

Global Social Policy Digest

Global Social Policy Digest is compiled once a quarter by a team at Sheffield University in the UK and provides an overview of the contributions of a range of national and international actors, both governmental and non-governmental, to global social policy. The Digest summarizes recent developments and provides links to statements and reports on specific themes under the banner of social policy. The themes include redistribution, regulation, rights, global social governance, social protection and trade and social policy. The Digest will be hosted on the Integration site for the remaining editions of 2009, we hope you find it useful and welcome your feedback at communication@ilo.org

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Global Social Policies: Redistribution, Regulation, and Rights

REDISTRIBUTION

The financial crisis has the world in its grip (see [critical analysis](#)¹). There is serious concern amongst international organisations and agencies such as [UNCTAD](#)², [World Bank](#)³ and think tanks, such as [IDEAs](#)⁴ and [Foreign Policy in Focus](#)⁵ that it will reduce foreign aid; and put global [anti-poverty targets at risk](#)⁶. The OECD calls for an [aid pledge](#)⁷ from donor countries. At the IMF-World Bank [annual meetings](#)⁸ (13 October, Washington), there was agreement that industrialised countries must not back down from their commitments to boost aid to developing countries, and the two organisations were [urged](#)⁹ to draw on the full range of their resources to help developing countries. Accordingly, the World Bank announced “it would [substantially increase financial support for developing countries](#)¹⁰, including the launch or expansion of four facilities for the crisis-hit private sector that is critical to employment, recovery and growth”¹¹. The OECD Development Centre released “[The end of public support for development aid?](#)”¹² by Robert Zimmerman, and “[Implications for FDI to Developing Countries](#)”¹³, and “[Will Aid Budgets Fall Victim to the Credit Crisis?](#)”¹⁴ both by Andrew Mold. *More on their website*¹⁵.

The concern about reduced aid has been a particular issue connected to the attainment of the MDGs. The [Millennium Development Goals Report 2008](#)¹⁶ says that “we have made important progress towards all eight goals, but we are not on track to fulfil the commitments”. At a [UN High-Level Event on the MDGs](#)¹⁷, governments, foundations, businesses and civil society groups called

for slashing poverty, hunger, disease and other socio-economic ills by 2015, by announcing an estimate \$16 billion in [new commitments](#)¹⁸ to meet the MDGs. The MDG Task Force report [Delivering on the Global Partnership for Achieving the MDGs](#)¹⁹ which focuses on MDG 8, “sounds strong alarm” as “delivery on commitments made by member states has been deficient, and has fallen behind schedule”. A think piece by the Overseas’ Development Institute (ODI) also stressed the importance of [keeping up with the MDGs](#)²⁰. In addition it points to social protection as a tool to protect the poor from sudden shocks, and argues that it should be added to the MDGs as a target under MDG1. At the same time, Jens Martens and Tobias Debiel remind us that the MDGs are much [less ambitious](#)²¹ than previous international development goals, and argue that the MDGs fail to deal with the structural root causes of poverty, such as unequal distribution of wealth, land and political power, as well as unfair global trade rules.

Much of this debate is also connected to estimates of poverty. By revising its poverty estimates, the World Bank recently has provoked a debate on the issue. In a [working paper](#)²² Ravallion and Chen had argued that the developing world is poorer than we thought, but no less successful in the fight against poverty. Nicolo Tomaselli from Eurodad states that “the World Bank data [misses the central issue](#)²³ of characterising a modern and transparent concept of poverty”. Further contributions to the debate can be read at [Social analysis](#)²⁴ and [UNDP’s Poverty Centre](#)²⁵ websites. Parallel to this debate, the Social Watch released its 2008 [Basic Capabilities Index](#)²⁶ (BCI) providing evidence for progress being too slow to achieve the MGDs by 2015.

