



SOCIAL WATCH E-NEWSLETTER

Issue 18 - December 23, 2010

In view of the year-end recess and to enable the staff to have some rest, the next issue of the Social Watch newsletter will appear on 14 January 2011. We wish all our readers best wishes for the season and a Happy New Year.

[A message to Watchers around the world](#)



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Continue reading the message from Social Watch co-chairs Emily Sikazwe and Tanya Dawkins...

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Dear Watchers:

Greetings! As 2011 approaches, there is much for which to be thankful even as we prepare ourselves for the important work ahead. As we look forward, we know that our struggle for human rights and dignity for all continues; even as new fronts of struggle and opportunities for justice emerge. The mission and work of Social Watch is more urgent and timely than ever.

Once again, this year's annual report, *After the Fall: Time for a New Deal*, has brought a much needed dose of truth, reality and vision to the debates about governance, finance and what is *really* needed to advance human rights, gender justice and poverty eradication in our countries and in the world. Watchers have continued to raise their voices and worked tirelessly to build power on behalf of this work in every corner of the world.

As we speak of tireless efforts, we know that no year-end message would be complete without expressing special appreciation for those of our Secretariat. In ways both visible and invisible, our gifted coordinator, Roberto Bissio and his talented team of colleagues demonstrate their creativity, skill and unwavering commitment to our mission by ensuring that Social Watch's work advances every day.

As Watchers around the world, your energy, actions and ideas are the heart and soul the Social Watch Network. We look forward to working with you as we finalize our plans for the 2011 General Assembly in the Philippines, prepare for key upcoming international gatherings including the World Social Forum, CSW, Rio +20 and work to strengthen our advocacy efforts on multiple fronts.

Because of the work of Watchers, we look to the New Year with a sense pride, hope and eagerness to meet the challenges and opportunities that 2011 will bring. Together we will continue to build this powerful movement for human rights, gender justice and poverty eradication around the world.

On behalf of the Coordinating Committee and the millions who benefit from your efforts at home and abroad every day, we thank you.

In solidarity and with best wishes for 2011,

Emily Sikazwe, Women for Change (Zambia)
Co-Chair, Social Watch

Tanya Dawkins, Global-Local Links Project (USA)
Co-Chair, Social Watch

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In the context of the preparations for the Rio + 20 Summit, humanity is at a critical juncture: time has come to open up new ways to move ahead, to learn lessons from the world crises -economic, financial, climate and food- and to re-think our goals and strategies for development and social progress, in the South as well as in the North. In this regard, the annual international Social Watch report, based on reports made by citizens' groups and independent coalitions, will become a key player in the discussion on sustainable development.

The Social Watch Accra Assembly, in October 2009 shaped the network's strategy and the framework of activities for the current period. On that occasion, the assembly reaffirmed the network's commitment to peace, social, economic, environment and gender justice, and to the right of all people not to be poor. Also, the assembly recognized climate change as a threat to the very survival of our planet and that, based on the notion of environmental justice, Social Watch will be contributing to the current climate negotiations, an approach founded on its social and gender justice principles.

Abiding by these principles, Social Watch is currently promoting Rethinking Development and Progress , an alliance of civil society organizations whose purpose is to reflect on development perspectives. This group is made up of 15 civil society activist leaders, experts and academics from all over the world. It will evaluate conventional and alternative models for development and well-being, reconsider development indicators and goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), draw conclusions for future development strategies, and make specific recommendations for policies for the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.

The time between the Summits in 2010 and 2012 provides a unique window of opportunity to reconsider the current development paradigm and to develop strategies towards a holistic, rights-based approach of global development and well-being. The Group will contribute to this process of rethinking.

While inclusive growth will mean rebalancing the private sector with the interests of citizens and the states' obligations to promote human rights and provide a "social floor" for all (and this in turn requires a global investment in climate security, food security, social protection and employment creation in developing countries), to reach sustainable development, its three pillars (environmental, economic and social) should be targeted.

However, this is just the beginning. A good portion of the evidence to be considered in this reflection process will come from the Social Watch Report 2011, whose might resides in the fact that national Social Watch organizations from all over the world provide concrete information about the real needs for development in each country, about what the main obstacles are and about which alternative proposals or views are presented by civil society in each country. The experiences at the national level collected in the Report 2011 will help demonstrate the extent to which the current development model aggravates social injustice.

