



Press Release

## **Jeevika utilises the insurmountable power of documentary filmmaking to affect the livelihood policy space**

*The 11th edition of Jeevika Livelihood Documentary Festival organised by Centre for Civil Society utilises the medium of documentary films to highlight much-needed reform in the livelihood policy space.*

**11 December 2014, New Delhi:** Centre for Civil Society (CCS), a leading public policy think tank based in New Delhi, will be hosting the eleventh edition of their annual Jeevika: Asia Livelihood Documentary Festival on 13 & 14 December – in an effort to advocate the need for livelihood freedom for the rural and urban individuals who are currently restrained by a number of regulatory barriers while trying to earn their living.

Over two days, they will be screening 15 documentaries that focus on livelihood issues of people at the bottom of the pyramid. An additional highlight of the festival is a discussion being hosted on 13 December from 4:30pm to 6pm on '23 Years of Indian Economic Reforms'. Amir Ullah Khan, Director Research, Aequitas and Advisor to Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation & Barun Mitra, Director of Liberty Institute will be the panellists.

Ever since its inception in the year 2003, the festival has consistently endeavoured to create a platform to help sensitise people towards the problems faced by the poor on a daily basis. The festival has gained immense popularity over the years. This year, more than 80 entries were received from across the world.

A number of award categories and cash prizes have been established to venerate filmmaking effort. These include Best Short and Best Feature Documentary category for professionals, as well as a Best Student Documentary category. Additionally, a new category has been introduced this year: Education World-Jeevika Freedom Award. It focuses on filmmakers attempting to document livelihood challenges or successes of people working in the education sector.

Eminent personalities have lent their time and support to the festival as chief guests for various award distribution ceremonies and inaugural events over the years, including Shabana Azmi, Rahul Bose, Nandita Das, Deepti Naval, Subash Ghai and Adoor Gopalakrishnan.

There is a serious need to concentrate on the issue of livelihood freedom for the poorer sections of society in India and Asia. Quality of life is directly related to the pursuit of livelihood and the pursuit of livelihood of choice is most valuable for those at the bottom rung of the economic ladder. Victims concerned include street vendors, rickshaw pullers, artisans and petty shop owners. Livelihood freedom includes the removal of various counter-productive licenses, laws, rules and regulations which are binding upon the citizens.



Despite the 1991 reforms, the poor are still struggling to earn an honest livelihood under the License-Permit-Quota (LPQ) Raj (whose main objective was to reduce the red taping in order to run business under the planned economy for India), and overbearing government regulations. As unlicensed professionals, street entrepreneurs have no property rights to protect their source of income, subjecting them to defamation, confiscation of property and public extortion. The choice of livelihood is not really a 'choice' for them. Illegally operating hawkers and rickshaw pullers, unable to seek adequate legal defense are often evicted, harassed and subjected to hefty bribes by local law enforcement, which makes them a stooge of public officials.

In fact, according to the World Bank's 'Ease of Doing Business' index, India ranks 142<sup>nd</sup> amongst 189 countries. Last year, it was ranked 134<sup>th</sup>. This immediately brings to fore the difficulty faced by enterprising individuals trying to start out by earning a decent livelihood. Centre for Civil Society, through research advocacy and innovative outreach programs on the ground, campaigns for the review revision and removal of regulatory barriers that condemn the enterprising poor to undue harassment, extortion, and lifelong illegality and poverty.

This festival has been instrumental in creating a space for dialogue on these issues and highlighting possible policy solutions. Over the years, the festival has also proved to be a source of inspiration for other issues championed by CCS. The 'Bamboo is not a tree' campaign owes its roots to the 2009 edition of the festival, when a documentary entitled 'Hollow Cylinder' showcased the dependence of the tribal community on selling bamboo in order to survive. This campaign was very successful at a nationwide level, with the government eventually changing the classification of bamboo from a tree to grass, easing the plight faced by tribal communities. This is simply a single example of how the power of effective filmmaking can bring about policy change, mind-set change and most importantly; attitude change.

Join the festival on 13 and 14 December from 10am to 6:30pm at UChicago Center in Delhi.