



SOCIAL WATCH E-NEWSLETTER

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[Social Watch India launches its Report on Governance and Development](#)



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[Forum on Minority Issues discusses participation in economic life](#)

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[Call for action for the Peoples Summit for Sustainable Development - Rio+20](#)

Civil society organizations and networks in Brazil gathered around the Brazilian Civil Society Facilitating Committee for Rio+20, are calling for global mobilizations to build a joint civil society strategy towards the UN Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012. They argue that governments failed to trigger the deep and necessary changes that cannot be postponed once more to a distant future. It is up to organized civil society to call the world's attention on the gravity of the deadlock humanity is facing and the need to shift the development paradigm.

[Arjun Karki selected as recipient of the 14th Justice and Peace Award in 2011](#)

Dr. Arjun Karki, President of Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), International Coordinator of LDC Watch and former member of Social Watch Coordinating Committee has been awarded the '14th Justice and Peace Award 2011' by the Bishop Tji Hak-Soon Justice and Peace Foundation based in South Korea for his exceptional contribution for the protection of the human rights and the development of impoverished and marginalized communities in Nepal and in other LDCs.

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Prepared by civil society and academicians, the report presents a holistic picture of the status of governance and

democracy in India. It seeks to fill a significant policy gap existing between the institutions of governance and the institutional level. The report examines the sensitivity, efficiency and efficacy of the institutions of governance in ensuring rights and delivering public services.

The report will be presented on Tuesday December 21st, 2010 at India Islamic Cultural Centre, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi.

The ultimate test of effective governance is the fulfilment of its commitments to the citizens ensuring delivery of public services right up to the excluded and the marginalised sections of society. Institutions and their functionaries are the vehicles which carry the governance agenda forward. They represent the connecting links between the State and the citizens in terms of programmes of development. Therefore citizens must reclaim the institutions to serve their interests by participating actively at all levels of governance. It is thus important for a civil society initiative like [Social Watch](#) to intervene at different levels through constant and critical evaluation of the performance of these institutions and serve as an effective advocacy tool.

In this backdrop the Citizens' Report on Governance and Development 2010, evaluates the four key institutions of governance in India: the Parliament, the judiciary, the policy-making institutions (the executive) and the institutions of local self-government.

Through the lens of fundamental economic and social values-such as Rights, Development, Freedom and Security- this report examines the sensitivity, efficiency and efficacy of the institutions in enforcing rights and ensuring delivery of public services.

While reviewing the major developments of the year and probing the dynamics of democratisation, the 2010 Report also:

- highlights the casual and inadequate manner in which parliament functions;
- analyses various reform measures and welfare schemes adopted by the government while cautioning against putting public resources into private projects, under the mantra of public - private partnership;
- examines some significant court verdicts and argues that solutions for the judicial system should have a demand-orientation, which protects the poor; and
- observes that the State Governments' performance in the process of decentralisation leaves much to be desired, despite the consensus about objectives.

By now, this annual report-unique to the Indian political landscape-has developed into a fine tool for individual citizens and organised civil society to make government institutions more accountable. The latest edition will generate a healthy and constructive debate on the entire process of governance in India and will be welcomed by policy-makers, lawyers, scholars studying governance, journalists, civil society activists and concerned citizens.

[See invitation](#)

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National Social Watch is a network of organisations, citizens and communities with the aim of monitoring governance in the country.

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The United Nations' Cancun climate conference which adopted a text early on Dec 11 had a strange outcome.

It was acclaimed by many for reviving the spirit of multilateralism in the climate change system, because another collapse after the disastrous failure of the Copenhagen talks a year ago would have knocked another hole into the reputation in the UN Climate Convention.

Most delegations congratulated one another for agreeing to a document in Cancun. But this Cancun text has also been accused of falling far short, or even going backwards, in controlling the Greenhouse Gas emissions that cause climate change.

The Cancun conference suffered an early blow from Japan's announcement that it would never ever agree to making another commitment under the Kyoto Protocol.

The conference never recovered from that blow. The final text failed to ensure the survival of the protocol, though it sets some terms of reference for continuing the talks next year.

The Cancun meeting in fact made it more likely for the developed countries to shift from the Kyoto Protocol and its binding regime of emission reduction commitments, to a voluntary system in which each country only makes pledges on how much it will reduce its emissions.

The Cancun text also recognised the emission-reduction targets that developed countries listed under the Copenhagen Accord.

But these are overall such poor targets that many scientific reports warn that the developed countries by 2020 may decrease their emissions by only a little or even increase their level.

The world is on track for temperature rise of three to five degrees, which would lead to a catastrophe.

