

# SDGNOTE



International  
Labour  
Organization



## SOCIAL PROTECTION

The 2030 Agenda embraces the three dimensions of sustainability – economic, social and environmental – in an integrated and interconnected manner. It contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will build on the progress achieved under the Millennium Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development puts people and the planet at its centre and gives the international community the impetus it needs to work together to tackle the formidable challenges confronting humanity, including those in the world of work.

### The ILO DW for SDGs Notes Series

At a special UN summit in September 2015 world leaders adopted a new vision for global development: “Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.



With the Agenda 2030 the global community has recognized that decent work is both a means and an end to achieve sustainable development. Consequently, the Decent Work Agenda – an integrated policy framework in and of itself – features prominently across the SDGs and Agenda 2030.

The 2030 Agenda calls for integrated and transformative policies to tackle development challenges. The promotion of more and better jobs is a central element that cuts across many of the Sustainable Development Goals with SDG 8 at its core. The Director-General has stressed that Agenda 2030 is a major responsibility, opportunity, and at the same time, a challenge for the ILO. It thus requires a new way of working across the Office and a new way of communicating about Decent Work. The DW for SDGs Notes series is one building block in this process. It aims to provide a thematic decent work perspective on the SDG framework for ILO officials engaging in SDG discussions with constituents, UN counterparts, as well as development partners. SDG notes are envisaged for all Programme and Budget (P&B) outcomes. These more detailed notes are complemented by short leaflets on communication and advocacy prepared for external distribution.

The DW for SDGs Notes should be used in conjunction with the ILO Implementation Plan for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The present document is an SDG Note on “Social Protection” (SP) which mainly concerns SDG 1.3 (social protection floors), SDG 3.8 (health coverage), SDG 5.4 (gender equality and anti-discrimination), SDG 8.5 (social protection systems) and SDG 10.4 (inequality) and related indicators.<sup>1</sup>

1- The Global Indicator Framework developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) to monitor progress on 169 targets of the SDGs was agreed upon by General Assembly in July 2017. The framework has 232 indicators and each indicator has been assigned to one or several organizations to coordinate efforts around collection and reporting of national data. These indicators are classified into three tiers depending on the availability of data and internationally agreed measurement methodology. The global indicators can be found here. The list of custodian agencies here.



# 1- SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

"Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security [...]. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right of security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control" (Articles 22 and 25, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Social protection is needed across the life cycle to prevent people from falling into poverty and social exclusion. Social protection is also a powerful tool to move people out of poverty by providing them with the needed transfers and services and investing in the future of their children. In this context, the ILO focuses on sustainable solutions for extending social protection. In line with Recommendation No. 202, the ILO promotes a rights-based and equitable approach to social protection including access to health care.

## 1.1 How does social protection contribute to inclusive and sustainable development?

Social protection<sup>2</sup>, including social protection floors (SPF)<sup>3</sup>, is critical to address persistent vulnerability and poverty and a key element for decent work. In addition, it contributes to a number of other SDGs. Social protection is a key element of sustainable poverty reduction strategies. Without social protection, people become more prone to economic insecurity and social exclusion and hence more vulnerable to remain in poverty. Social protection is an economically beneficial policy fostering greater productivity, and consequently increased inclusive growth and social cohesion. Yet, according to ILO estimates, 73 per cent of the world population lacks adequate social protection, thus denying individuals their rights and dignity. For this reason, SDG 1 includes a target on SP:



2- Social security/social protection is the set of measures provided by society to protect its members from: (1) poverty and social exclusion, (2) the financial consequences of "life cycle risks" (ill health, sickness, disability, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, old age, or death of a family member) and (3) insufficient family support particularly for children and adult dependants.

3- Social protection floors are basic levels of social protection that should be guaranteed to all. Defined at the national level, they should at least provide essential health care throughout the life course; social protection for all children; income security to all people of working age in particular in case of unemployment, maternity, disability and work injury; and pensions for all older persons.