How to improve aid levels was the topic of the *follow-up* [International Conference on Financing for Development](#)²⁷ in Doha (29 November – 2 December) with the aim to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus of 2002. A SOMO paper discusses the link between [Taxation and Financing for Development](#)²⁸. The focus of that paper, namely the importance of a fair international tax system that is supportive to development, is somewhat different to Sanjeev Gupta and Shamsuddin Tareq’s contribution in [Finance and Development](#)²⁹ that also discusses the issue of taxation arguing that while external aid is still welcome, needed and supposed to increase, “aid-receiving countries [...] could also do more to generate resources internally – and to ensure that both new and existing sources are used efficiently”. [Eurodad](#)³⁰ called on the conference to “combat tax evasion, tax havens, and their impact on developing countries”. To the [conclusions](#)³¹ of the Council of the European Union for the EU’s participation in the conference some [criticisms](#)³² have been raised that there is weak acknowledgement on the impact of the financial crisis on developing countries, a lack of firm commitments to deliver aid levels, that the language on tax justice is rather weak, that debt is falling off the ministerial agenda, and that the commitment beyond Doha will depend on political will. The [Global Policy Forum](#)³³ presents a

number of articles and statements on the conference. The World Campaign for In-Depth Reform of the System of International Institutions 2006-2009 released a [paper](#)³⁴ calling for the creation of a Currency Transaction Tax for Financing for Development (CTT for FfD). The Doha NGO Group on Financing for Development addressed an [open letter](#)³⁵ to the President of the General Assembly.

This final outcome documents ([A/CONF.212/L.1](#), [A/CONF.212/L.1/Corr.1](#) , [A/CONF.212/L.1/Corr.2](#), and [A/CONF.212/L.1/Rev.1*](#)) was regarded by the civil society forum gathered at the conference as a [missed opportunity](#)³⁶. “Civil Society are most concerned about the lack of urgency and of any further commitment concerning the implementation of a great number of recommendations - including core issues challenging financing for development such as trade, Foreign Direct Investment, mobilising local resources, innovative funding - all these were inadequately dealt with or postponed to forthcoming meetings, at a time that people around the world are suffering directly from the persisting and combined crises. However a positive outcome was the decision, against initial US objections that “the UN will hold a conference at the highest level on the world financial and economic crisis and its impact on development. The conference will be organised by the President of the General Assembly and the modalities will be defined by March 2009 at latest”. See also a [critical analysis](#)³⁷ from Eurodad.

Despite there being so many concerns about keeping up and improving aid levels, the Global Fund Board approved [US\\$ 2.75 billion](#)³⁸ in new grants; and further broadens its financial basis by [Starbucks joining RED](#)³⁹.

On aid effectiveness, following the third [High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness](#)⁴⁰ , held in Accra on 2-4 September 2008, several connected documents have been issued, such as the Accra [Agenda for Action](#)⁴¹, and a booklet [‘Whose Ownership?’](#)⁴². A Key conclusion in the Accra Agenda was that “Donors agree to use country systems as the first option for aid programmes in support of activities managed by the public sector”. Capacity building of developing country governments was a central focus as was predictability and co-ordination of aid and an increase in South-South Co-operation. This in principle should address the kind of [problem](#)⁴³ identified by the World Bank when pointing for example to Vietnam as an international aid magnet in 2007: attracting 752 donor mission. “While the funds are welcome, the plethora of projects is taxing low income governments with limited capacity and hurting countries’ ability to take control of their own development, say donor experts”

Governance Matters – a blog about Governance and Development for All – points to the crucial role of CSOs in the outcome of the conference regarding [aid effectiveness](#)⁴⁴ and [anti-corruption governance](#)⁴⁵; Also it is worth noticing the [CSO report](#)⁴⁶ on Accra . However Aid Watch Philippines is [critical](#)⁴⁷ about

the Accra Action Agenda stating that “The AAA fails to address the most essential concerns with the greatest impact on development in the Third World: democratic ownership of aid, policy conditionalities, tied aid and the foreign debt burden”.

