

ENSURING SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR ALL

Role of youth, inclusive education, labour market growth, gender, digital challenges and big tech emerge as key themes

In This Issue

States debate the role of the **Global Fund for Social Protection**

Adequate housing, changes in age distribution of populations also introduced by some Member States

Growing criticism of targeted approach to Social Protection

Resources/Links

S-G's report on **Our Common Agenda**:
<https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/>

PGA's letter on **Our Common Agenda**:
<https://www.un.org/pga/76/2021/12/23/letter-from-the-president-of-the-general-assembly-oca/>

Video link for 1st thematic cluster of **Our Common Agenda** "Accelerating and scaling up the SDGs, leaving no-one behind":
<https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1b/k1b73a27va>

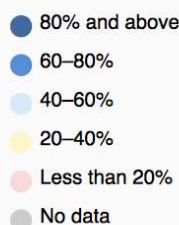
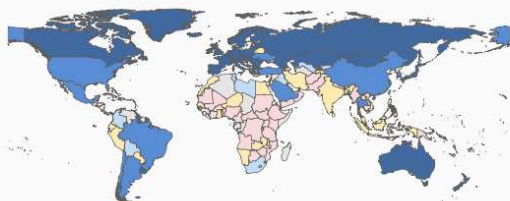
Definition of Social Protection

The Social Protection Floors Recommendation defines social protection floors as "nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees which secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion". (para. 2) Social protection floors should "ensure at a minimum that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential health care and to basic income security which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level" (para. 4).

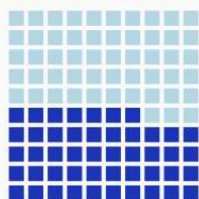
Gaps in social protection: ILO World Social Protection report – 2020-2022

- "The pandemic has exposed deep-seated inequalities and significant gaps in social protection coverage, comprehensiveness and adequacy across all countries."
- "Despite some international support, many low- and middle-income countries have struggled to mount a proportionate social protection and stimulus response to contain the pandemic's adverse impacts in the way that high income countries have been able to do, leading to a 'stimulus gap' arising largely from significant coverage and financing gaps."
- "Countries spend on average 12.9 percent of their GDP on social protection (excluding health), but this figure masks staggering variations. High-income countries spend on average 16.4 per cent, or twice as much as upper-middle-income countries (which spend 8 per cent), six times as much as lower-middle-income countries (2.5 per cent), and 15 times as much as low-income countries (1.1 per cent)."
- "This financing gap for building social protection floors has widened by approximately 30 per cent since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis."
- "To guarantee at least a basic level of social security through a nationally defined social protection floor, lower-middle-income countries would need to invest an additional US\$362.9 billion and upper-middle-income countries a further US\$750.8 billion per year, equivalent to 5.1 and 3.1 percent of GDP respectively for the two groups. Low-income countries would need to invest an additional US\$77.9 billion, equivalent to 15.9 percent of their GDP."

Social protection effective coverage (%)

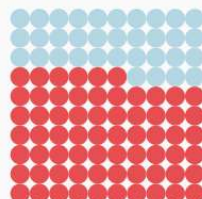


Effective coverage (%)



46.9

Population covered by at least one social protection benefit



66.0

Population affiliated to a social health protection scheme

Source: World Social Protection Data Dashboards

Mali/The African Group draws attention to the social and economic dimensions of adequate housing