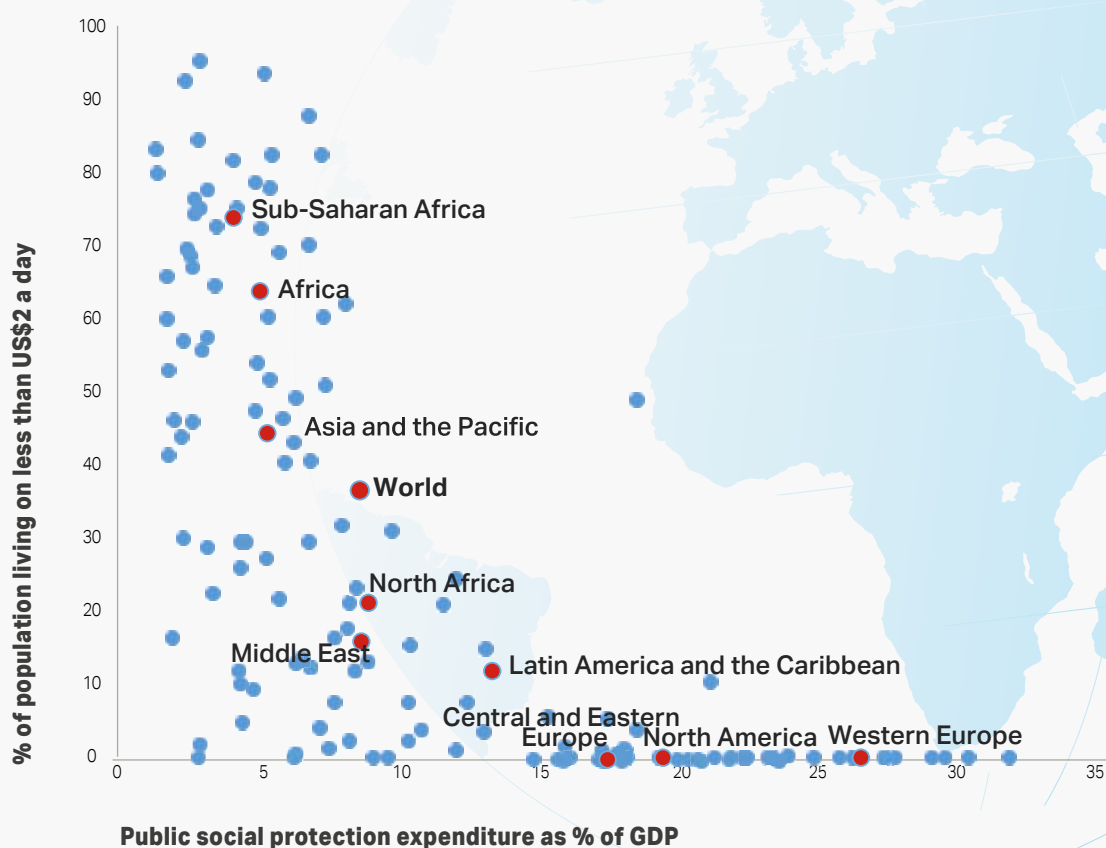
## SDG 1 End poverty in all its forms

- 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable

**Indicator 1.3.1:** Proportion of population covered by social protection floors / systems disaggregated by sex, and distinguishing children, the unemployed, old-age persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women /new-borns, work-injury victims, the poor and the vulnerable

### SDG 1.3

Public social protection expenditure (percentage of GDP) and proportion of the population in poverty



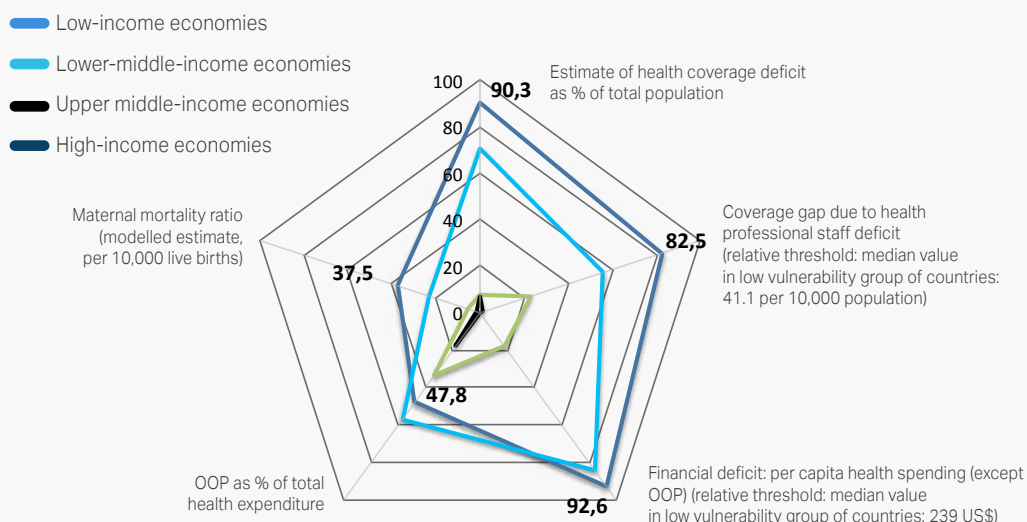
**SDG 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

- **3.8 Achieve universal health coverage (UHC), including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services, and access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all**

**Indicator 3.8.2.:** Number of people covered by health insurance or a public health system per 1,000 population

**SDG 3.8**

The global deficit in effective access to health services, 2011/12, by level of country income



Notes: OOP = out-of-pocket payments. regional averages weighted by total population 2012.

For the multiple dimensions of health coverage, and definitions of the health staff deficit and financial deficit indicators, see Annex IV, table B.11.

