



► Africa Regional Social Protection Strategy, 2021-2025

Towards 40 % – a social protection coverage acceleration framework to achieve the SDGs

► Social protection: a human right

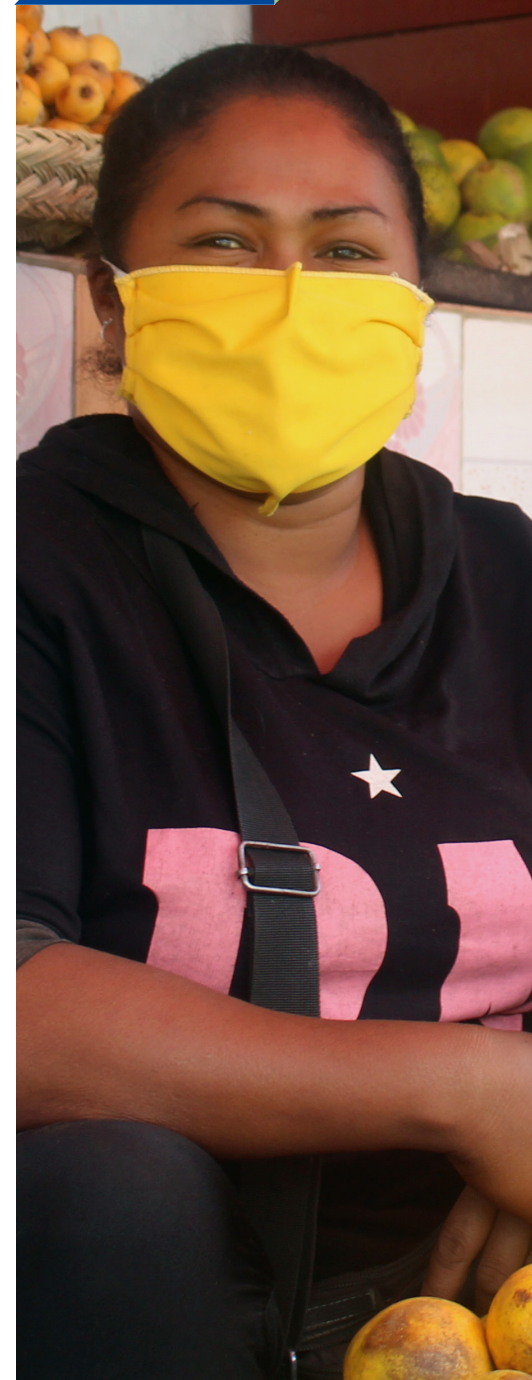
Everyone has a right to social security and a decent standard of living (Articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). This understanding has been consistently reinforced through the international labour standards, most notably the International Labour Organization (ILO) Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) and Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No.202).

Social protection is essential for inclusive growth, social justice and transformative change in the world of work, and for the successful achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic consequences, the International Labour Conference, at its 109th Session in June 2021, adopted the resolution concerning a global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient. Governments and employers' and workers' organizations from around the world undertook to "build forward better" in the wake of the crisis by working to "achieve universal access to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection, including nationally defined social protection floors".

African countries have demonstrated strong political will to put in place policies aimed at building a sustainable development path that includes combating poverty by promoting social protection policies and ensuring that their entire population has effective access to social security. Countries have ratified the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention and other relevant ILO Conventions.



African countries can learn important lessons from the response to COVID-19 to help build an effective strategy to strengthen social protection systems on the continent.



Social protection and the virtuous cycle of development



► Social Protection: a priority in Africa

The African Union's *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*, adopted in 2015, outlines a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of Africa over the next 50 years. The Agenda seeks to achieve a high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens through affordable social security and protection for all, and to increase incomes and provide decent jobs for people of working age.