The OECD followed up on the conference with a [policy workshop](#)⁴⁸ *Delivering Aid Effectiveness: Progress Since Accra in the Context of the Global Economic and Financial Crisis*. Further, as part of the OECD [Global Forum on Development](#)⁴⁹, the OECD together with the Brookings Institutions and IESE Business School organised an informal [experts’ workshop](#)⁵⁰ *Lessons for Development Finance from Innovative Financing in Health*. Also the World Bank published on [Innovative Financing for Development](#)⁵¹. In the context of the aid crisis increased attention is being given to the [significance of remittances](#)⁵² from migrant workers to countries: the IFC and the World Bank have launched a [global database of remittances](#).⁵³

REGULATION

As the world is hit by financial and economic crisis, at the G20 Summit in Washington D.C, governments came up with a [joint declaration](#)⁵⁴ on measures to tackle the crisis – that, however, avoided the implementation of stronger global tools of trade regulation. There were [significant differences](#)⁵⁵ in European and US approaches to this issue. While the former “call for more global regulation of cross-border flows, the US argue that the nation state should be the primary regulatory authority responding to the financial crisis”. The [OECD](#)⁵⁶ welcomed the declaration and offered its support related to providing analysis and recommendations for more effective regulation and policies for a return to sustainable growth.

The ILO responded to the crisis by [arguing for employment and social policy responses](#)⁵⁷ arrived at through social dialogue such as ensuring social protection for all affected by the deepening global economic crisis. A [statement](#)⁵⁸ by ILO’s Director-General further encouraged the development of global regulation for a fair globalisation. An International Institute for Labour Studies [discussion paper](#)⁵⁹ addressed *The effects of financial globalization on global imbalances, employment and inequality*. CSOs [called](#)⁶⁰ for governments to “renegotiate free trade agreements, control capital flows, call for debt cancellation and close tax havens”. More [discussion](#)⁶¹ on the G20 event can be found at the G20 Information Project.

Discussion on tax havens continues however to focus on their transparency rather than their closure. For example on the initiative of France, and Germany, 17 OECD countries came together in a [Conference on the fight against international tax evasion and avoidance](#)⁶² in Paris on the 21st October to discuss how to respond to offshore non-compliance with their tax laws. The OECD has published a [report](#)⁶³ on its work on tax evasion.

The question of regulating tax havens was an issue at the *Finance for Development Conference* (See above). An early draft of the outcome document addressed this issue focusing on fighting tax evasion. It aimed to encourage global tax information-sharing and simplified tax laws. Most crucially, it wanted to upgrade the UN's tax-expert panel to intergovernmental status, elevating the importance of the issue of individual and corporate tax avoidance and evasion. The UK, together with the US, Canada and Australia, were opposed to the measure, according to the [Tax Justice Network](#)⁶⁴. The relevant paragraph in the Doha's final outcome document in a watered down statement: "In this regard, we acknowledge the need to further promote international cooperation in tax matters, and request the Economic and Social Council to examine the strengthening of institutional arrangements, including the United Nations Committee of Experts on [International Cooperation in Tax Matters](#)⁶⁵.(Para 16)

The *Global Forum on Migration and Development* in Manila held between 27th and 30th October 2008 focused on rights and security of migrants, with the aim "to shift the debate away from the usual rational arguments about economic benefits of migration, and back to the migrants and their families". Among the [conclusions and recommendations](#)⁶⁶ of the forum was that protecting these rights is "a shared responsibility of governments of origin and host countries". It was further proposed to set up an ad hoc Working Group on Data and Research on Migration and Development, and an ad hoc Working Group on Policy and Institutional Coherence.⁶⁷ An ITUC [statement](#)⁶⁸ makes a similar point. The UN Population Division published its [Global Migration Database](#)⁶⁹ on the number ("stock") of international migrants by country of enumeration and country of birth, citizenship, sex and age, comprising over 2,200 data sets from over 200 countries and territories in the world, collected between 1975 and 2008.

Further, the UN and the European Commission (EC) have started a *Joint Initiative on Migration and Development*. This is a [15 million € programme](#)⁷⁰ funded by the EC and implemented by the UNDP in partnership with the IOM, UNFPA, UNHCR and ILO that is supposed to introduce new ways of making migration work for development. The [Seventh Coordination Meeting on International Migration](#)⁷¹ (20-21 November 2008) discussed the follow-up to the 2006 High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, and exchanged information on activities in international migration and development.