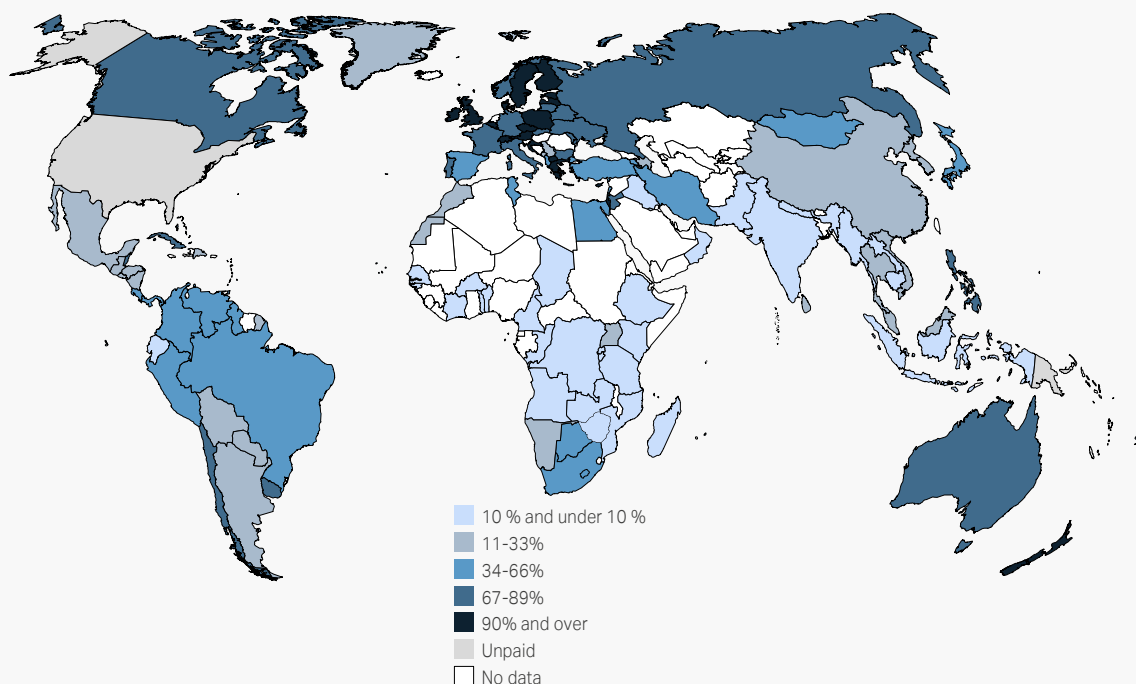
Sources: ILO calculations based on WHO Global Health Observatory, 2011 data; OECD; national sources; UN World Population Prospects, 2012 Revision.

Link: <http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/RessourceDownload.action?ressource.ressourceId=41717>

Insufficient health coverage causes long term problems for societies, hampering vital employment and productivity returns. Some 90 per cent of the population in low-income countries remains without legal health coverage i.e. is not affiliated to any health scheme or system and 39 per cent of the world's population has no social health protection. Out-of-pocket payments, the most regressive form of health financing, constitute 40 per cent of health expenditures worldwide. Moreover, 10.3 million health workers are lacking globally, 7 million of whom are missing in rural areas. When people are sick, the lack of rights and entitlements to health care, as well as inadequate access to quality services that are available and affordable pushes them into poverty. The negative consequences of insufficient access to health care services are far-ranging and can even be a contributing factor to child labour, as families are forced to compensate for income losses. SDG 3 thus calls for universal health coverage.



Effective coverage for maternity cash benefits: Women in employment entitled to maternity cash benefits, latest available year (percentages)



5

## SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

**- 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate**

**Indicator 5.4.1.:** Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic care work, by sex, age and location

Discrimination and lack of quality public service provision undermines the social contract of societies. The unequal sharing of care responsibilities results in a situation where unpaid care and domestic work are disproportionately shouldered by women, and are not valued, and protected to the same extent as other forms of work. This situation hinders women's access to (decent) employment and social protection. Income security and access to basic services such as nutrition, education, and health care are therefore important elements to take into account towards achieving SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment.



**SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

- 8.5 By 2030 achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
- 8.b By 2020 develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization

**Indicator 8.5.1.:** Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities

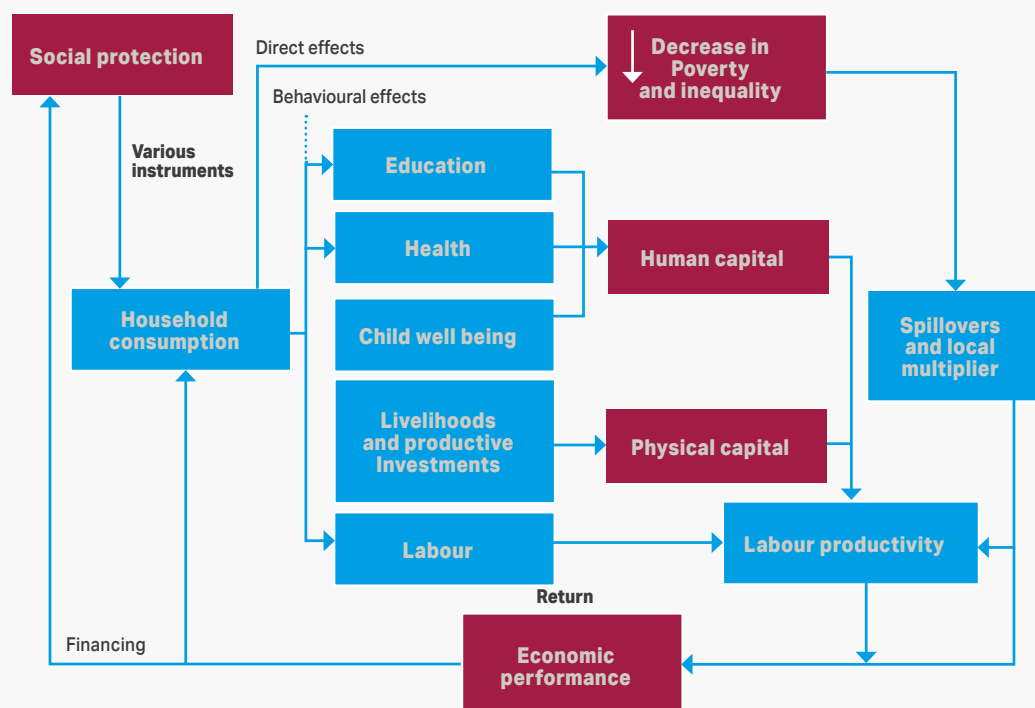
**Indicator 8.5.2.:** Unemployment rate, by sex, age, and persons with disabilities