- “African Group welcomes the Secretary-General’s call for Member States to accelerate the achievement of universal social protection coverage.”
- Asks for explanation on “elements of this (Lifelong Learning Entitlement) concept that he (S-G) has proposed in his report, including transformational mechanisms, pedagogy, learning environment, adequacy between training and the job market, the geographic gap and the target population”.
- “The Group calls for emphasizing and supporting the implementation of existing mechanisms within the framework of the 2030 Agenda and in line with Goal 2 of Agenda 2063 which encourages and strengthens science, technology, technical innovation and vocational education to promote economic growth and development.”
- “Welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to convene the Education Transformation Summit... calls for more engagement on the modalities and outcomes of this Summit.... stresses that the summit should give priority to ensuring access to good quality education for all, including girls and children with disabilities, and serve as a bridge to reduce the technological gap to ensure the continuity of education during crises.... The Group calls for more engagement around the modalities and outcome documents that the Secretary- General envisages for this Summit.”
- “Takes note of the Secretary-General’s call for a roadmap to integrate informal sector workers into formal economies and to benefit the full participation of women in the labour force”.
- “The African Group makes the link between adequate housing and the New Urban Agenda and aligns it with the African Union Harmonized Framework for the New Urban Agenda in Africa, which takes into account social and economic dimensions in the acquisition of housing in developing countries.”

Partnerships, care, inclusive education highlighted in ASEAN statement

- “ASEAN attaches great importance to promoting sustainable development and in particular the attainment of the SDGs as ASEAN continues to reinforce the caring and sharing, people-centered ASEAN Community based on its Community Vision 2025.”
- Regional and collaborative action necessary for sustainable development. Reiterates commitment to “promoting complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.
- “Welcomes a new economic model that is restorative and regenerative by design, and in this regard, welcomes the endorsement of the Bio-Circular-Green Economy Network.” Underlines “the importance of pursuing sustainable and innovative ways and technology transfers to finance the SDGs, as we build capacities, engage various stakeholders, ensure quality public expenditures, and promote private investments that impact the lives of the people”.
- “Reaffirms the principles of quality, equity and inclusion in education in the ASEAN Work Plan on Education 2021-2025, which is anchored on a lifelong learning framework.”

What does the Global Fund for Social Protection entail? Colombia/Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries ask

- Asks “What would be the nature and guiding principles of the Global Fund for Social Protection?” while recognizing that “social protection responses, while based on national priorities, need to be more mainstreamed across countries. It is time to take stock and develop an action plan on social protection aligned with the 2030 Agenda.”
- Sees “merit of proposals to foster lifelong learning and reskilling; decent work opportunities; proper investment in sustainable economies; integration

of informal workers into formal economies; and adequate housing”.

- Says: “It is critical to scale-up access to universal and quality education. We also need to transform education systems, considering digital technologies and innovative approaches.”
- Recalls that “development should remain the focus of the United Nations Development System (UNDS), pursuant to the mandates and provisions in the QCPR resolution”.

Inclusive Social Security Policy Forum report ‘Smoke and Mirrors’ - analyses IFI policy in MENA region

- “Although the IFIs promote their approach to social security as progressive and pro-poor, in reality, poor relief can have a range of negative consequences.”
- “Across the MENA region, social security systems are failing to reach the majority of the population.”
- “Further, while fuel and food subsidies have historically been regarded as the main means of delivering a degree of income security for much of the population, these measures have been scaled back in recent years. The schemes that are designed to compensate for such subsidy removal, however, are limited in reach and, as a result, many people receive less from the State than before.”
- “When promoting structural adjustment measures – such as subsidy reform – the IMF and World Bank generally advise that part of the savings should be re-allocated to ‘well-targeted’, ‘pro-poor’, ‘efficient’ social security schemes. However, the package that is promoted aligns with a poor relief model and is neither well-targeted nor pro-poor.”