At the same time, European and OECD countries are taking steps to regulate migration to meet their own needs. The *OECD International Migration Outlook*⁷² analyses its member states policies, and makes recommendations on labour migration programmes.⁷³ More concretely, the EU started opening [offices](#)⁷⁴ in Africa to control illegal immigration. To give this a more "human face", these centres are also supposed to act as a transfer point for sending

home remittances. At the UN GA's annual high-level debate, [Ecuador criticised](#)⁷⁵ this policy, arguing that "migration must be in line with international humanitarian law and respect migrants' human rights". At the same time trying to attract highly qualified migrants to the EU, a "Blue Card scheme" is underway. However, there are concerns about increasing the [brain drain from poor countries](#)⁷⁶. The International Organisation for Migration warns that Africa has already [lost one third of its human capital](#)⁷⁷.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is to reinforce its efforts to help employers and the private sector contribute to the [global fight against forced labour](#)⁷⁸, which the ILO estimates afflicts more than 12 million persons worldwide.

RIGHTS

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Global Migration Group analyses the challenges of protecting the [human rights of international migrants](#)⁷⁹. The report argues that "migrants have inalienable rights that states have an obligation to protect even when they exercise their sovereign right to determine who enters and remains in their territory". The UN Global Compact calls on companies to make a commitment to improve at least one aspect of their [human rights reporting](#).⁸⁰

The [Human Rights Council](#)⁸¹ met for its 9th session in September. Amongst its resolutions were those on human rights and international solidarity, the right to development, human rights of migrants, the food crisis and the realisation of the right to food for all, and human rights and indigenous people.

Further, there is a UN [study under way](#)⁸² to ensure the right to education for world's indigenous peoples. And the ILO [Gender Equality campaign](#)⁸³ highlights the need for rights, jobs and social security for older women and men. [The State of World Population](#)⁸⁴ of the UNPFA focuses on *Culture, Gender and Human Rights*.

Global Social Governance

The financial crisis has also raised new issues about the future role of the Bretton Woods institutions. Hossein Askari (George Washington University) argues that one of the causes of the present financial crisis is that [IFIs refused to deal with their basic mandates](#)⁸⁵, and that they should return to these. "The world needs an IMF that is in charge of macroeconomic policies, namely fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies, leaving trade policies to the World Trade Organisation and economic development and its financing to the World Bank. The idea of a Bretton Woods II Conference generated [debates](#)⁸⁶. Formally, the [Declaration of the Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy](#)⁸⁷ (15 November, Washington, D.C.) declares:

We should review the adequacy of the resources to the IMF, the World Bank Group and other multilateral development banks and

stand ready to increase them where necessary.We underscore that the Bretton Woods Institutions must be comprehensively reformed so that they can more adequately reflect changing economic weights in the world economy and be more responsive to future challenges. Emerging and developing economies should have greater voice and representation in these institutions.

The [Bretton Woods Project](#)⁸⁸ was not impressed by this outcome. However the [Centre for Global Development](#)⁸⁹ notes that criticism is now being made about the organisations from the inside.

Some commentators (see [here](#)⁹⁰ and [here](#)⁹¹) link their reflections about global institutional reform to yet other organisations and fora, such as the finance for development conference in Doha. Clearly, the debates about the financial crisis have also started to shape preparations for the next [G8 summit](#)⁹² in Italy. This relates to the future format of G8 summits: Despite Silvio Berlusconi's [defence of the G8](#)⁹³ (of which Italy is the next President) there are [plans to expand the G8](#)⁹⁴ by including China, India, South Africa, Mexico and Brazil. Also World Bank president [Zoellick](#)⁹⁵, and [Sarkozy](#)⁹⁶ called for replacing the G7.

Commentators are mixed regarding their expectations for a better system of global governance. 550 organisations from about 90 countries called the G20 summit another "[New Undemocratic Washington Consensus](#)".⁹⁷; while others regard the current situation as "a [rare opportunity to reform global governance](#)⁹⁸ in ways that address the systemic inequalities of the neo-liberal age". The South Centre has called for a process of [revamping the global financial architecture](#)⁹⁹.