**Indicator 8.b.1.:** Existence of a developed and operationalized strategy for youth employment as part of a national employment strategy

Inadequate social protection systems tend to weaken full and productive employment and decent work outcomes, including for youth. Social protection is one of the pillars of the ILO's decent work agenda set out in SDG 8 and an important prerequisite for all women and men to be able to gain and uphold productivity, human capital and household income. In the event of unemployment, sickness, maternity, injury or disability, people are even more at risk of poverty if they have no access to social protection coverage. This reduces the potential for national consumption and growth.

### SDG 8,5

#### Social protection and socio-economic development



Source: A. Mideros, F. Gassmann, and P. Mohnen: Estimation of rates of return of social protection instruments in Cambodia: A case for non-contributory social transfers (Maastricht, Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, 2012).



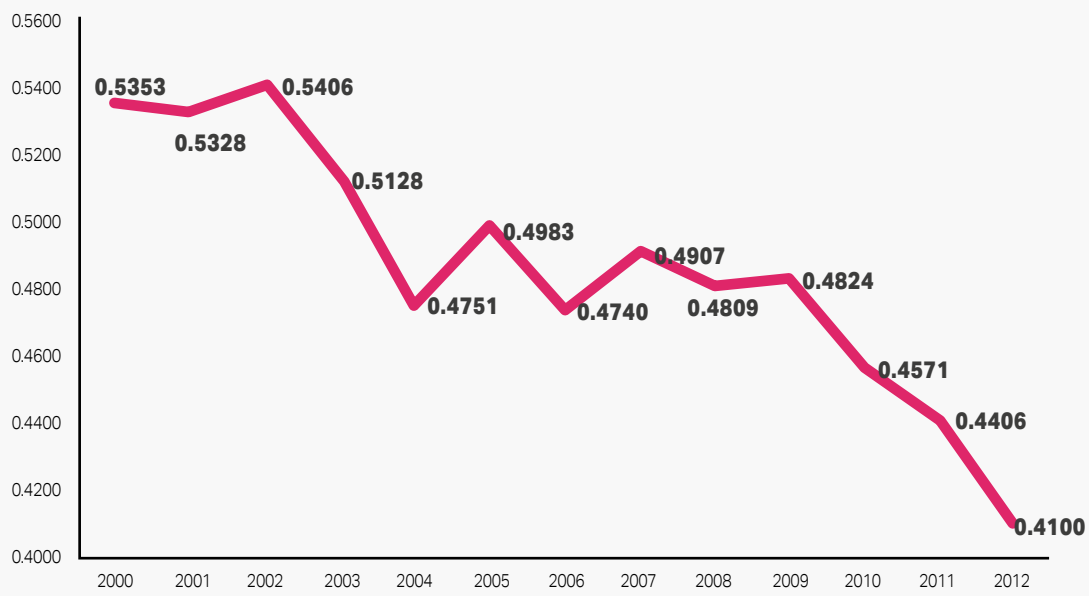
**SDG 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries**  
- 10.4 Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality

**Indicator 10.4.2:** Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers

**SDG 10,4**

Impact of social redistribution policies (2009) in El Salvador measured by means of the GINI index between 2000 and 2012.

"Since 2009, El Salvador has attached great significance to using social policy as a means to distribute and redistribute wealth, affecting poverty, inclusion, and equity. The country has witnessed the progressive decline of poverty and income inequality. Poverty rates fell from 39.9 per cent in 2008, to 34.5 per cent in 2012. Inequality, measured by means of the Gini index, dropped from 0.48 to 0.41 during the same period."



Source: Durán-Valverde, F; Ortiz-Vindas, J.F. 2015. El Salvador: Reducing inequality through universal social protection. Available at: [www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/RessourcePDF.action?ressource.ressourceId=53018](http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/RessourcePDF.action?ressource.ressourceId=53018).

Rising inequality is an obstacle to social peace, political stability and social cohesion. It also presents a risk to sustainable economic growth. Access to social protection transfers and services, in particular for vulnerable groups, contributes to making societies more equitable. Social protection systems are one of the elements which provide for a more equitable distribution of resources and contribute to more inclusive growth and are therefore included in SDG 10.



