largest wage employment programme for the poor and is considered as an innovative social protection scheme. We in India also have the world's largest school feeding programme, known as the Mid-Day-Meal

² The Ration Card is considered as an identity document for several purposes, though it is meant to enable the distribution of subsidized food grains to the poor.

(MDM) Scheme. MDM is aimed at providing cooked meals in primary schools, whereby the practice of poor families sending their children out to work for want of food is discouraged and the children are encouraged to attend schools. Both of the above-mentioned schemes became necessary, as poverty and exclusion are widely prevalent in the country, where the poor could be accommodated neither in the agriculture sector nor in the labour market. Various committees set up to study the poor and vulnerable in the country have come up with different data sets, just as the UNDP and the World Bank have done as well. The fact of the matter is that there are no less than 450 million poor people in the country. As per official data, there are 20 million working children in India, who are also not in school. Informal sources estimate the depth of child labour at no less than 50 million, next only to Sub-Saharan Africa. According to ILO, 80% of child labour in India is in the agriculture sector. Thus, any statistic about the poor in the country will be the biggest in the world, which is not a situation to take pride in.

Economic liberalization and growth have apparently not touched 70% of the Indian population. The economic structure of most of the developing countries, which are dominated by the informal sector, makes more difficult the expansion and universalization of social protection measures. Added to this, the structural adjustment and liberalization trend have also provided an ideological basis for a minimalist state that does not attach a high priority to social protection measures. Social protection must aim to tackle the insecurity trap by protecting poor people from shocks and reducing their extreme vulnerability; and it must contribute to transforming economic and social relations in ways that strengthen the longer-term livelihood prospects of the poor.

Thus, social protection as understood in the developed countries remains rudimentary in nature (in terms of both conceptualization and delivery) in the developing countries. With the growing acknowledgement of the multidimensional nature of poverty and the importance of social protection, it is obvious that there is a need to approach and craft social protection policies as 'developmental', as against their current treatment as 'residual' social policies (such as NREGS). Such a mainstreaming is also in conformity with the thinking that social protection policies ought to be 'transformative' in content and practice, as they mediate using the concepts of rights and entitlements, inclusion, citizenship, collectivity of the poor and good governance.

The Role of the Social Work Profession and the Way Forward

As professional social work is founded on humanitarian and egalitarian values and seeks to address issues of social injustice and inequality, the concept of social protection, if it is understood as a means to achieve social justice, can probably provide a meaningful framework for analyzing social realities and designing possible engagements with those realities. However, the trans-disciplinary profession of social work has not been adequately engaging with those social realities, neither in its curricular inputs nor in the domain of practice. Not only are the issues of poverty and marginalization missing in education and practice, there have also been very few research projects undertaken by social work educators in these fields. Thus, an iterative process of indigenous knowledge production is glaringly missing in many social work education programmes.

I have three simple suggestions for improving the practice of social work as a profession.

One: Faculty and student research needs to be aimed at the concerns of social protection and social justice. This can lead to indigenous knowledge production in social work practice. Bringing social work out of the so called *professional imperialism*, as Bughardt (1982)³ has put it, is possible only by bringing it closer to the social realities of today. Such indigenous knowledge

3 Bughardt, S (1982), *The Other Side of Organizing*, Cambridge, Mass, Skenmann.

production could lead to curricular changes and also to a reorientation of field education components.

Two: Policy practice is yet another area in which social workers need to get engaged. Strong primary research builds the foundations for policy practice. Social protection for poor and vulnerable communities can only be achieved through policy practice, as several policies in a neo-liberal frame are essentially accentuating the inequalities and vulnerabilities of communities.

Three: Networking, advocacy and social action are also important areas for social workers to engage in. So far, social workers have been only marginally engaged in several social movements in the country. Civil society and people's pressure groups can bring considerable change in transforming people's vulnerabilities into opportunities.

Conclusion

The socio-economic vulnerabilities discussed earlier and several other socio-economic and political issues also touched upon present a reality in which poverty, marginalization and social exclusion are becoming the order of the day alongside the growth story. Most of the problems of Indian society, including poverty, exclusion and marginalization, have their roots in the unequal social structure and power dynamics. Thus, an analysis of the social structure and the institutionalization of inequality and social exclusion, using the broad lens of caste, class, gender, religion, ethnicity and nationality, should become the conceptual base of any social engagement with people.

