



Global Coalition for SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS

27 January 2014

A social protection floor for everyone: a universal rights-based development goal

Well into the 21st century, the world remains an unfair, unequal, insecure and unhealthy place for the majority of people. At global level, four out of five persons do not have access to comprehensive social protection. About 80 per cent of the global population live in social insecurity and face a complete loss of income security when a personal or national economic crisis strikes. About half of our insecure population live in abject absolute poverty, the cruellest form of insecurity. Increasing levels of the feminization of poverty are recorded. About 30 per cent of the global population have no access to adequate health care. Every second child is poor and millions of children die every year of preventable causes. Millions of older persons face poverty, hardship and disease at the end. Inequality is increasing in many parts of the world. Social progress is uneven, unacceptably modest and slow.

The state of global social realities is not inevitable and can be changed by decisive action.

We, the **Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors**, a coalition of more than 70 civil society and trade union organizations, promote social protection floors as key instruments to achieve the overarching social goal of the global development agenda. Social protection is one of the foundations for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. It can simultaneously address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability and preservation of livelihoods. It can have a transformative role in contributing to long-term inclusive and sustainable growth while also enhancing resilience against natural and manmade disasters, as well as economic and social crises. We subscribe to the fundamental goal of social justice upheld in the ILO Constitution and the Declaration of Philadelphia¹ and its essential cornerstones as defined in Articles 22 to 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We want the human right to social security², defined at least as guaranteed basic income security and access to essential health care, to be realized by 2030 – the next target date for the global development agenda. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has elaborated the right's normative content as well as the core obligations of States parties in respect of the right³.

¹ ILO Constitution (1919 et seq.) and Annex, Declaration of Philadelphia, 1944.

² As formulated in Articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 and Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966.

³ General comment 19 : “To ensure access to a social security scheme that provides a minimum essential level of benefits to all individuals and families that will enable them to acquire at least essential health care, basic shelter and housing, water and sanitation, foodstuffs, and the most basic forms of education” (GC 19, Art. 59a).

The target date of 2030 is more than 80 years after the right to social security was first formulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There is already long experience with social protection systems that work, but largely in more developed countries. Now, recent encouraging experience in less developed countries demonstrates that without doubt some form of social protection is affordable and feasible nearly everywhere⁴.

We believe that as this world becomes significantly richer, no woman, no man and no child need live in social insecurity, poverty and apprehension. We believe that the International Labour Organization's Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202 (2012), which emerged from the joint Global Social Protection Floor Initiative of the UN System, is a cornerstone to meet the objective to ensure security, to remove the fear of destitution, and to protect standards of living when people are sick, unemployed, disabled and old, or cannot work when having to care for infants or sick family members. It can help address inequality and discrimination that women experience in accessing basic social services, economic opportunities and resources. For men and women to benefit equally from social protection systems, the role of women as caregivers must be explicitly addressed by social protection programmes, as must be the differences in access to services, work, and productive activities between women and men.

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors holds that the social protection floor concept developed by the UN Social Protection Floor Initiative, described in the “Bachelet” report⁵ and defined in the ILO Recommendation No. 202 must comprise the core social objective of the post-2015 global development agenda.

National floors of social protection

The ILO Recommendation No.202 concerning National Floors for Social Protection⁶ is an instrument of international public law that all member States of the ILO must take into account when drafting national social legislation. It establishes core content for the Human Right to Social Security as expressed in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

The Recommendation provides that national social protection floors should comprise basic social security guarantees for:

- *access to a set of goods and services, constituting essential health care , including maternity care, that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality;*
- *basic income security for children, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services;*

⁴ Already, implementation of nationally designed social protection floors is a key driver of the social development agenda, especially the Copenhagen Declaration and Platform for Action and its goals of poverty eradication, social inclusion and full employment and decent work.

⁵ In April 2009, the UN Chief Executives Board on Programmes selected the topic of Social Protection Floors (SPF) as one of its nine key priorities to cope with the global crisis, its consequences and the evident necessity for adequate social protection systems. The initiative was to be co-led by ILO and WHO. In October 2011, the high-level advisory board of the Social Protection Floor Initiative, a coalition of UN agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs chaired by Michelle Bachelet (then former President of Chile and former Executive Director of UN Women) presented a report to the UN Secretary General that demands a social protection floor for all and demonstrates its feasibility. ILO: Social Protection Floor: for a fair and inclusive Globalisation, report of the advisory group chaired by Michelle Bachelet, Geneva 2011.

⁶ International Labour Office (ILO 2012): Social Security for all – Building social protection floors and comprehensive social security systems, Geneva, 2012 (see text of the recommendation on p. 33).