Plenary Segment- MS Statements

10 February, 2022

[Morocco/ Arab Group](#)[Thailand/Association of Southeast Asian Nations](#)[South Africa/UN75 Leaders Network](#)[Dominican Republic/ with many countries](#)[Colombia/ Like-Minded Group of Countries Supporters of Middle-Income Countries](#)[Belgium/ Group of Friends of Decent Work for Sustainable Development](#)[European Union](#)[Kenya/ Group of Friends for Education and Lifelong Learning](#)[Jamaica/ Caribbean Community \(CARICOM\)](#)[Botswana/ Landlocked Developing Countries](#)[Chile/ Group of Friends of Older Persons](#)[Mali/ African Group](#)[Uzbekistan](#)[Germany](#)[Switzerland](#)[Poland](#)[Japan](#)[China](#)**Digital divide intensified by inequitable broadband costs: Botswana/LLDCs**

- Landlocked Developing Countries “[see] merit on the need for enhanced international cooperation...[and] welcomes the Secretary-General’s proposals to convene the Transforming Education Summit....Emphasizes strengthening cooperation to close the digital divide as a main priority.”
- Reiterates “importance of support to expand social protection programmes and strengthen safety nets that are gender responsive; provide specific programmes to support women’s return to

economic activity, including access to training and credit; and ensure that men and women receive equal pay for work of equal value”; seeks further information on World Social Summit.

- Emphasizes “open and affordable access to the Internet for all...broadband costs, as a share of gross national income, are much higher in countries in special situations like the LLDCs, than in coastal countries that are located close to submarine communications cables”.
- Stresses “importance of ensuring predictable and adequate funding for the core activities of the UNDS through existing funding arrangements. We agree that the development partners must enhance their contributions for the core activities of the UNDS”.

UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Philip Alston lambasts the concept of targeted social protection

- “Systems of social protection and assistance are increasingly driven by digital data and technologies that are used for diverse purposes, including to automate, predict, identify, surveil, detect, target and punish.” – A/74/48037, October 2019, para 3
- “Digital welfare states thereby risk becoming Trojan Horses for neoliberal hostility towards social protection and regulation.” – [press release OHCHR, October 2019](#)
- “As humankind moves, perhaps inexorably, towards the digital welfare future it needs to alter course significantly and rapidly to avoid stumbling zombie-like into a digital welfare dystopia,” – October 2019, A/74/48037, 2019, para 72
- “The right to social protection is integrally linked to what the Human Rights Committee refers to as the right to life with dignity.”
- “In relation to social protection services there is a deeply problematic lack of information about the precise role and responsibility of private actors in proposing, developing and operating digital technologies in welfare states around the world.”

Critique of targeted approach to Social Protection: Kidd and Athias (in association with Church of Sweden)

- “If countries and international agencies are truly committed to ‘leaving no-one behind,’ social protection schemes must be able to accurately identify their target populations. Therefore, the mechanisms chosen to target the intended recipients of social protection schemes need to be effective (or, some would say, effective enough).”
- Based on the authors’ research on 42 social protection schemes across 25 low- and middle-income countries, “universal and affluence-tested schemes are much more effective than poverty-targeted programmes in reaching both their intended recipients and those living in poverty. While this is an unsurprising finding, the scale of the errors with poverty targeted schemes is, perhaps, more unexpected.”
- “There is no evidence at all that poverty targeting in low- and middle-income countries can be undertaken with any degree of accuracy.”
- “The results are further proof of the old adage that programmes for the poor are poor quality programmes. The belief among some advocates of poverty targeting that technology will bring about improvements is not borne out by the evidence: even in relatively advanced Latin America contexts with ‘cutting-edge’ Social Registries, the errors are high. Significant improvements are unlikely to happen with more technology.”
- “If governments and international agencies are really committed to ‘leaving no-one behind’ and ensuring that the right to social security is fully realised, the evidence from our research demonstrates that it will be necessary to support universal social protection schemes within the context of inclusive, lifecycle social protection systems. Of course, universal programmes will require a higher level of investment than those using poverty targeting, but the simple truth is that quality costs.”