At the end, social workers should be able to detect and address the pertinent inequities present in the Indian "biographies of development", which are highlighted by such terms as the "informalization of work", the "feminization of poverty", the "urbanization of poverty" and so on.

The trans-disciplinary nature of social work, which allows for the synthesis of multiple knowledge domains and the amalgamation of practice skills, needs to be nurtured through research into the areas of the larger social realities of inequality and the absence of social protection for vulnerable groups in the society.

The opinions in the article are those of the author and are not necessarily shared by the ICSW Management Committee.

Opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect views of the ICSW Management Committee

The Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda released

The High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda appointed by the U.N. Secretary-General has submitted its highly anticipated report to the Secretary-General at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

In advance of the release of its report, the Panel characterized its discussions as frank and productive, and with a strong unity of purpose. The imperative need for a renewed Global Partnership that enables a transformative, people-centered and planet-sensitive development agenda, realized through the equal partnership of all stakeholders, was stressed.

It was specifically noted that the Panel came together with a sense of optimism and a deep respect for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to the report, the 13 years since the millennium have seen the fastest reduction in poverty ever in human history: there are half a billion fewer people living below the international poverty line of \$1.25 a day. Child death rates have fallen

by more than 30%, with about three million children's lives saved each year compared to 2000. Deaths from malaria have fallen by one quarter. This substantial progress has been driven by a combination of economic growth, better policies, and the global commitment to the MDGs, which, according to the report, set out "an inspirational rallying cry" for the whole world. It is noted that, given this remarkable success, it would be a mistake to simply tear up the MDGs and start from scratch. As world leaders agreed at Rio in 2012, new goals and targets need to be grounded in respect for universal human rights, and finish the job that the MDGs started. Central to this is eradicating extreme poverty from the face of the earth by 2030. This is something that leaders have promised time and again throughout history. Today, it can actually be done. So a new development agenda should carry forward the spirit of the Millennium Declaration and the best of the MDGs, with a practical focus on things like poverty, hunger, water, sanitation, education and health care. But to fulfill the vision of promoting sustainable development, it is a must to go beyond the MDGs.

The report admits the limitations and shortcomings of the MDGs. They did not focus enough on reaching the very poorest and most excluded people. They were silent on the devastating effects of conflict and violence on development. The importance to development of good governance and institutions that guarantee the rule of law, free speech and open and accountable government was not included, nor the need for inclusive growth to provide jobs. Most seriously, the MDGs fell short by not integrating the economic, social, and environmental aspects of sustainable development, as envisaged in the Millennium Declaration, and by not addressing the need to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production. The result was that the environment and development were never properly brought together. People were working hard – but often separately – on interlinked problems.

According to the report, the Panel asked some simple questions regarding the shape of the new goals—"what to keep, what to amend, and what to add"—doing that in face-to-face meetings as well as through surveys, community interviews, and polling over mobile phones and the internet. As a result, the opinions of thousands of people from all over the world-- young people, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, indigenous people and local communities, migrants, experts, business, trade unions and governments were taken into account.

The massive changes in the world since the year 2000 and the changes that are likely to unfold by 2030 were considered. There are a billion more people today, with the world's population at seven billion, and another billion expected by 2030. More than half of the world's population now lives in cities. Private investment in developing countries now dwarfs aid flows. The number of mobile phone subscriptions has risen from fewer than one billion to more than six billion. Thanks to the internet, seeking business or information on the other side of the world is now routine for many. Yet inequality remains a huge issue, and opportunity is not open to all. The 1.2 billion poorest people account for only 1 per cent of the world's consumption, while the billion richest consume 72 per cent.

According to the report, there is one major trend – climate change – which will determine whether or not we can deliver on our ambitions. Scientific evidence of the direct threat from climate change has mounted. The stresses of unsustainable production and consumption patterns have become clear, in areas like deforestation, water scarcity, food waste and high carbon emissions. Losses from natural disasters – including drought, floods, and storms – have increased at an alarming rate. People living in poverty will suffer first and worst from climate change. The cost of taking action now will be much less than the cost of dealing with the consequences later.