The President of the UN General Assembly commenting on the [outcome of the Doha Conference](#)¹⁰⁰ on Financing for Development (see above) said that the world had repudiated the notion of a Group of Seven (G-7), a Group of Eight (G-8) or even a G-20, and declared: "We believe the only relevant forum is the G-192 – that is the entire membership of the United Nations General Assembly." The Conference marked the only time since Monterrey that systemic issues and reform of the global financial system had been discussed in a United Nations forum. Since Monterrey, the great Powers had been trying hard to move such issues outside the United Nations system, so the Conference had been a great advance.

Regarding the World Bank, President Zoellick said: "The World Bank Group [also needs reform](#).¹⁰¹". The World Bank board met in October to discuss a package of reforms to the way the World Bank is governed. A great number of NGOs and individuals signed a letter to World Bank president, Robert Zoellick, calling for future reforms based on the principle of "parity" (equal voting share for borrower and non-borrower countries). An [article](#)¹⁰² by the Bretton Woods

project expresses only limited expectations for change from that meeting (see also [here](#)¹⁰³). In a similar attempt, the [Commonwealth](#)¹⁰⁴ has urged the World Bank and the IMF to re-examine their policies to put them in line with the needs of the 21st century, namely greater representation of small and poor states in the governance structure of the institutions. See also World Bank-IMF Development Committee [communiqué](#)¹⁰⁵ and [reactions](#)¹⁰⁶.

At the same time as there is talk about the future role of global IFIs, regional initiatives are further gaining ground: The Bretton Woods project discusses the alternative of the '[Bank of the South](#)'¹⁰⁷; while Korea proposes the creation of a \$80 billion [Asian Monetary Fund](#)¹⁰⁸; for discussion see also [here](#)¹⁰⁹. Already in summer, the [African Union had announced plans](#)¹¹⁰ to establish an [African Monetary Fund](#)¹¹¹

The UN meanwhile set up a [High Level Task Force](#)¹¹² on the global financial crisis, chaired by [Joseph Stiglitz](#)¹¹³, who argues that the UN is the only institution that has broad legitimacy and that it should take a lead role in reforming and monitoring the global financial system. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, the current Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and José Antonio Ocampo of Colombia, who is a former Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, were also members of the [panel](#)¹¹⁴.

The UN is also considering reforms to its governance structures. In the beginning of September, UN member states met in the 62nd session to further discuss system-wide coherence based on a [report](#)¹¹⁵ by the co-Chairs. First consultations were followed by a [draft resolution](#)¹¹⁶ circulated by the co-chairs which stated that "the Assembly's continuing, and deepening inter-Governmental work on System-wide Coherence will focus exclusively and in an integrated manner on Delivering as One at country and regional level". This was adopted. This appears to leave aside the issues of reform at the UN global level.

International Actors and Social Policy

HEALTH

At the WHO, primary health care (PHC) has come even more back to the agenda (see digest 8.3): The [World Health Report 2008](#)¹¹⁷ *Primary Health Care – Now More Than Ever* was released. This was accompanied by a Lancet series *Alma-Ata: Rebirth and Revision*¹¹⁸. A blog by [Duncan Green](#)¹¹⁹ at the Oxfam website is not only supportive of the report. It criticises that prepayment schemes are accepted that can exclude poor people; and that it stops short of calling for publicly provided services.

The Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) has also been followed up in other ways. Resuming its 2008 substantive session, the ECOSOC President announced a briefing on the [key messages](#)¹²⁰ of the

CSDH's final report, as these findings were of great relevance to the Council's deliberations next year on the theme of global public health. This [meeting](#)¹²¹ took place on 10 December with Michael Marmot (Chair of CSDH), Ruth Levine (Centre for Global Development), and Nora Lustig (George Washington University). A Lancet issue gives space for the new global movement resulting from the WHO's Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH). It published evidence on actions that can reduce the startling health inequalities within and between countries.¹²²

Further, in November, an international [conference on health inequalities](#)¹²³ took place in London, initiated by the WHO. More specifically on health systems, on 10 October, experts with the WHO have identified ways to further [strengthen national health systems](#) in Africa.