To demonstrate let's consider global warming. This environmental factor was identified by the Accra assembly as a threat to the very survival of the planet. All around the world rising temperatures affect human lives, but it is the disadvantaged who suffer the most. Women, people of color, low-income, and Indigenous communities are affected by compromised health, financial burdens, and social and cultural disruptions due to climate change.

They are the first to experience the negative impacts of climate change such as heat-related illnesses and death, respiratory illness, infectious diseases, unaffordable rises in energy costs, and extreme natural disasters. Not only do they bear disproportionate burdens from climate change itself, but also from ill-designed policies to prevent climate change and the side effects of the energy systems that cause it as well.

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Bihar Social Watch, together with other citizen groups released a report focused on the education of Muslim children in one of the poorest states of India. Only 40 per cent of Muslim children complete their primary education in Bihar, while less than one fourth are able to finish education at the middle school level.

Non-government organizations Bihar Social Watch, Hunger Free Bihar Campaign and Vada Na Tod jointly released a report titled "Millennium Goals by 2015" at Bihar. The report laid special emphasis on educating Muslim children.

Only 40.7 per cent children of the Muslim community in Bihar, India complete their primary education, while 23.7 per cent are able to finish education at the middle school level. As far as high school education is concerned, only 16.1 per cent of them can afford to go through it. These worrying figures were revealed in a report "Education and Literacy Among Muslim Children" in the state.

The report has detailed almost all the aspects of education among the children of the minority community, including its approach and thought towards education, the condition of Madarsa system in the state and the issue of medium of instruction.

Eminent social thinker, Prafulla Kumar Sahu of Bhubaneswar along with Imtiyaz Ahmad, director of Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, released the report in Patna, capital of Bihar state, last October. It has been written by social activist Ali Imam and published by Bihar Social watch. Speaking on the occasion, Sahu said, "Going by the data, there is a dire need to strengthen education among the Muslim children. They need to be brought, to the mainstream. Government support as well as the Madarsa system of education will have to be strengthened".

Ahmad on his part called for a holistic solution to the problem of illiteracy among Muslim.

"There are several reasons for illiteracy among them. The major one is the poverty-illiteracy cycle due to which children are forced to discontinue their education. The report focuses on Bihar and can be a beginning of a positive approach to provide solutions to the burning issue".

The author of the report lamented the absence of definitive and separate data on the Muslim community. "The census and other surveys should have proper indicators to bring such facts to light. The civil society should also understand the situation and help change it. problems of scheduled castes and tribes, backward castes and other communities are talked much in the state, but nobody touches the real issues like this confronting the Muslim".

Imam also said that the report is based on secondary data available with institutions, but hoped to use primary data in the future documents.

National Social Watch national coordinator Himanshu Jha said: "The present condition of education among Muslim children is pathetic. However, the state government has appointed 11,458 Urdu teachers in the past four years. This is not enough, there is a need to do more."

Jha also said: "The Muslim community, especially in backward areas, have finally realized that education empowers. More people are coming forward to educate their children in the formal schooling system."

Coordinator of Bihar Social Watch, Pramod Kumar Singh, Himanshu Jha of National Social Watch Coalition, Gulam Jilani of Idara Sharia and many social activists affiliated to non-governmental organizations were in the presentation.

(Source: Hindustantimes, The Telegraph India)

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Europe, with its social support policies, is often held up as a good model for a system of social security that enables people to have access to a least a minimum standard of living and development. Yet poverty and social exclusion are a reality for a large number of Europeans. Up to 17% of people in the EU (approximately 80 million people in 2008) live below the poverty threshold.

2010 was the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion following the Treaty of Lisbon that establishes the eradication of poverty as the principle objective of the EU's development policy, and sets the framework for the EU's cooperation with all developing countries.

The global economic crisis has struck all European countries resulting in massive job losses across the continent. Yet, European governments - which are now heavily indebted after helping bankers and industrialists to mitigate their losses, incurred as a result of poor decisions made in pursuit of quick financial returns - have chosen to cut social expenditure.

