



International Labour Organization

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Key Resources

[The ILO/WHO "Manual and Strategic Framework"](#)

[Country Profiles on national social security protection systems](#)

[Social Transfer Schemes](#)

["World of Work Magazine" - Social Protection edition, December 2009](#)

[What is the UN CEB Social Protection Floor Initiative?](#)

[CEB Communiqué on crisis action](#)

[CEB Issues Paper – The Global and Financial Crisis and its impact on the work of the UN system](#)

A Social Protection Floor for All

Social protection is an indispensable investment in the productive capacity of any country and it is key to charting a fairer and sustainable course for the global economy.
ILO Director-General Juan Somavia

Social protection is defined as the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption or loss of income: it is essential to enable people to live without excessive fear of the consequences of misfortune. All countries – even low-income countries – can provide some elements of basic social protection to their people.

Universal social protection ensures that all people everywhere have access to basic income security, health care, education, food security, unemployment and family protection, water, sanitation, and housing, as well as life and asset saving information. A healthier, more stable nation leads to increased prosperity and opportunity.

An analysis of 80 studies of 30 different countries found that most countries are able to afford some kind of social protection floor. Social transfer schemes are effective programmes that provide cash or in-kind grants to individuals on a conditional basis. They have had a positive impact on poverty, health and nutrition, the social status of recipients – especially women – economic activity, and entrepreneurial small-scale investment.

In the wake of the financial and economic crisis, the need to build a social protection floor has become even more imperative. However, an effective and universal social protection floor can only be achieved through cooperation between nations and with the full support of the multilateral system. If everyone commits to the strategy, then universal social protection can become a reality.

Social protection has been a core priority for the ILO since its founding in 1919. In response to the fractured social protection systems resulting from the current crisis, the ILO and the World Health Organization, acted as the lead agencies for the UN Chief Executive Board's (CEB) Social Protection Floor Initiative, and recently released a ["Manual and strategic framework for joint UN country operations,"](#) which offers policy strategies and tools for ensuring a minimum level of access to services, including health and education and income security for all.

The strength of the Social Protection Floor Initiative lies in its focus on both the supply and demand side of social protection: effective protection can only be achieved through both universal availability of adequate goods and services and income security, affordability and information.

Successful social protection programmes and policies in developing countries to date include –

- Ø [Oportunidades and Seguro Popular, Mexico](#) – a health insurance programme that provides for those not covered by other social security institutions
- Ø [Bolsa Família programme](#) – a conditional cash transfer programme in Brazil
- Ø [GESTARSALUD](#): A subsidized health insurance scheme in [Colombia](#)
- Ø [South Africa](#) has instituted an income support system for children, old age pensions and the disabled
- Ø [The Government of Rwanda](#) has instituted obligatory health insurance for all



Manual and strategic framework for joint UN country operations

Objectives:

- ∅ Promote a coherent vision of national social security as an integral part of a national development strategy.
- ∅ Support countries in identifying and closing protection gaps that can maximize on resources while reducing poverty and insecurity.
- ∅ Ensure that the programmes and activities of UN agencies, national governments, stakeholders and donors are effective in alleviating the impact of the crisis and helping societies protect themselves from future crises.

Building a Social Protection Floor: SPF countries and the UN agencies assisting them are encouraged to build on the social protection strategies already in place. Existing measures can be adjusted and support given to efforts that build on, expand or reorient social protection. To help achieve this, UN agencies participating in the SPF Initiative have agreed to collaborate to help countries build national social protection floor policies, to share information about their social protection activities and to adopt a common development message.

Implementing a framework

For governments: Many countries already have individual strategies in areas such as health, education, housing, food, water, sanitation, the unemployed, older persons, persons with disabilities, families, and people living with HIV/AIDS. These strategies can be brought together to create a single unified development planning framework through a government-led national Social Protection Task Force. The *Manual* can help countries develop their framework, and they are encouraged to prioritize and sequence their policies. The strategies in the *Manual* are not intended to be “one-size-fits-all.” Rather, they are recommendations that can help build on existing policies and identify new measures where needed, in accordance with each country’s social, cultural, political and economic context, as well as its technical, financial and administrative capacities.

For UN cooperating agencies: The *Manual* lays out a strategy for how UN agencies and country teams can work together to launch the social protection floor process. UN agencies are working together on three levels to help put the process in place.

At the country level cooperating UN agencies are tasked with organizing a special Social Protection Floor Country Team to coordinate UN country activities and participate with one voice in the national Social Protection Task Force. UN agencies and NGOs are encouraged to form supplementary networks and initiatives.

At the global level the UN is working together through a Technical Social Protection Floor Advisory Network, which assists country representatives and UN country teams and is composed of focal points from cooperating UN agencies and Bretton Woods institutions. The network will also ensure the documentation and dissemination of national SPF experiences.

A social protection floor requires strong, coherent policy and leadership. The UN High Level Committee on Programmes, currently chaired by ILO Director-General Juan Somavia, will coordinate global policy aspects and advocacy activities, and the UNDG (UN Development Group) will coordinate technical implementation activities.

Knowledge sharing

Education, training, and capacity building (ETC): These programmes are key to defining and implementing a social protection floor policy. By drawing on a variety of methodologies, including south-south learning, triangular training, online and distance learning, knowledge and success stories are shared across the globe. SPF training in English, French and Spanish has already been included in the [ETC Curriculum](#).

Monitoring and evaluation: To increase its monitoring of social protection, the UN is adding to its existing macro research and is developing the Global Immediate Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS), which will provide ‘real-time assessments’ of countries and populations.

In Brief In Brief In Brief

The United Nations has launched its new internet site on Private Public Partnerships, with information organized by region, business, global issue, partnership type and UN organization. ILO partnerships are fully listed and searchable on the site. See: business.un.org and the ILO information at: http://business.un.org/en/browse/un_organisations/62

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Partnerships and Development Cooperation Department
International Labour Office
CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland
Tel. +41 22 799 7604
exrel@ilo.org
www.ilo.org/pardev