

Introduction

Ensuring universal access to basic guarantees of social protection is a human right and a direct and efficient way of reducing inequalities as well as fighting poverty and social exclusion. Social protection is also an investment in a healthy, productive and equitable society. It stabilises peoples' livelihoods, stabilises the economy, contributes to social cohesion and peace and builds peoples' resilience to economic and environmental shocks. Still, over 75% people on this planet do not have access to social protection.

As a comprehensive approach to social policy, the Social Protection Floor (SPF) approach covers issues currently addressed by most of the Millennium Development Goals, especially poverty (MDG1), education (MDG2), health (MDG 4-6) and through the inclusiveness and universality of the approach – gender inequality (MDG 3). Adopting a goal on social protection would provide a more coherent approach to these interrelated social policy elements. The advantage of the SPF approach is also that it provides a set of guidelines for policy measures and schemes that the MDG framework lacked. Being a well-defined concept, the SPFs' implementation would be measurable and easily monitored at country and global levels.

The SPF approach has been developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and adopted by the whole UN system. In 2011 the ILO and WHO published a report titled *Social protection floor for a fair and inclusive globalisation* ("the Bachelet Report"), which offers a wider policy perspective and a better understanding of the approach. In 2012 the ILO adopted a recommendation on the national floors of social protection (no. 202) that outlines the strategy for progressive implementation of the SPFs at country level.

Social protection in development has been taken up in other intergovernmental bodies, including the G20 during the French presidency (2011) and by the European Commission. The new global development framework offers the opportunity to further strengthen political will and adopt coherent global and national level action for the implementation of the Social Protection Floors.

What is social protection?

Social protection is a right. It is a coherent, rights-based approach to social policy, ensuring people's access to basic services and social guarantees. Social Protection Floors are nationally defined minimum levels of income security in the form of various social transfers as well as universal, affordable access to essential social services.

Social protection includes:

- Income security for unemployed (unemployment benefits)
- Income security for elderly (pensions)
- Income security for people with disabilities (pensions)
- Income security for children (child benefits)
- Income security for pregnant women (maternity benefits, maternity leave)
- Access to affordable healthcare
- Access to affordable education (at least to primary level)
- Access to affordable housing
- Access to sanitation

What social protection is NOT:

Social protection is not mere safety nets provided to people in the times of crisis.

It is a comprehensive and sustainable system based on rights.

Social protection is not a network of privatised service providers, accessible only to the wealthy.

It is the responsibility of the governments to ensure affordable and universal access to all essential social services. While some schemes can include private service providers, strong and effective public institutions should be at the foundation of the system.

Social protection is not just an economic calculation to boost consumption and reduce future costs. While social protection is indeed a good investment that results in an increase of human capital, supports aggregate demand in the economy, economic productivity, domestic consumption and economic growth, it is first and foremost a universal human right.

Funding for social protection

Social protection schemes can be contributory or non-contributory, but in both cases require ensuring adequate domestic funding for their implementation. A basic social protection system is affordable even to the poorest countries costing about 1-2% of GDP (ILO, 2008). Domestic funding for social protection can be ensured through a number of policy measures:

- Making fiscal space through improving tax collection or cutting expenditure in other budget areas (e.g. military expenditure),
- Introducing progressive taxation systems to increase revenue,
- Improving corporate taxation through improving tax collection and addressing the issue of tax evasion and tax havens.

Ensuring social protection for all citizens is the responsibility of the governments. However, the establishment and temporary support to basic social protection systems as well as capacity building for social protection implementation in Low Income Countries can be supported through adequate development cooperation programmes as well as the establishment of a Global Fund for Social Protection, following the proposal of the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights (Schutter & Sepulveda, 2012).

Development Goal: Universal social protection

The new agenda should include a goal on the implementation of social protection floors as defined in the Bachelet Report, and the ILO Recommendation 202 which has set an international standard to be applied at national level. Targets must be set and realised on income security for the unemployed, the sick, the disabled, pregnant women, children and the elderly as well as on access to health care, education, housing and sanitation.

Possible targets and indicators:

Target	Indicator(s)
Global target: Establishment of a Global Fund for Social Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishment of a Global Fund for Social Protection as proposed UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights
Implementing policy framework for social protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 102 on social security• Implementation of universal Social Protection Floor based on ILO Recommendation No 202• Spending on social protection as a percentage of GDP
Guaranteeing income security and basic social services during childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of children and of total population with access to essential health care, education goods and services• Percentage of children receiving cash and in kind support
Guaranteeing income security for unemployed, sick, mothers and people with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of men and women in active age who are not working due to unemployment, sickness, maternity or disability and who receive support• Beneficiaries of cash income support (% of the poor)
Guaranteeing income security for elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share of population aged 65 and above benefitting from a pension

References:

ILO (2008). *Can low-income countries afford basic social security?*, Social Security Policy Briefings 3, Geneva: ILO

Schutter, O. and Sepulveda, M. (2012). *Underwriting the Poor. A Global Fund for Social Protection*. Briefing Note 07, October 2012

About the ITUC

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) is the main international trade union organisation, representing the interests of working people worldwide. Our primary mission is the promotion and defence of workers' rights and interests, through international cooperation between trade unions, global campaigning and advocacy within the major global institutions.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 153 countries.

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