International Labour Organization questions the role of targeting in Social Protection

- “In the face of complex and fast-moving crises, universalism is preferable to targeted approaches, especially where the administrative capacity to target is limited and a very high proportion of the population is vulnerable. Universalism makes more practical sense than ad hoc efforts to ‘effectively’ target, the limitations of which are well documented.”
- “In the context of our shared commitment to universal social protection, exemplified by the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection (USP2030), and given the growing urgency and commitment on the part of countries to build universal social protection systems, it is of utmost importance that there is clarity in international policy guidance. This would enable national policymakers to decipher where there is consensus on key policy issues, where differences may remain, and where we may simply not know enough.”
- “To do justice to the complex issues associated with poverty targeting, it is essential to treat it separately from other eligibility conditions. However, [the World Bank’s recent publication] [Revisiting Targeting](#) blurs these distinctions.”
- “Targeted or means-tested social assistance schemes are usually one component of a more comprehensive social protection system: in well-developed social protection systems, they cover a small proportion of the population who are not sufficiently captured by non-means-tested schemes, and they are usually anchored in national legislation. Their relevance/usefulness is determined in each specific context against the problem they are trying to address.”
- “The human rights perspective is not blind to the reality of financial constraints weighing on States in their quest for universal social protection. It does not, however, take at face value that the available resources are static.”
- “Compared to poverty-targeted schemes, universal social protection schemes receive more public funding, offer higher value transfers to recipients,

enjoy higher quality implementation, with fewer people living in poverty being excluded."

- "Deficits in state capacity need to be addressed in a more concerted fashion that goes beyond a focus on delivery systems alone. It is equally urgent to build state capacity to regulate labour markets, formalize employment and enterprises, build effective and well-governed social insurance systems, and strengthen the capacity of tax authorities to collect taxes."
- "Digital technology can certainly help to improve the administration and delivery of social protection systems, yet it needs to be applied with caution."
- "The discussion around targeting, and the objectives and design of social assistance schemes is very timely, as these constitute a key component of most social protection systems. Further improving them is critical for realizing universal social protection and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals."

Belgium/Group of Friends emphasizes quantity and quality of jobs in supporting socio-economic equity

- "Labour market plays a key role in shaping societies and the lives of individuals, by providing financial resources, personal dignity, and connecting people to society.... labour market capacity to absorb millions of new entrants remains very slow, especially in low and lower-middle income countries."
- "It is also essential that we look beyond the number of jobs that we seek to create and also enhance the quality of those jobs to ensure people are better off as a result of their employment. This means we must make sure that the policies that shape these transitions also support social and economic equity."
- Appreciates that "Our Common Agenda' considers the challenges of the vast informal economy in developing countries. Such efforts must have a strong gender dimension."
- Calls for closing the financing gap through "full utilization of existing institutions and structures to strengthen social protection globally before new

structures are created. We also call for greater collaboration with and support from the International Financial Institutions, namely the World Bank."

- Reminds states about "Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions that aims to channel national and international, public and private, financial and technical support towards the creation of at least 400 million decent jobs by 2030, and extending social protection floors to over 4 billion people currently not covered", launched by the S-G.

Dominican Republic/joint country statement to support role of youth

- "This Agenda is an opportunity to better galvanize the power, energy and innovation capacity of youth to help tackle not only humanity's biggest challenges of today: from the COVID-19 pandemic, inequality and exclusion, climate change to peace and security, but also to be prepared for future crisis."
- Endorses establishment of a full-fledged UN Youth Office in the Secretariat to "effectively integrate the current activities of the Office of the Envoy on Youth, continue to lead high-level advocacy and serve as the anchor for the United Nations system coordination and accountability on youth matters, including peace and security, sustainable development, humanitarian action and human rights".

Chile/Group of Friends of Older Persons welcomes references to intergenerational cooperation throughout Our Common Agenda

- Asks Member States to "consider how changes in the age distribution of population can have major implications for labour markets, households, social protection, education and health care, and in that regard address ageism and issues that affect persons throughout their life course, in particular those they face when they age".

