

## A SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR FOR ALL: INDISPENSABLE FOR ERADICATING EXTREME POVERTY BY 2030

INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT ATD FOURTH WORLD

### Social Protection Floors (SPFs) and human rights

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. Basic social protection is not or hardly available for the 1.6 billion people who live in extreme (or multidimensional) poverty. According to ILO estimates, about 20 per cent – or 1.4 billion people – have access to comprehensive social protection, while the remaining 4 billion people have access to only limited social protection coverage.

SPFs 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 programmes are an essential part of strategies that contribute to social, economic and sustainable development. The recently adopted **UN Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights** recommend the implementation of SPFs in all countries.

In 2009 the United Nations Chief Executives Board accepted the development of a global SPF as one of its nine core policy priorities. They appointed the ILO and the WHO as the leading UN agencies, who in 2011 jointly published a report titled ***Social Protection Floor for a fair and inclusive globalization*** ("the Bachelet report"), which offers a wider policy perspective and a better understanding of the approach. In 2012 the ILO Conference adopted a recommendation on national floors of social protection (No.202) that outlines the strategy for progressive implementation of the SPFs at country level. The SPF concept has thus been endorsed by virtually all countries in the world, as well as by employers' and workers' organizations.

The lack of basic social protection is one of the main reasons why people living in extreme poverty have been left behind. The rights-based approach is the most effective way to design and implement empowering and sustainable SPFs, because it ensures compliance with human rights commitments both in the content and outcomes of their policies, as well as in the process by which they implement them. Equality and non-discrimination, participation, as well as transparency and accountability are the key human rights principles that should guide the design and implementation of social protection policies. The implementation of multidimensional measures of poverty will lead to more suitable social protection and poverty eradication policies.

## Equality, participation and accountability

Respecting the ***principle of equality and non-discrimination*** means first of all that every effort must be made to ensure that nobody is left behind. Targeted schemes can be accepted as a form of prioritization of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups within a longer-term strategy of progressively ensuring universal protection. Implementing the principle of equality and non-discrimination means that all services and benefits are accessible and available – geographically and financially. States should also facilitate access to certain types of administrative requirements, such as ID registration and registration at birth, and remove administrative barriers that prevent people from accessing social protection.

The ***participation*** of people living in poverty in legislation, policies and programmes that affect them is a key condition for the good governance of social protection programmes. People living in poverty should be recognized as new partners in building knowledge on development who can contribute to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these programmes. Participation is a right, in the context of freedom of expression, where people do not fear reprisals. A pre-condition for participation is an interactive informational campaign – in the language most familiar to people living in poverty, where the authorities explain their intention before any decision is taken. Relevant individuals and civil society organizations should be assigned the role of implementing this participation, building up trust with those most concerned and making their expectations known. The state must protect the right to participation through an appropriate legal framework. It must also provide capacity-building and human rights education for persons living in poverty, and establish specific mechanisms and institutional arrangements, at various levels of decision-making, to overcome the obstacles that such persons face for effective participation.

***Transparency and access to information*** are essential elements of ***accountability***. States must implement social protection programmes in a manner that allows individuals to easily recognize and understand: (i) the eligibility criteria; (ii) the specific benefits they will receive, and (iii) the existence and nature of complaints and redress mechanisms. When accountability and redress mechanisms are in place, social protection programmes are more likely to avoid stigma, because they will be understood in terms of entitlements and rights.

## Financing Social Protection Floors

New sources of funding are necessary to finance SPF. At the national and international level a new tax system should be built that brings about social justice and ensures environmental protection. It is also necessary to better regulate global finance, and apply new taxes, such as taxes on financial transactions and financial activities.

Domestic funding for SPFs can be further increased through (i) improved tax collection and broadening the tax base; (ii) progressive tax systems to increase revenue; and (iii) measures to address tax evasion and tax havens. At the international level, additional funding for setting up SPFs is needed through adequate development cooperation programmes as well as through the establishment of a Global Fund for Social Protection.

## Goal, targets and indicators

The overall goal would be: ***a stand-alone goal on social protection and decent work.***

New and participatory sources of information must be developed, making use of new technologies, such as through mobile phones. Inspired by the conceptual framework on human rights indicators<sup>1</sup>, as developed by the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, the outcome, participatory and structural indicators for this target would be as follows:

### ***Outcome indicators:***

- Proportion of workers participating in social insurance schemes
- Proportion of entitled families, children and dependent-adults receiving public support
- Proportion of population in specific situations of need receiving social assistance for food, health care, education, emergency or relief services.

### ***Participatory indicators:***

- Proportion of targeted population appropriately informed of its entitlements and benefits (in cash and in kind) under the applicable social protection schemes.
- Implementation of mechanisms for participation of target groups in the design, implementation and evaluation of social protection programmes.
- Measuring the satisfaction level of beneficiaries and would-be beneficiaries through opinion polls and focus groups, and exploring ways for improvement.

### ***Structural indicators:***

- Design and implementation of a national social protection plan aimed at universal coverage.
- Ratification of international instruments on the right to social protection and implementation of ILO Recommendation (No.202) on national social protection floors.
- Public expenditure and other forms of financing of social protection programmes.
- Creation of international funding mechanisms to support SPFs in low-income countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Essentially, what distinguishes a human rights indicator from a standard disaggregated indicator of socio-economic progress is less its substance than (a) its explicit derivation from a human rights norm and (b) the purpose to which it is put, namely human rights monitoring with a view to holding duty-bearers to account. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights distinguishes three types of indicators. "Structural" indicators measure the commitment of the State (the main duty bearer) towards realizing human rights; for instance through ratification of international instruments and inclusion in national legislation, as well as through the adoption of national policies and corresponding time frame. "Process" indicators measure the efforts and resources that the duty bearer uses to achieve the enjoyment of human rights, which is measured by "outcome" indicators.