Also based on the tradition of PHC, CSOs launched the second [Global Health Watch](#)¹²⁴. On health system¹²⁵s, amongst other things, it supports progressive health financing, pooling health finance to optimise risk-sharing and cross-subsidisation, fitting health-care expenditure and utilisation patterns according to need, balancing population-based approaches with individualised health care, and balancing needs-driven and rights-based health provision against commercialisation. Improving the situation of health systems requires increased levels of health expenditure from international and external sources. Labonte points to the strength of the report being a product of several CSOs and networks, and that its inherent activism is strongly evidence based and carefully reasoned. Ilona Kickbusch in the Lancet¹²⁶ comments that “[a]lthough *Global Health Watch 2* draws attention to recent southern initiatives to develop alternative international structures and new models of south-south cooperation, it does not go far enough”. See also the comment by Ronald Labonte (2008) ‘The Global Health Watch 2 report: Holding the social and economic causes of health inequities to account’¹²⁷.

The *Global Health Watch II* also takes a critical look at the health activities of the World Bank. It points to the unequal voting rights within the World Bank, its decreasing health role, and discusses the latest health sector strategy (see digest 7.2). It acknowledges that the “Bank has become more sensitive to the charge that its policies have been harmful to the poor”; but there are still contradictions such as the promotion of commercialisation in the health sector. Accordingly, the report concludes:

In overall terms, the strategy shows a continued inclination towards pro-private, market oriented policies and segmented health systems, with a public sector charged mainly with the responsibility of financing a basic package for the poor.

Also commenting on the World Bank's health strategy is an [article](#)¹²⁸ by the Bretton Woods project. It criticises that while it is a positive sign to focus on

health systems, “implementation of the strategy has gone nowhere, [...] because the HNP team simply does not have the expertise nor staff to implement it.”

From 17 to 19 November, the [Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health](#)¹²⁹ took place in Bamako, Mali (see [official website](#)¹³⁰). In advance, a HR4D-net [discussion list](#)¹³¹ has been launched. The Lancet¹³² published a statement on the Forum, arguing that the “Bamako call to action was a substantial step beyond Mexico¹³³, towards a new vision for health equity”. One important focus was “to ensure that research priorities were determined by countries, not global institutions”. Thus, the multilateral contributors to the meeting (WHO, UNESCO, and World Bank) were asked “to promote, expand, and implement research strategies with an emphasis on listening to country agendas and responding to their priorities”.

More specifically on one global disease, 1 December was [World AIDS Day](#)¹³⁴. In a [news release](#)¹³⁵, the statements by a number of global figures were summarised, pointing to universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support, and rights to health. Related events have been organised, amongst others, by the [ILO](#)¹³⁶, and the [World Bank](#)¹³⁷

The future of any of these global health activities could be threatened by the financial crisis (see also *Global Social Policies* section). In a statement on [health and the financial crisis](#)¹³⁸, WHO Director-General Margaret Chan warned to shift investments away from the social and health sector as such strategies had already failed in past crises: “it is essential to learn from previous mistakes and offset the current economic upheaval by enhancing investment in health and the social sector”

The OECD has contributed publications on [pharmaceutical pricing policies](#)¹³⁹; and on the looming [crisis of the health workforce](#)¹⁴⁰. On pharmaceutical pricing is also [Eurohealth](#)¹⁴¹. The OECD further released its [OECD Health Data Updates](#)¹⁴²

In its publications, the World Bank is concerned about how to govern [mandatory health insurance](#)¹⁴³, and has issued a [toolkit](#)¹⁴⁴ for performance-based contracting for health services. Further, Pablo Gottret, George J. Schieber and Hugh R. Waters have edited [Good Practices in Health Financing](#)¹⁴⁵.