The thematic report on labour market impacts, by Janine Leschke looks into Two paradigmatic cases - Germany and Spain and concludes that that active labour policies have proved their worth during the crisis, and should be maintained and strengthened.

On the other hand, the report on access to healthcare by Dorota Sienkiewicz from the European Public Health Alliance argues that, despite the EU's commitment, access to health is only 'universal' in principle.

Cesare Ottolini from the International Alliance of Inhabitants and Jason Nardi from Social Watch Italy maintain that lack of access to adequate housing remains a significant problem in Europe, despite the fact that EU Member States have ratified international treaties and conventions that recognise and protect the right to housing.

Oxfam International and the European Women's Lobby analyse the situation of women living in poverty and social exclusion in the European Union.

As a follow-up to the European Social Watch Report 2009 that focused on migrants as development actors, Pablo Sanchez from December 18 argues that a coherent labour migration policy depends on the successful integration of migrant workers and members of their families into the host society.

Parallel to its efforts to eradicate poverty internally, Europe has a responsibility, based on its economic development history and its technical expertise, to assist developing countries in their own efforts. Kinda Mohamadieh and Ziad Abdel Samad from the Arab NGO Network for Development examine the role of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership that seems so far to focus exclusively on the economic partnership, leaving social aspects aside.

Roberto Bissio, Social Watch Coordinator, argues that recognition in the Outcome document of the UN Summit reviewing the Millennium Development Goals of the need for a social protection floor was in part the result of EU support. The global community continues to look to the EU to help make this universal social protection floor a reality.

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rights framework, its non-comprehensive approach to reproductive health, and its lack of robust, transparent gender-related data.

The World Bank's "Applying Gender Action Plan Lessons: A Three Year Road Map for Gender Mainstreaming" (the "Road Map"; 2011-2013) evaluates the Bank's implementation of the Gender Equality as Smart Economics (GAP) Action Plan (2007-2010), and presents a plan for the Bank to strengthen gender mainstreaming in its operations. The Road Map includes significant improvements compared to the GAP, but still fails to respond to multiple civil society criticisms

Women's Rights as Human Rights

As Gender Action noted in its 2007 critique of the GAP, the Bank seeks to "make markets work for women," but ignores "the most important argument for empowering women: achieving women's human rights." The continuing lack of a human rights framework illustrates the Bank's clear prioritization of "smart economics" over the human rights of the vulnerable populations it claims to empower, and its failure to promote women and men's equal rights

Gender Equality and Reproductive Health

The Road Map's acknowledgement of the critical role that men and boys play in improving women's reproductive health and achieving gender equality is commendable. For example, the Road Map claims that "address[ing] reproductive health needs of adolescent girls and women in low-income households... requires strengthening the role of boys and men in attaining reproductive health goals." As it stands, however, this statement seems to be an afterthought, with no discussion of what constitutes a "strengthened role" for men and boys in regard to reproductive health goals.

The Road Map should prioritize responding to the gender role complexities of sexual and reproductive health in a comprehensive manner, in order to help girls and women in client countries fulfill their reproductive health rights and achieve full equality with men.

Economic Empowerment as a Means to Achieve Gender Equality

By focusing primarily on women's economic opportunities as a means to enhance gender equality, the Road Map ignores critical factors that influence girls' and women's economic viability and ability to attain full equality with men. These include women's human rights to freedom from sexual violence and discrimination. The Road Map also fails to mention how climate change burdens poor people, especially women and girls.

Quality and Transparency of Gender-Sensitive Data

While the Road Map supports the need for more robust monitoring and evaluation, even the Road Map itself fails to provide clear data on the GAP's gender-focused performance.

Conclusions

Although the Road Map includes a greater reproductive health focus than its parent document, the Road Map repeats many of the GAP's critical failures. In the absence of a human rights framework, a comprehensive approach to supporting reproductive health and a robust monitoring and evaluation system, the Bank's efforts to achieve gender equality will remain rhetoric rather than reality.

Read the critique in full at: http://www.genderaction.org/publications/2010/critique_road_map.pdf

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

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Social Watch E-Newsletter

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