In the quest for a bold yet practical vision for development beyond 2015, the Panel covered substantial ground. Discussing household poverty -- the daily reality of life on the margins of survival — the Panel considered the many dimensions of poverty, including health, education and

livelihoods, as well as the demands for more justice, better accountability and an end to violence against women. Inspiring stories of how individuals and communities have worked their way to prosperity were also noted.

The central importance of a new spirit to guide a global partnership for a people-centered and planet-sensitive agenda, based on the principle of our common humanity, was underscored. The Panel agreed to push developed countries to fulfill their side of the bargain – by honoring their aid commitments, but also by reforming their trade, tax and transparency policies, by paying more attention to better regulating global financial and commodity markets and by leading the way towards sustainable development. It also agreed that developing countries have done much to finance their own development, and will be able to do more as incomes rise. Agreement was reached on the need to manage the world's consumption and production patterns in more sustainable and equitable ways. Above all, the Panel agreed that a new vision must be universal: offering hope – but also responsibilities – to everyone in the world.

The report sets out 12 universal goals, along with 54 associated targets aimed at translating the essence of the goals into practical outcomes:

1. End poverty
2. Empower girls and women and achieve gender equality
3. Provide quality education and lifelong learning
4. Ensure healthy lives
5. Ensure food security and good nutrition
6. Achieve universal access to water and sanitation
7. Secure sustainable energy
8. Create jobs, sustainable livelihoods, and equitable growth
9. Manage natural resource assets sustainably
10. Ensure good governance and effective institutions
11. Ensure stable and peaceful societies
12. Create a global enabling environment and catalyze long-term finance

Convinced of the need for a new paradigm, the Panel noted that business-as-usual is not an option. The Panel concluded that the post-2015 agenda is a universal agenda, and it needs to be driven by five big, transformative shifts:

1. Leave no one behind. "We should ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities".

2. Put sustainable development at the core." For twenty years, the international community has aspired to integrate the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability, but no country has yet achieved this. We must act *now* to halt the alarming pace of climate change and environmental degradation, which pose unprecedented threats to humanity."

3. Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth. "We call for a quantum leap forward in economic opportunities and a profound economic transformation to end extreme poverty and improve livelihoods. This means a rapid shift to sustainable patterns of consumption and production -- harnessing innovation, technology, and the potential of private business to create more value and drive sustainable and inclusive growth."

4. Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all. "Freedom from fear, conflict and violence is the most fundamental human right and the essential foundation for building peaceful and prosperous societies. At the same time, people the world over expect their governments to be honest, accountable, and responsive to their needs. We are calling for a

fundamental shift – to recognize peace and good governance as core elements of well-being, not optional extras.”

5. Forge a new global partnership. A new spirit of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual accountability must underpin the post-2015 agenda.” A new partnership should be based on a common understanding of our shared humanity, underpinning mutual respect and mutual benefit in a shrinking world. This partnership should involve governments but also include others: people living in poverty, those with disabilities, women, civil society and indigenous and local communities, traditionally marginalized groups, multilateral institutions, local and national government, the business community, academia and private philanthropy. “

Overall, the Panel reaffirmed its vision to end extreme poverty in all its forms in the context of sustainable development and to have in place the building blocks of sustained prosperity for all. For more information please go to: <http://www.post2015hlp.org/the-report/>

Useful resources and links

Defining social protection as a collection of programs that address risk, vulnerability, inequality and poverty through a system of transfers in cash or in kind, this paper written by Ravi Kanbur and published by the World Bank argues that social protection needs to be on the post-2015 agenda as a key element of the discourse. Providing an empirical overview of social protection around the world and focusing on the goal of ending poverty, the paper estimates that social protection programs are currently preventing 150 million people from falling into poverty.

For more details go to:

http://econ.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64165259&piPK=64165421&theSitePK=469382&menuPK=64166093&entityID=000158349_20130530132533

The content of this Global Newsletter may be freely reproduced or cited provided the source is acknowledged. Views do not necessarily represent policies of ICSW.

Newsletter Editor: Sergei Zelenev, Executive Director
Address: ICSW, P.O. Box 28957, Plot 4, Berkeley Lane, Off Lugard Avenue,
Entebbe, Uganda

Phone + +1 718 796 7417, +256414321150
E-mail: szelenev@icsw.org, icsw@icsw.org
Website www.icsw.org;

If you wish to cease receiving this newsletter, please click 'here' providing your name and email address