When the dust settles after the Cancun, a careful analysis will find that its text may have given the multilateral climate system a shot in the arm and positive feelings among most participants because there was something to take home, but that it also failed to save the planet from climate change and helped pass the burden onto developing countries.

Read the complete article in The Star: <http://thestar.com.my/columnists/story.asp?file=/2010/12/13/columnists/globaltrends/7611715&sec=globaltrends>

[Forum on Minority Issues discusses participation in economic life](#)

"Affirmative action is key to overcome discrimination and promote an active participation of minorities in economic life, but trade and investment rules are making affirmative action difficult or even impossible to implement" argued Roberto Bissio, in representation of Social Watch, during the Forum on Minority Issues that took place in Geneva last Wednesday, December 15.

"The principle of non discrimination in Human Rights law and practice admits and even requires affirmative action to achieve results, in terms of human capabilities, that ensure equal opportunities" explained Bissio.

"In trade and investment law, on the contrary, non discrimination means legal equality among the unequal. Individuals and corporations, large or small, national or foreign, are deemed equal and governments are forbidden from applying affirmative action by, for example, imposing performance requirements on foreign investors or tilting procurement rules in favour of those who employ workers from vulnerable sectors".

In the process of advocating for social, economic and cultural rights and monitoring how governments are implementing their international commitments on gender justice and poverty eradication, Social Watch has produced evidence from a variety of countries on the importance of "affirmative action" to promote specific vulnerable groups. Historically, discrimination based on ethnicity, caste, language or religion has produced deep inequities. Equal treatment under the law, while necessary, is not enough.

"The tools of affirmative action can be many", said Bissio. "Governments can subsidize certain sectors of the economy where minorities concentrate, they can exempt certain activities from taxation, or reduce their tax burden, they can channel government procurement to buy from specific providers, they can demand investors to hire a certain quota of workers from members of certain minorities. This is a very common practice in many countries for persons living with disabilities".

"Yet, in the last two decades, bilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements have proliferated that may severely constrain the ability of governments to apply these tools of affirmative action. Paradoxically, this is being done in the name of "non discrimination". The principle of non discrimination in Human Rights law and practice admits and even requires affirmative action to achieve results, in terms of human capabilities, that ensure equal opportunities".

"The global financial and economic crisis of the last two years has had a disproportionate impact on developing countries, even when those had no responsibility at all in creating the crisis and on minorities within these countries. This is due to a variety of transfer mechanisms, such as a decline in volume and price of export commodities, less incoming tourism and a reduction in remittances by workers abroad, which in turn lead to increased indebtedness of many countries".

Large debt overhang acts as an impediment to the fiscal capacity of governments to meet their human rights obligations. The consequences of such indebtedness and their impacts on the progressive realization of economic and social rights and the rights of minorities cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, the IMF continues to condition disbursement of debt relief funds on the reduction of fiscal deficits, despite a broad consensus on the need for fiscal stimulus actions to restore growth. "As a result, several governments have been left with no room or freedom to engage in the countercyclical measures necessary to support economic and social rights and the rights of minorities" he stated.

"Public expenditure reductions, fiscal consolidation plans, public sector wage cuts, the phased elimination of subsidies, capping pension payments and postponing social benefits are just a few ways such restrictive fiscal measures are carried out, posing clear threats to the measures in favour of minorities. By preventing, rather than supporting, the type of countercyclical spending (and autonomous policy space) highly required in times of crisis, pro-cyclical conditionalities undermine minority rights".

"This context of deep, interlocking economic, social and environmental calamities worldwide hands us an historic opportunity and indeed a generational responsibility to rethink the manner in which decision-making in economic policy has so far occurred, not only to alleviate the impact of this financial crisis but to re-structure our broken global economy with concrete economic policies founded in human rights norms and principles".

A minority rights policy response does not presuppose a certain type of economic system, nor preordain detailed fiscal or monetary policies in all contexts. Yet, human rights do provide a clear and universally-recognized framework for guidance in the design, implementation and monitoring of economic policies and programs. Human rights-centered economic policies which generate real equal access to the benefits and ensures shared burdens from the harms of economic activity-protecting people and the environment-are not only necessary as a matter of morality and justice. They are crucial to ensuring a more sustainable, more equal and more resilient economic system in the trying times ahead".

Read the speech in full including recommendations: <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/12589>

[Call for action for the Peoples Summit for Sustainable Development - Rio+20](#)

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Read the call for action:

We call attention for the important mobilization and building of autonomous civil society strategies that consider initiatives and processes of the organizations and social movements, as well as the influence on the official process that takes place at the heart of the UN.