## 2 WHAT IS THE ILO'S APPROACH?

### 2.1 Relevant International Labour Standards

- C102 - Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)
- C118 - Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962 (No. 118)
- C121 - Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 (No. 121 [Schedule amended in 1980]) and its associated Recommendation 121
- C128 - Invalidity, Old-age and Survivors' Benefits Convention, 1967 (No. 128) and its associated Recommendation 131
- C130 - Medical Care and Sickness Benefits Convention, 1969 (No. 130) and its associated Recommendation 134
- C157 - Maintenance of Social Security Rights Convention, 1982 (No. 157) and its associated Recommendation 167
- C168 - Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 (No-168) and its associated Recommendation 176
- C183 - Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) and its associated Recommendation 191
- R202 - Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)
- R204 - Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204)

### 2.2 International Labour Conference discussions and results

At the **100th Session (2011) of the International Labour Conference (ILC)**, the ILO member States approved a two-dimensional strategy for the extension of social security. On the one hand, social protection systems should guarantee a nationally-defined social protection floors, that is at least a basic level of social security for all, namely income security and access to health care (horizontal dimension). On the other hand, the level of protection should be progressively increased to reach adequate levels of coverage in line with Convention No. 102 and other social security standards (vertical dimension). The strategy should be implemented in line with national priorities aiming to achieve comprehensive and adequate coverage for all. The Conference reaffirmed that social security is a human right and highlighted its importance for both social and economic development. The discussions also addressed mechanisms for implementation, as well as the role of the ILO in supporting countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies with a view to building their social protection systems including social protection floors.

The ILO's position further strengthened one year later at the 101th ILC through the adoption of the **Social Protection Floor Recommendation (No. 202)**. The new Recommendation complements existing labour standards by "flexible but meaningful guidance to member States in building social security systems tailored to national circumstances and levels of development". It was decided that national social protection floors should guarantee access to at least essential health care, including maternity care, as well as at least a basic level of income security for children, persons of working age and older persons. Moreover, the Recommendation stresses that such basic social security guarantees should be provided to all residents and all children with the aim of building a comprehensive and sustainable social security system in line with national circumstances.

The adoption of the **Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, (No. 204)** in 2015 highlights the role of social protection in protecting workers in the informal economy and its importance in of facilitating the transition to the formal economy.



## 2.3 Key areas of work

The Social Protection Department together with the field specialists and other social protection experts focuses on five key areas of work: (1) awareness raising and advocacy for the Social Protection Floor initiative; (2) building and strengthening partnerships; (3) technical advisory services and capacity building; (4) policy, knowledge and tools development, and (5) national social dialogue.

Outcome 3 of the **ILO's Programme and Budget 2016-17** on "creating and extending social protection floors" further develops the organization's efforts to improve coverage, adequacy and access to social security. Policy advice, training and advocacy will be reinforced in order to better support constituents in developing and implementing national rights-based social protection strategies, which are effectively guided by social dialogue and social security standards. More precisely, the ILO supports countries in strengthening their social protection systems. Such support includes extending coverage and facilitating access for vulnerable groups including as migrant, domestic or informal workers and increasing universal health coverage. Overall, tools and policy instruments will be developed and services for enhanced policy frameworks will be provided. Furthermore, the capacity of constituents will be built to raise awareness, support policy, as well as institutional, actuarial and legal development of social protection systems. Help will also be given to assist with the implementation and governance of the schemes.

In view of the ILO's revised Development Cooperation strategy, the Office has launched a **Global Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All** to go well beyond small and piecemeal interventions so as to pursue projects that are ambitious both in terms of scale and impact. During its first phase (2016–2020) the flagship programme is focusing on 21 countries. Country experiences also allow the development of good practices that can be used elsewhere. The Programme is results-oriented and benefits from efficient impact assessment tools progressively developed by the ILO.

## 2.4 The role of the International Training Centre

The Turin Centre organizes an Social Security Academy for governments', workers' and employers' representatives. In addition, the ITC offers courses regarding planning and implementing social protection systems, including financial management and governance of social protection schemes.



### 3- HOW HAVE COUNTRIES RESPONDED EFFECTIVELY?

#### 3.1 Policy options to address key challenges

##### **How to achieve social protection for all, to improve coverage for all, including the poor and the vulnerable (SDG 1.3)?**

Nationally-defined social protection floors constitute a fundamental element of national social protection systems, and, as such, represent an important instrument in achieving SDG 1.3. SPFs promote access to essential social security transfers and social services, thereby reducing poverty and vulnerability. Nationally-defined strategies should respond to needs, circumstances and priorities in each country. In order to do so, they should build on existing institutions with a view to ensuring at least a basic level of income security throughout the life course, for both older persons and persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income due to unemployment, sickness, disability, maternity or injury. This also applies to children, with particular emphasis placed on ensuring access to nutrition, education, care and other necessary goods and services. Recommendation No. 202 also sets out that countries should formulate and implement national social security extension strategies based on an effective social dialogue and social participation. These should progressively aim to reach higher levels of social security for as many people as possible through comprehensive social protection systems. An assessment-based national dialogue can support the development and implementation of national strategies, particularly with regard to identifying the best policy mix for a given country that ensures universality of protection for the population. This would be based on an appropriate mix of tax- and contribution-financed transfers and services. Such strategies allow for the progressive implementation of nationally-defined social protection floors and for the improvement of operations (see section 3.2).

