



# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

## Paper Presentation Conference

*by the Social Policy Research Foundation and O.P. Jindal Global University*

The Social Policy Research Foundation (SPRF India) and O.P. Jindal Global University invite abstracts from students enrolled in postgraduate programmes and/or the third year of their undergraduate degree on the theme '*Social Protection and Security in India: Present Challenges and Discussion for the Future*'.

Our approach is intra and inter-disciplinary with a strong focus on answering questions that can shape public policy. The shortlisted candidates will be asked to submit discussion papers, with the finalists getting the opportunity to present their research at the **Paper Presentation Conference** at the O.P. Jindal Global University campus in **April 2023**. The top 3 papers, as judged by the panellists, will be published on the SPRF website.

### **Premise**

Social policies encompass a network of regulations, guidelines, interventions, and systems that provide welfare and other developmental needs around healthcare, education, nutrition, and livelihoods. Social protection and security measures constitute a crucial part of the national social policy orientation, as they ensure that the poor and vulnerable receive socio-economic and nutritional support during times of stress and economic shocks. While India is globally recognised for large-scale social protection measures, concerns remain regarding how future-proof such policies are, implementation challenges, the politicisation of benefits, and socio-economic discrimination among welfare recipients.

An emerging debate in the realm of social protection and welfare in India lies in the conflict between productive and protective social policy-making. There have been discussions on how India needs to incorporate a more productive social policy to create skilled workers and jobs and ensure that the vulnerable do not depend on social welfare measures. However, protective social

policy has proved crucial in ensuring adequate nutritional uptake, decent work, access to civic services such as electricity and other essential needs of the most vulnerable have been met.

Several socio-political factors steer the social policy orientation for states and the Centre, and such issues often become areas of contestation among political parties. As a result, such policies often have to keep in mind public scrutiny and discourse as well as the actual intervention. Social protection and welfare policies can also be costly for states, depending on how the intervention is devised. Several states have been criticised for running large deficits due to direct subsidies and benefits. However, states reiterate the need for such measures, citing extreme vulnerability and lack of alternative channels of addressing the same.

The implementation and effectiveness of such schemes are also different across gender, geography, caste, and class lines. Prevailing socio-economic inequalities influence the ultimate provision of welfare, with structural barriers to access and information limiting the effectiveness of interventions. Thus, resulting gains in welfare and livelihoods are unequally distributed and do little to address the prevailing socio-economic inequalities that give rise to welfare-related needs in the first place.

Social protection and policymaking remain an area of heated debate among the centre and states, political parties, scholars and the public. While focusing on productive policymaking is important, states argue that immediate resources and attention must protect the most vulnerable. At the same time, limited public funds and socio-political factors ensure that the administration has limited opportunities to expand and innovate on such interventions.

### **Suggested questions and areas of discussion**

- How future fit are social protection schemes in India, and what are some necessary ways in which to update such schemes for a growing population?
- What are the local and resource-based challenges and opportunities the administrative units face in adequately executing such schemes?
- Are there risks of dependency by vulnerable populations on social protection schemes?

- What are ways in which the states and the centre can better cooperate to administer such schemes?
- What insights can be drawn from past and present social protection schemes on the skill, livelihood and well-being of the recipients?
- Analysis of past and current social protection and security schemes through an intersectional lens, encompassing class, caste and gender inequalities.
- What does the skewed sectoral division of social protection schemes suggest about national welfare and development priorities?
- The political economy of social policy and socio-economic inequalities.
- Debating the prevalence of tax-funded subsidies and direct benefits as social protection measures; discussing the resulting effect on state finances, meeting the immediate essential needs of the vulnerable, and other effects of such expenditure.

### **Submissions guidelines**

- We accept submissions with no more than 4 authors.
- We are accepting only one submission per author/group of authors. However, multiple submissions from a single institution are allowed.
- Abstracts should be no longer than 300 words and must contain the proposed hypothesis, methodology, and policy implications of the research.
- Please ensure that your submissions are in a doc or docx. format. Other formats will not be accepted.
- The document should also contain a short 50-word author(s) bio.
- Do not share pieces that have been previously published elsewhere.
- All submissions should be sent to [contact@sprf.in](mailto:contact@sprf.in) with the subject line “Abstract for Consideration – [paper title]”



**Deadline for submission**

19 February 2023, 11:59 pm

**Confirmation emails to shortlisted candidates**

23 February 2023

*We strongly encourage individuals from all marginalised communities to share their work. We request you to highlight this in your submission for our easier discernment.*