- *basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and*
- *basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for older persons.*

The Recommendation emphasizes that Social Protection Floors are not a static objective. States are expected to embed them in strategies to extend social security that progressively ensure higher levels of social security to as many people as possible, and for that purpose States must progressively build and maintain comprehensive and adequate social security systems. Floors of protection are a first necessary step towards universal, rights based and comprehensive social protection for all. In no manner can social protection floors be conceptualized as - or serve as - ceilings to cap access to social security. They must be part of wider and coherent national social protection development strategies.

The Recommendation advances 18 human rights principles that should govern national social protection systems, *inter alia* universality, non-discrimination, and social inclusion. Among them also is the principle that high quality public services enhance the delivery of social security systems and that essential stakeholders in societies should participate in the design and implementation of national social protection systems. Finally, the Recommendation acknowledges explicitly that access to essential health care and income security are interrelated objectives that should not and cannot be pursued in isolation without losing effectiveness and efficiency; and enjoins States to engage in a wide national participative process in giving effect to the Recommendation.

In line with major UN Treaties on human rights, the Recommendation offers strong normative guidance, recognizing that the State has overall and primary responsibility in giving effect to the Recommendation. Accordingly, the State in dialogue with societies determines the legal and regulatory framework, the means and methods of implementation, the level of social protection, and the nature of access (direct services and/or income support services for effective access).

Social protection floors and their role in economic development, combating poverty and reducing inequality

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors recognizes that social protection can be instrumental in preventing poverty and correcting its consequences at all levels of income. It can also be instrumental in addressing some of the systemic root causes of poverty, but cannot do so in isolation⁷. As Recommendation No. 202 sets out, social protection must be embedded into the broad matrix of economic and social policies to be effective and procure the greatest benefit. The potential of social protection to improve the lives of people will be fully achievable only when linked to people-centred labour markets, fair economic policies

⁷ Social protection floors cannot be a substitute for economic development. They cannot serve as a sole tool to alter the root causes of structural poverty. Moreover, social protection floors cannot be used as an alibi to cease efforts to improve livelihoods, ensure decent work for all, and raise the standard of living for all.

and environmental policies that lower the level of individual risk⁸ and reduce threats to the well-being and participation of all people.

Well-designed social protection floors will reduce inequalities and proactively enhance gender equality because social protection guarantees have multiple and interconnected beneficial effects which can cause a virtuous circle. Better education leads to better work life; access to health care, nutrition, water and sanitation maintains people in good health, and leads to more sustained employment; access to housing fosters stability, civic participation and access to the social service system; assistance for women when childbearing enhances their prospects for fulltime work and a more consistent work history; lowered unemployment of youth leads to better lifelong work prospects and so on. All these benefits have been demonstrated and are of paramount importance for human development. Well-designed social protection floors serve as economic and social stabilizers in times of crisis and should never be compromised in times of fiscal crisis⁹.

The Coalition does not envisage a future in which some persons benefit from economic globalization and social protection floors are used to compensate those who do not. Social protection floors are conceived as an investment in people that can address inequalities of opportunity through transfers in cash or in kind. Social protection floors cannot alter gross inequalities generated by skewed primary income distributions and the resulting unequal standards of living that exist in all societies to a lesser or greater extent.

Most fundamentally, social protection floors can advance the right for all people to participate in the well-being and welfare of a society, to seize opportunity, and to contribute to the development of their society. The underlying concept of social protection floors invalidates any criticism levelled that it is founded on a principle of charity and encourages dependency. Persons excluded from a society cannot contribute to that society. Inclusion in society is the only means to the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Our goal: universal social protection floors

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors holds that the two-dimensional strategy of the Recommendation, extending basic social security guarantees to all and ensuring improved quality of protection be adopted as a guide in developing an **overarching social protection goal** for social development in the framework of the post-2015 development agenda.

To track progress in accordance with this strategy, the targets, target levels and indicators to monitor realization of the two objectives are outlined in the table annexed.

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors promotes the right of all people residing in a country to social security, regardless of documentation. Accordingly, there is no reference

⁸ Risks of multiple sources (job loss; disease; crime; natural disasters; financial crises – See *World Development Report 2014*; Washington, D.C. The World Bank, 2013) may be addressed by Social Protection Floors, but national policies should also be designed to lessen them. More, the World Bank states that “provision of basic insurance against the risks associated with illness and old age...is arguably a fundamental goal of social policy...” and supports examination of delinking social insurance from work status to cover workers in the informal economy, engaging public action *inter alia* to provide “basic health care and old-age pensions funded by the state and directed to vulnerable populations but potentially open to everyone (at least for health care)”.