Social protection systems and SPFs in particular, play an important role not only in reducing poverty, but also in preventing poverty. One of the lessons learned from the expansion of social protection coverage in many parts of the world is that impressive progress has been achieved in countries where combined tax-financed and contribution-financed social protection mechanisms ensure universal protection for the entire population, including the middle class. Through an appropriate mix of social protection schemes financed by contributions (such as social insurance schemes) and general taxation (such as cash transfers, social assistance, as well as employment guarantee schemes and other public employment programmes) social protection systems can ensure universal protection, comprising adequacy, equity and sustainability. In order to reach those at risk of being left behind and the most vulnerable, the extension of social security to those in the informal economy is important. This also facilitates the transition from the informal to the formal economy, as set out in Recommendation No. 204 (2015).

> On the aspect of informality and informal economies, see also the SDG Note on National Employment Policies.

### **How to achieve universal health coverage (SDG 3.8)?**

The Social Protection Floor Recommendation No. 202 (2012) stresses the importance of ensuring addressed, and its access through entitlements enshrined in national law. The importance of its availability, affordability, acceptability, quality and financial protection are also highlighted. When extending social health protection coverage, countries should follow a rights-based, universal and equitable approach based on solidarity in financing. The global deficit of 10.3 million skilled health workers needs to be addressed by providing decent working conditions for a sufficient number of workers, especially in rural areas. Additionally, sufficiently broad benefit packages have to be provided by social health protection schemes and systems so as to minimize out of pocket payments, including co-payments. Solidarity by financing through sufficiently large risk pools is another important component for ensuring equitable health coverage without differentiating between beneficiaries.

### **How to ensure access to social security and gender equality (SDG 5.4)?**

Social protection policies can contribute to better recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work, facilitating access to quality public services and supporting the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family. In addition, social protection policies also contribute to generating employment opportunities in the health, education and care sectors, and to providing public services more generally. On condition that adequate wages and working conditions exist, the expansion of employment in these sectors can have a double impact on women's employment: by offering new employment opportunities and by facilitating access to employment by lowering the burden of care responsibilities.

### **How do social protection systems contribute to employment and decent work (SDG 8.5)?**

Social protection systems are imperative for sustainable development in all three of the dimensions. In view of the fact that social protection helps stabilize income in the event of unemployment, injury, disability, sickness, maternity and old age, the universal provision of adequate social security is vital for the entire society beyond basic social security needs, and beyond the poor and vulnerable. Countries need to set up comprehensive short-and long-term mechanisms to support people's efforts in finding productive jobs or ensure compensation, if the need arises. Social protection mechanisms, namely unemployment protection and active labour market policies, can support structural changes in the labour market, and prevent the informalization of employment. Moreover, social protection can support the transition from the informal to the formal economy.

Investing in social protection systems contributes to stimulating cycle of inclusive development and growth. Income security, schooling and health provision improves people's employability and productivity, thus leading to higher household consumption and increased domestic demand. More decent jobs can be created and tax revenues can be reinvested to improve social protection for all. Social protection systems ought to be comprehensive, coherent and coordinated with employment policies in order to guarantee services and social transfers across the life cycle, paying particular attention to the poor and vulnerable. Ensuring effective access to social protection, including in rural areas, can be supported by providing "single window services" giving access to coherent and comprehensive packages of social protection, skills development, job placement and other services.

### **How to frame social protection policies to promote greater equality (SDG 10.4)?**

Social protection systems contribute immensely to reducing inequality through redistribution. Together with wage and fiscal policies, social protection policies are an important means to redistribute income both vertically (from the rich to the poor) as well as horizontally (from the healthy to the sick, those without children to those with children, etc.), and to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources. The social protection system is one of the channels that allows for the more equitable distribution of the fruits of economic growth, and is thus a precondition for inclusive growth. Social protection systems also play an important role in fostering social inclusion and enabling participation, including, for example, as regards persons with disabilities.



### 3.2 ILO Country-level assistance

The following case studies provide examples of how the ILO has supported and engaged with constituents to realize social protection objectives:

#### **Building National Floors of Social Protection in Southern Africa (RAF/13/04/IRL – US\$1,630,434)**

The ILO has supported multiple countries in setting up nationally defined social protection floors. Mozambique is a good example of the successful implementation of an Assessment Based National Dialogue. Despite impressive growth rates, the country suffered from persisting poverty hampering sustainable and inclusive development. Based on the assessment of the National Strategy for Basic Social Security, a new strategy is currently being developed that extends social protection to vulnerable groups.