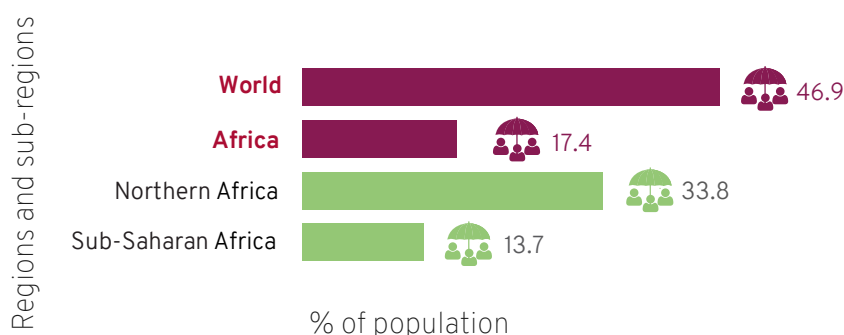
► Coverage gap

Despite the relative importance attached to social protection at the regional and national levels, effective coverage (including contributory and non-contributory schemes) is estimated to be as low as 17 per cent of the total population in Africa. The coverage gap is associated with significant underinvestment: the average social protection expenditure in Africa is less than 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

This has prevented the continent from reaping the benefits that social protection brings, such as the reduction of poverty and vulnerability, formalization of informal workers and elimination of forced and child labour. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this situation, exposing the gaps in social protection and underscoring the worrying consequences of insufficient coverage, particularly in the informal economy.

According to the ILO Social Protection Monitor, between 1st February and end of 2020, nearly all countries in Africa have introduced 230 emergency social protection measures. These measures were mostly non-contributory (86%) and new programmes (64%); 36% of the measures were an adjustment or upgrade of a pre-existing programme.

SDG 1.3.1: Percentage of the total population covered by at least one social protection benefit (effective coverage), 2020



Source: ILO World Social Protection Database, based on the SSI, ILOSTAT and national sources

► The Strategy

The ILO Regional Office for Africa has set a target of 40 per cent coverage with at least one social protection benefit by 2025. Accomplishing such coverage at the continental level will require significant effort and funding, since the countries of Central, Eastern and Western Africa have far lower coverage rates and much higher informality rates among their workforce.

A comprehensive strategy is needed to bridge the gap between existing policies and to guarantee effective social protection at the continental level. The *Africa Regional Social Protection Strategy, 2021 - 2025*, addresses the root causes of coverage deficits on the continent, establishes principles that should guide the extension of social protection, and identifies three action areas that are necessary to bring about tangible change.

► Principles for the Expansion of Social Protection:

- A rights-based approach based on the entitlements prescribed by national law;
- Diversity of methods and approaches and progressive realization;
- Universality of protection based on social solidarity and collective financing;
- Adequacy and predictability of benefits and protection of the rights and dignity of beneficiaries;
- Non-discrimination, gender equality and responsiveness to special needs;
- Financial, fiscal and economic sustainability;
- Transparency, accountability and sound financial management and administration; and
- Tripartite participation and consultation with representatives of the persons concerned.

► Three Action Areas



Action area 1:
Enhance coverage and adequacy through strong social protection strategies, legal frameworks and programmes



Action Area 2:
Close financing gaps by ensuring adequate and sustainable financing



Action Area 3:
Develop strategic partnerships

► An enabling environment for the extension of social protection includes

- (a) a systemic approach to social protection;
- (b) good governance;
- (c) social dialogue;
- (d) investment in data collection and analysis with a view to the development of empirically sound policies;
- (e) monitoring and evaluation of the system with a view to future reforms;
- (f) preparedness of the system should to include a shock-responsive approach.



Effective coverage in Africa is estimated to be as low as 17 per cent of the total population, which has prevented the continent from reaping the benefits that social protection brings.

A structural transformation will be required to ensure the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of social protection systems in member States. A coherent and inclusive social protection system should be built gradually. Policies and programmes should be embedded in law and based on comprehensive longer-term plans that are incorporated into national social protection action plans. These in turn should be part of national development plans that reflect the basic elements detailed in this strategy and based on its principles.

We owe it to the young generations to do our utmost to make social protection in Africa a reality for all through the decisive and concrete actions outlined in this strategy. Let us commit to making the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to build back better towards the vision of The Africa We Want. Together we can make it happen.

Cynthia Samuel-Olonjuwon, ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Africa

Learn more about the strategy at:

<https://www.ilo.org/africa>



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