

# Indian Coalition for Basic Income Launched to Help Shape India's Social Policy Future

While India is a rich site of several Basic Income Pilots held by Research and Governmental agencies, there is a recent uptrend in the number of cash-based social policies in several states, especially with evidence that shows a marked increase in several indicators of a better life. The time has come in India when the discussion on Basic Income in India is to be taken to the next level. In this context, the **Indian Basic Income Coalition (iBIC)** was launched in a landmark initiative to craft a resilient and inclusive social policy framework for India as a pioneering coalition formed by **Indus Action, the India Network for Basic Income, Project DEEP, and WorkFREE**. The launch took place at the UBI Policy Roundtable in New Delhi at Sri Aurobindo College of Arts and Communication in New Delhi on 13 March 2024.

## **A Convergence of Minds for a Unified Purpose**

The roundtable convened a select group of 20 eminent personalities, including policymakers, politicians, academics, and practitioners from across the country, to deliberate on the political and economic viability of Universal Basic Income (UBI) in India. The session was marked by insightful presentations showcasing evidence from various unconditional cash transfer pilots and the successful implementation of rights-based policies nationwide.

## **Universal Basic Income: A Vision for India**

At the heart of iBIC's mission is the Universal Basic Income (UBI), proposing periodic, unconditional cash payments to all legal residents to cover basic needs. UBI has gained momentum globally and in India, driven by increasing employment and income insecurity, technological advancements, and rising inequality. Exemplary pilots, such as SEWA's initiative in Madhya Pradesh, Project DEEP's in Maharashtra, and WorkFREE study in Hyderabad, have highlighted UBI's significant impact on healthcare access, education quality, financial inclusion, and empowerment.

## **The Path Ahead: From Concept to Reality**

iBIC's formation is a strategic move ahead of India's significant 2024 election, aiming to unify efforts towards making UBI a scalable reality. The coalition seeks to build upon the guiding principles of the 2016-17 Annual Economic Survey and the successes of targeted basic income programs across eight states. The goal is to design a UBI model that aligns with India's existing rights-based policy landscape and addresses the inefficiencies in the current welfare delivery system.

## **Voices of Leadership**

- **Tarun, CEO of Indus Action**, reflects on the journey since the Annual Economic Survey's discussion on UBI, highlighting its growing relevance in addressing the socioeconomic challenges of farmers, women, and youth. He asserts, "UBI's time has come. It's an efficient and equitable addition to our welfare portfolio, achievable within our public finance constraints."
- **Pankhuri, Co-founder of Project DEEP**, champions basic income for its ability to uplift living standards, spur economic activity and ensure no one is left behind. She believes, "A basic income is a security net that fosters productivity and local economic growth, a true win-win scenario."
- **John Michael, WorkFREE Coordinator and BIEN's Asia Pacific Hub Manager**, emphasises UBI's role in breaking the cycle of debt and dependency, highlighting its potential to provide psychological security and open up new personal and economic opportunities for the marginalised.
- **Sarath Davala, the Chair of Basic Income Earth Network and Research Director of WorkFREE** mentioned the five pillars of the concept of UBI - individual, periodic, cash, universal and unconditional - and lauded that unconditionality is gaining traction in the policy space in India. He asserted that UBI is not a dream but necessary to address insecurity and deprivation in the Indian context.

iBIC is committed to facilitating ongoing dialogues, building a comprehensive knowledge base, and advancing structured advocacy for the adoption of UBI at scale. This collaborative effort promises to pave the way for India's more dignified, robust, and future-ready social policy framework, ensuring inclusive growth and a brighter future for all citizens.