#### **Extension of Social Protection Floors at Cape Verde (STEP/Portugal – Phase II) (GLO/08/60/POR – US\$4,910,983)**

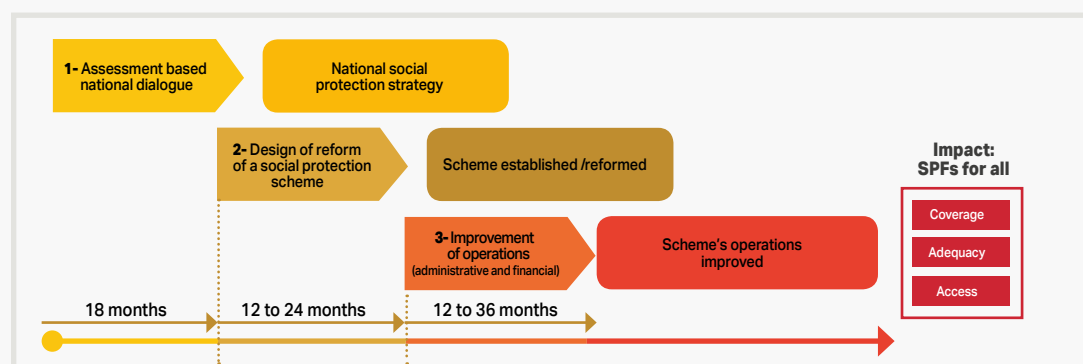
In Cape Verde, the ILO provided policy advisory services to design and reform the social protection system. Based on an expenditure review, a study on social insurance coverage and an assessment of the health financing system, the project supported the design and implementation of a series of improvements regarding the institutional capacity to deliver social protection benefits. Today, 90 per cent of older persons are covered by the social pension system, delivery of social protection benefits is better organized and the number of self-employed enrolled in social insurance has increased.

#### **Supporting the implementation of sustainable social protection floors for the workers and their families in ASEAN (RAS/15/51/ROK – US\$800,000)**

The operation of the SPF in Cambodia was improved through the implementation of a single window service. The ILO, in close cooperation with the government, established a single delivery point for programmes (e.g., health care, schooling and cash transfers). The single window service facilitates access to people's multiple social protection needs which is often difficult for those living in remote areas.

#### **Supporting the establishment of the National Health Insurance scheme and the extension of coverage in Lao PDR (LAO/11/01M/LUX – US\$2,058,239) working with the United Nations and other partners**

The four-year joint programme, implemented by the ILO together with the WHO between 2012 and 2016, supported the country in piloting the national health insurance decree, creating a development strategy, and assessing the cost of social health protection benefits with a view to improved scheme governance and extended coverage. Payment mechanisms, information systems, and operational procedures were harmonized to foster coherence and coordination among existing social health protection schemes. A solidarity fund was established to extend social health insurance coverage to the informal economy, and subsidized health insurance coverage was piloted in Vang Vieng district. A scaling-up to other districts and provinces is currently being considered by the government. Furthermore, social protection was included as a key priority area in the UNDAF 2017–2021, as well as in the 8th Lao National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016–2020.





### 3.3 Added value to engage with tripartite constituents

Working closely with governments and social partners is extremely important to enable the successful implementation of social protection systems that ensure adequate and comprehensive coverage for all women and men. Conducting national dialogues together with tripartite constituents is important for identifying key issues and monitoring the implementation of social protection reform. Political buy-in is however needed to arrange for necessary fiscal space. The engagement of trade unions helps to ensure that the schemes that are developed are deemed adequate. Employers' organizations can help build up the necessary engagement of the business community in view of contributing to and supporting social protection. Establishing social security schemes based on dialogue and consultation will therefore build consensus and trust in societies and thus facilitate reforms which are aligned with the society's needs.

While the ILO with governments and social partners carry out assessment-based national dialogues, or support the design and reforms of social protection floors, other partners such as civil society organizations also need to be involved, so that the needs of the workers of the informal economy, as well as vulnerable groups are represented.

### 3.4 Working within the United Nations system and with other partners

The Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I) was adopted in 2009 by the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination as one of the nine UN joint initiatives in response to the global financial crisis. Under this initiative, UN agencies are requested to form Social Protection Teams to collectively support the implementation of social protection schemes. The importance of such collaborations was recognized by the recent ILO-UNDG letter to UN Resident Coordinators and country teams. The UN-SPF joint team in Thailand, led by the ILO with support from UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN WOMEN and the WHO, is considered a good practice as the team agreed to incorporate social protection as one of the UNDAF 2012-16 priorities. The UNDG has also set up thematic working groups on social protection at the regional level to contribute more effectively to UNCT's efforts in developing national social protection systems and to support countries in the achievement of several SDGs. At the global level, a training curriculum is being developed with the UN Staff College and a pooled funding developed with UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office to foster Delivery as One on social protection floors.

The Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) responded to a request by the G20 Development Working Group in 2011 in order to better advocate for the importance of social protection and improved knowledge-sharing among relevant agencies. Co-chaired by the ILO and the World Bank Group, SPIAC-B brings together international organizations and bilateral institutions to improve policy coherence and coordination. For example, Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) tools have been developed to offer common assessment tools that help countries assess social protection outcomes.

In June 2015, the ILO together with the World Bank Group used the momentum of the new 2030 sustainable development framework to launch a Universal Social Protection Initiative. In September 2016, this initiative led to the launch of a Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The partnership aims to raise awareness on the feasibility and affordability of universal social protection, showcase evidence from over 20 countries that have achieved universal social protection coverage and present different approaches available to make universal social protection an achievable objective as part of every Member State's plan to realize the SDGs. In addition to ILO and the World Bank, the Partnership includes more than ten development partners that have committed to promote universal social protection extension as part of their efforts to realize the SDGs through their delivery of technical assistance and other support to UN member States.