⁹ See also the letter dated 16 May 2012 addressed by the Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states *inter alia* that austerity policies must “identify the minimum core content of rights or a social protection floor, as developed by the International Labour Organization, and ensure the protection of this core content at all times”.

in this framework to the citizenship status of any person residing within the borders of a country or recognized territory.

Annex

A social protection floor for everyone: a universal rights-based development goal

Objective	Targets	Target levels in 2030	Indicators¹⁰ of progress
(1) All countries have adopted and progressively implement national social protection development strategies	1. As many people as possible enjoy the highest possible level of social protection	100 per cent of all countries	(1) Number of countries with social protection development plans
Objective	Targets	Target levels	Indicators
(2) All people enjoy a floor of social protection	1. Health security for all: All people have access to essential healthcare goods and services defined as necessary at the national level	100 per cent of residents in all countries	(2) Proportion (per cent) of the population with quality health services and goods needed for the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health ¹¹ that are available, accessible, acceptable and affordable (3) Proportion (per cent) of the population with financial protection ensuring effective access to the health services and goods
	2. Income security for all: The concept of income security entails access to goods and services (<i>inter alia</i> , nutrition, housing, education and healthcare) defined as necessary at the national level that are guaranteed by the state either through direct provision or through provision of cash benefits that enable the purchase of necessary goods and services	100 per cent of all residents in all countries	(4) Proportion (per cent) of resident children with access to basic income security (5) Proportion (per cent) of resident persons of active age with access to basic income security, notably in the event of sickness, unemployment or loss of livelihood, maternity, and disability (6) Proportion (per cent) of older resident persons with access to basic income security

¹⁰ All indicators of progress should be disaggregated – where applicable – by gender, age and income class

¹¹ As set out in the WHO constitution of 1946

Signatories

	Name of Organization
1	ActionAid International
2	Advocacy etc. Consultancy and Training for NGOs
3	Asia Monitor Resource Centre and Global Network Asia
4	Asia-Europe People's Forum Secretariat for Asia
5	Association Points Cœur
6	B.I.R.S.A. Mines Monitoring Centre
7	Brot für die Welt
8	Cambodian Women Movement Organisation CWMO and Global Network Cambodia
9	Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento, (CIPPEC)
10	Community Law Centre
11	Community Legal Education Center CLEC and Global Network Cambodia
12	Concern Worldwide
13	Concern Worldwide UK
14	Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
15	Congregation of the Mission
16	Daughters of Charity
17	Democracy and Workers Rights Centre DWRC and Global Network Arab Countries
18	Development Initiatives
19	Development Research and Training (DRT)
20	Dominican Leadership Conference
21	Drug Policy Programme
22	European Anti Poverty Network (EAPN)
23	Franciscans International
24	Free Trade Union Development Center
25	Friends of The Disabled Association
26	Gambia Future Hands On Disable People
27	General Confederation of Trade Unions (GCTU)
28	Global Social Justice
29	Grow Up Free From Poverty Coalition
30	HelpAge International
31	Institute for Popular Democracy
32	Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary
33	International Alliance of Women (IAW)
34	International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)
35	International Disability Alliance (IDA)
36	International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)
37	International Kolping Society (IKS)
38	International Movement ATD Fourth World
39	International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
40	International Presentation Association
41	JusticeMakers Bangladesh

42	Labour and Economic Development Research Institute LEDRIZ and Global Network Zimbabwe
43	Labour and Education Foundation LEF and Global Network Pakistan
44	Labour Education and Research Network LEARN and Global Network Asia
45	Labour Research Service and Global Network Africa
46	Labour Resource and Research Institute LARRI Global Network Namibia
47	Life of Dignity for All Campaign
48	Loretto Community
49	Marianists International
50	Medical Mission Sisters
51	Modern University for Business and Science
52	National Union of Bank Employees (NUBE)
53	National Union of Organizations on Intellectual Disability
54	Network for Transformative Social Protection, Asia
55	OXFAM
56	Passionists International
57	Phenix Center
58	Platform for Social Protection
59	Programa Laboral de Desarrollo PLADES and Global Network Latin America
60	Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR)
61	Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales (PRODESC)
62	Public Service International
63	Salesian Missions
64	Service and Research Institute on Family and Children (SERFAC)
65	Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
66	Social Justice in Global Development
67	Solidar
68	The Grail
69	Trade Union Right Centre
70	Trickle Up
71	UK Child Poverty Action Group
72	UNANIMA International
73	VIVAT International
74	Workers Education Association Zambia WEAZ and Global Network Zambia
75	Youth For Action