20 years ago, Brazilian organizations and social movements, supported by different international movements and networks, came together to face the challenge of promoting the Global Forum 1992, a true citizen global forum, which opened space and visibility for social actors in this debate and also for social control of the emerging themes of Rio-92. That moment set the beginning of a cycle of UN Conferences on Sustainable Development, as a result of the alerts and demands of a social and environmental movement that had turned out to be planetary.

The situation of the planet and the world population is serious. Poverty, misery and inequality persist and are reproduced, exacerbated by the environmental and climate crises. The despoilment of the planet goes together with the marginalization and extermination of many peoples and social groups. While we face a civilization crisis, governments and many sectors of national societies, attached to immediate benefit and blind to the future, cling to a model of

economy, governance and values that are old-fashioned and paralyzing.

The [official Rio+20 event](#) will discuss green economy and international governance for sustainable development. It is high time for economic systems to incorporate principles, values and tools that ensure justice and social equity, as well as environmental sustainability and integrity. To build global governance in the transition to an including economy, that is fair and respects ecologic processes and limits is also our concern, but our perspectives are certainly different from those supported by the majority of governments, trading and financing corporations and industrial and agricultural sectors. While some of the dominant groups recognize the need for deep and urgent changes, we see large corporations, governments and international conferences putting the market as the single central player, weakening the role of the public power.

A sincere assessment of the commitments on sustainable development by the UN Conferences would show, despite of some specific advance, the governments' failure to trigger the deep and necessary changes that cannot be postponed once more to a distant future. It is up to organized civil society to call the world's attention on the gravity of the deadlock humanity is facing and also on the impossibility of the dominant economic, political and cultural systems to point out outcomes for the crisis. But it is also its responsibility to define and show other possible ways.

If there's a risk of transforming the agenda of sustainable development into a stage to re-invent the dominant economic system, that only relies on market opportunities and makes the structural causes of environmental degradation and social inequalities even worse, there is also the emergence of a new paradigm. This comes from a global movement that recognizes the umbilical link of humanity with nature and the populations who develop in harmony with Mother Earth and teach us that another way is possible, enhancing the vision of sustainability for another model of society, based on other production and consumption patterns, on social, environmental, economic, political and gender justice, on the sovereignty of peoples and the solidarity among peoples and individuals, and free of all kinds of domination.

Thus, the Brazilian Facilitator Committee calls all civil society networks and social movements of the country, the region and the world, to turn the Rio+20 into:

- An opportunity for local, sector, national and global processes of political discussion: so as to turn the Rio+20 into a climax point of this process, which shall keep on strengthening a huge movement of social transformation;
- A process-event with own identity: so as to highlight the role of several civil society groups and peoples of the planet, their struggle for rights and social and environmental justice; to strengthen cooperation, plural organization, unity and integration within the diversities of civil society;
- A moment of strengthening the social and environmental struggle: so as to show the challenges of the city of Rio de Janeiro as a place of struggle, conflicts and dreams and which is being a laboratory of large interventions for the Soccer World Cup of 2014 and the Olympic Games of 2016;
- A great opportunity for social mobilization: so as to debate, build actions and make the Rio+20 lead to a paradigm change and to an effective implementation of sustainable development.

The Facilitating Committee will enhance Brazilian dialogues and networking, and will work together with partners, networks and civil society organizations wishing to engage in the preparation of an international participative and plural event during Rio+20. (Source: [Inesc](#))

Rio de Janeiro, November 11th, 2010

Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG), Brazilian Trade Workers Union (CUT), Brazilian Forum of Solidarity Economy (FBES), Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development (FBOMS), Group for Reflection and Support of the World Social Forum Process (GRAP), Brazilian Network for Peoples' Integration (REBRIP), Brazilian Network on Multilateral Financing Institutions (Rede Brasil).

More information: [Facilitating Committee for Rio+20](#)

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Commemorating the late Catholic Bishop Daniel Tji (Hak-Soon), the Award seeks to acknowledge individuals and organisations in Asia working vigorously and courageously towards democracy, human rights, justice and peace, and showing deep commitment towards poor and oppressed peoples.

Dr. Karki has been actively engaged in development politics as a youth activist, academic, human rights leader and social activist. While implementing rural infrastructure projects at the grassroots level in Nepal, he has also been deeply involved with defending human rights of all citizens, and campaigning for democracy in Nepal. His extensive activism at local, national, regional and international levels embodies his belief that policy advocacy is key in producing the necessary paradigm shifts in the social and economic development system, in order to achieve genuine development from below.

SOCIAL WATCH IS AN INTERNATIONAL NGO WATCHDOG NETWORK MONITORING POVERTY ERADICATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

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