- “As a first step, we must change how we think, feel and act towards age and ageing. Older persons must not only be understood as beneficiaries of social protection systems, but also active contributors to their societies.”
- It is “important to remember that we are not starting from scratch...efforts should focus on building synergies around the existing frameworks, including by building upon the complementary elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals and targets, the four action areas of the United Nations Decade on Healthy Ageing, the Madrid Action Plan and its three priority directions, as well as the 12 commitments of Our Common Agenda”.
- “Such interlinkages between these frameworks can be found in terms of the meaningful engagement and participation of persons of all ages; building capacity for integrated action across sectors; linking stakeholders to share experience and learn from others; and strengthening data, research and innovation in order to better respond to the needs of people.”

OUR COMMON AGENDA

“Agenda of action designed to accelerate the implementation of existing agreements, including the Sustainable Development Goals. The report includes S-G’s key proposals across the 12 commitments from the Declaration on the Commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, as well as proposed key moments. This report was in response to a request from UN Member States for a report-back with recommendations on how to move forward on current challenges.”- [Women's Major Group](#)

Per President of General Assembly’s [letter on OCA](#)

1. Accelerating and scaling up the SDGs, leaving no-one behind

Covers inter alia [proposals in chapters II and III of Our Common Agenda report, including] paragraphs 19 (social contract), 28 (fund for social protection), 29 (informal economy), 30 (World Social Summit), 31 (transformative gender measures), 32 (CSW), 34 (human rights mechanisms), 36 (legal identity), 46 (youth in politics), 47 (youth office, youth engagement), 49 (education summit), 51 (job creation), 80 (just transition) and 112 (UN Development System).

2. Accelerating the SDGs through sustainable financing and building trust

Covers inter alia [proposals in chapters II and III of Our Common Agenda report, including] paragraphs 21 (listening exercises), 23 (rule of law), 25 (tax and illicit financial flows), 26 (public information code of conduct), 35 (disinformation), 38 (GDP);73 (global economy, biennial G20-ECOSOC-SG-IFI summit), 74 (fairer trading system), 75 (financial integrity), 76 (sustainable business models) and 124 (UN budget).

3. Frameworks for a peaceful world – promoting peace, international law and digital cooperation

Covers inter alia [proposals in chapter IV of Our Common Agenda report, including] paragraphs 89 (new agenda for peace), 91 (outer space), 93 (digital compact) and 127 (intergovernmental organs); [23] (rule of law), [34], (human rights mechanisms, Universal Periodic Review), 35 (application of human rights to frontier issues), [36] (legal identity), 96 (international law), 113 (UN support to social contract) and 129 (funding human rights mechanisms).

4. Protecting our planet and being prepared for the future

Covers inter alia [proposals in chapter IV of Our Common Agenda report, including] paragraphs 79 (climate finance), 82 (1.5 degrees), 83 (global stocktake), 85 (green finance), 86 (adaptation, territorial threats of climate change) and 87 (biodiversity); 54 (representing future generations), 56 (future impact/lab), 58 (Envoy for Future Generations), 59 (Declaration on Future Generations) and 125 (Trusteeship Council or alternative); and 100 (foresight), 101 (emergency platform), 103 (Summit of the Future), 67 (global vaccination plan), 68 (WHO), 69 (pandemic preparedness), 70 (access to health technologies) and 71 (universal health coverage).

5. Enhancing international cooperation

Covers inter alia [proposals in chapters IV and V of Our Common Agenda report, including] paragraphs 32 (CSW), 102 (High Level Advisory Board), 111 (age, gender, diversity), 112 (governance and funding of development), 114 (recruitment), 117 (Scientific Advisory Board), 123 (UN 2.0) and 124 (UN budget), 126-128 (intergovernmental organs), [129] (funding human rights mechanisms); and 118 (regional organizations), 119 (local and regional governments, parliaments), 120 (private sector engagement and accountability), 121, 122 (civil society) and 130 (engagement of civil society and other stakeholders across intergovernmental organs.)