

YCW India to demand social protection for all workers

Friday, 17 August 2007

“Minister for labour agreed to introduce the bill that assures social security to the informal workers in the parliament session in October 2007” Signature campaign from YCW India to demand social protection for the workers in the informal economy.

Context of the action

Since 1997 YCW India has been organising the informal workers to improve their working and living conditions. From 2000 YCW India has started organising workers in the agricultural sector, beedi making, tailoring, fishermen, plantation and construction work. These groups are in the districts of Amravathi, Kanyakumari, Thirunelvely, Thoothukudi, Madurai, Pudukottai, Kumbakonam, Thanjavur and Thiruvarur

Various studies had been done to discover the reality of the informal workers. It was discovered that more than 200 categories of work defined as informal work. The workers in these categories do not have any labour rights given in the labour laws. It was also discovered that these categories of workers do not have any social protection. In 2003 YCW national council, the campaign to demand social protection was included in the national plan of action.

In the meantime, various non governmental organisations and the political parties in India also started working on the demand for social protection to informal workers. This put pressure on the government to form a Commission under Mr. Sengupta to come up with proposals to provide social security for the informal workers. The commission worked from 2004 to 2005. Various political parties, trade unions and organisations presented aspects to come under social protection. YCW India also presented its view on social protection to this commission and presented a list of aspects under social protection. The commission forwarded its report to the government in the beginning of 2006 recommending the aspects to come under social protection.

Finally, the government drafted the Social security bill based on the recommendation of the Sengupta commission assured the workers that this bill would be introduced in the winter session (Oct 2006) of the parliament. However, the government did not introduce the bill to the parliament in Oct 2006. Therefore, YCW India decided to develop this action

The concrete problem YCW India is trying to solve through this action is that there is no social protection to the workers in the informal economy. YCW India demands social protection for all young workers in the informal economy.

Strategy evolved

The national team discussed the issue of social protection for the informal workers in its national team meeting. It motivated the national level action team to develop an action for this demand.

The action team prepared a questionnaire with this demand and asked the reflections of the base groups and the district movements about this demand.

The opinions of the base groups and the district team were again brought back to the action team and it was analysed. The action team discovered that all base groups supported the demand for social protection for the informal workers.

The action team developed a signature format in support of the demand to collect the signatures. In order to explain the

demands to the public, 8000 handbills were printed to distribute to the public.

The collection of the signatures in support of the demand was held in all base groups and district movements. 10,000 signatures were collected and 8000 hand bills were distributed.

2 YCW national leaders with the representatives of the Worker Federation of India met Mr. Oscar Fernandez (Minister for Labour, Government of India) in New Delhi on 22nd Feb 2007 and submitted the demand to provide social protection for the informal workers with the 10,000 signatures.

Result of the action

The Result of the action was that the government assured to bring in the bill to provide the social protection in the winter session of the Parliament (in Oct 2007) to make it an act. The government increased its fund for the benefits of the informal workers from 7.5 to 9.5