### ? **IS IT POSSIBLE FOR LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES (LDCs) TO AFFORD SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS?**

In principle, all countries can afford social protection schemes, including LDCs, yet their often limited economic and fiscal capacities may require a step-wise approach and/or temporary financial and technical assistance. As social protection systems can contribute to maintained consumption, increased productivity and economic growth, they also contribute to strengthening economic and fiscal capacities over time. The initial implementation of SPFs requires start-up investments and the development of capacities to plan, design, implement, and operate appropriate schemes and systems. Lacking such capacities, countries may be tempted to opt for ad-hoc, small-scale and, ultimately, unsustainable programmes. Adequate, financial and technical support can help ILO member States to establish a sound and sustainable framework.

### ? **HOW CAN SOCIAL PROTECTION COVERAGE BE EXTENDED TO VULNERABLE GROUPS, INCLUDING THOSE IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY?**

The informal economy is huge and heterogeneous. Policy responses need to respond to the situation of those in the informal economy, according to the type of employment. They should also take into account the challenges that arise from the lack of recognition of unpaid care and domestic work. Legal frameworks should be designed in such way as to facilitate the transition from the informal to the formal economy. Overall, social protection schemes should be extended to cover workers in the informal economy and provide incentives to formalize employment.

### ? **HOW CAN THE ILO SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS?**

The establishment of SPFs typically includes the following components. Assessment Based National Dialogue: a country's social protection needs go through an assessment process based on a participatory consultation with tripartite constituents and other partners from civil society. The process also includes recommendations for the building of a national action plan and for the completion of the nationally defined SPF.

Design or reform social protection scheme: technical advisory services are provided in line with ILO standards, as well as capacity building as regards costing, financing, institutional set-up, legal frameworks and broader policy coherence.

Improve operations: the ILO also facilitates the implementation of the SPF through enhancing administrative and financial governance capacities, and pilot-testing of delivery mechanisms.

### ? **HOW CAN THE PRIVATE SECTOR BE INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS?**

As a tripartite UN organization, the ILO's decision-making processes foresee dedicated institutional channels for involvement with private sector enterprises. This included the development of Recommendation No. 202, which was adopted with the support of employers. As employers, private sector enterprises have a strong interest in functioning social protection systems, including floors, which play a key role in enhancing human capital, supporting productivity, competitiveness and an enabling environment including social peace. At the same time, social protection systems can boost aggregate demand for goods and services, which can create new business opportunities for private sector enterprises and thus contribute to economic development

at large. As part of the new SPF flagship programme, a global business network for SPF has been established in conjunction with the private sector. The network supports its members in sharing their experiences and learning from other companies and determines the extent to which these protections can be implemented through public social protection systems, particularly in countries where social protection systems exist and are functional. The network also encourages enterprises, their affiliates and subsidiaries to support the implementation of public social protection systems through advocacy and other activities.

Contributions from civil society organizations (CSOs) are crucial. The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors brings together a global coalition of more than 80 CSOs to support SDG implementation. For instance in 2015, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung launched the Civil Society Guide for National Social Protection Floors to assist civil society organizations in contributing to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

### ? HOW CAN THE ILO WORK WITH THE UN ON SOCIAL PROTECTION?

The launch of the UN CEB SPF-I institutionalized UN system-wide coordination of social protection. The multi-layered approach allows cooperation at different levels. At country level, national SPF teams and UNCT working groups carry out joint-initiatives and integrate social protection into UN development frameworks. At regional level, UNDG Regional Chairs have the possibility to set up working groups on social protection, to foster knowledge-sharing activities and capacity building (see section 3.4).

### ? WHAT IS THE ILO'S ADDED VALUE IN ENSURING UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE?

The ILO focuses on sustainable solutions within and beyond the health sector. In line with Recommendation No. 202, the ILO promotes a rights-based and equitable approach to health care provision through ensuring availability, affordability and quality of services, as well as the financial protection of these. For instance, the ILO assists countries in designing and implementing legal frameworks to ensure coverage and also provides technical as well as financial support to meet the threshold of 41.1 health workers per 10,000. Beyond the health sector, the ILO adds value towards ensuring universal health coverage through coordination and policy coherence. More precisely, the ILO works with a view to better aligning health sector reforms with income support measures that aim to establish comprehensive social security systems.

**Examples of countries in the developing world that have successfully achieved universal social protection:<sup>4</sup>**



4- Universal social protection for children: Argentina, Mongolia, Universal disability grants: South Africa, Nepal, Timor Leste, Ukraine. Universal maternity protection: Argentina. Universal old-age pensions: Azerbaijan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Cabo Verde, China, Georgia, Kosovo, Lesotho, Maldives, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, South Africa, Thailand, Timor Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, Zanzibar. Universal survivors' pensions: Ukraine



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## CONTACTS

The Social Protection  
Department in ILO headquarters  
in Geneva:  
[socpro@ilo.org](mailto:socpro@ilo.org)

**SDGNOTE**  
**SOCIAL PROTECTION**



International  
Labour  
Organization



**SOCIAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT:**  
[socpro@ilo.org](mailto:socpro@ilo.org)

**EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKET  
POLICIES BRANCH:**  
[emplab@ilo.org](mailto:emplab@ilo.org)