The [WHO and the OECD jointly hosted](#)¹⁴⁶ a dialogue on migration and other health workforce issues in a global economy.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

The global policy advocacy coalition for a global social floor, or more precisely a global minimum social protection package (See GSP Digest 8.3:414), has been active in various fora. A side event at the December Doha Finance for Development Conference entitled “[A new deal for people in a global crisis:](#)

[Social security for all](#)¹⁴⁷“ was addressed by Michael Cichon, Director, Social Security Department, ILO, Isabel Ortiz, Senior Policy Advisor, UN DESA, Silvia Stefanoni, Director, HelpAge International and Gaspar Fajth of UNICEF. Similarly, the AU meeting in Windhoek (See also Southern Voices) agreed in November – after lobbying from Helpage International – to include into the document “Social Policy Framework for Africa” the [following statement](#)¹⁴⁸: *There is an emerging consensus that a minimum package of essential social protection should cover: essential health care, and benefits for children, informal workers, the unemployed, older persons and persons with disabilities.* A brainstorming meeting organised by UNICEF in Nepal in November on Social Protection Opportunities in South Asia, attended also by Ortiz and Cichon agreed an advisory note to SAARC which included the same sentiments. This will be reported on UNICEF’s [ROSA website](#)¹⁴⁹ subsequently. The [UNDP Poverty Centre](#)¹⁵⁰ in Brazil now reports progress with cash transfer programmes across the Global South.

Tax funded social pensions provided categorically is an important component of this basic social protection package. Meanwhile the global economic crisis is impacting on the value and sustainability of the defined-contribution private pension tier introduced with World Bank advice in many countries in the past decades. Argentina is the first country to [nationalise](#)¹⁵¹ its private pension system. Other [Latin American schemes](#)¹⁵² are likely to follow suit. Of related interest is the OECD view that [Latin America needs better taxes and better spending](#)¹⁵³.

Undeterred, however, the World Bank celebrates its [impact on pension reform in South East Europe](#)¹⁵⁴ and the Directorate of Financial and Enterprise Affairs of the OECD pursues its advocacy of private pension schemes in alliance with the International Organisation of Pension Schemes (Not the state-centred ISSA with which the ILO collaborates): The OECD/IOPS Global Forum on Private Pensions was held on 30-31 October in Mombassa, Kenya. The Global Forum addressed a wide range of issues of high relevance to national policy debate on retirement savings in both developed and emerging economies. Special attention at the event this year was devoted to the developments in the [pension industry on the African continent](#)¹⁵⁵. At the same time the lead [web page](#)¹⁵⁶ of the OECD’s Department of Labour and Social Affairs notes “high levels of pension spending have led OECD countries to reform their pension systems and encourage people to work longer. But private retirement plans also face enormous challenges”. Other useful sources are: [Coverage of Funded Pension Plans](#)¹⁵⁷ and [Pension Fund Performance](#)¹⁵⁸: and [Complementary and Private Pensions Throughout the World 2008](#)¹⁵⁹ provides in-depth information on the regulation and supervision of voluntary and mandatory occupational pension plans as well as mandatory private pension schemes in 58 countries worldwide.

On global policies on ageing more generally the following UN documents relate to implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing. These are the [Guide](#)¹⁶⁰ to the National Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2008), and the [Guiding Framework And Toolkit For Practitioners & Policy Makers](#).¹⁶¹

The following two items are UN position papers: [Mainstreaming](#) the concerns of older persons into the social development agenda¹⁶² (2003) and [Integration and Participation of Older Persons in Development](#)¹⁶³ (2008).

In terms of the world of work, the ILO has published, in association with their International Institute for Labour Studies, the new flagship report [World of Work outlook: Income Inequalities in the Age of Financial Globalization](#)¹⁶⁴. This provides analytical support to the ILO's view that the growth model that led to the financial crisis is not sustainable. It confirms that a rebalancing between economic, social and environmental goals is vital both to recovery and also the shaping of a fair globalisation. Recently published background research papers from the Institute include [Policies for redistribution: taxes and social transfers](#)¹⁶⁵ which reviews successful government policies in this field and ["Labour, globalization and inequality: Are Trade Unions still redistributive?"](#)¹⁶⁶ by Lucio Baccaro.

At the same time the OECD published its major report on ["Rising Inequality"](#)¹⁶⁷ which shows that inequality is growing in three out of four OECD countries. It reveals that the inequity and poverty situation among the elderly is not as bad as the growing inequity and poverty among OECD children. Related is the final [policy brief](#)¹⁶⁸ of the OECD's Bosses and Babies programme.

Migrant workers are not adequately covered by nationally-based social protection systems and no global social protection system has yet been developed to meet their needs. A working paper from the World Bank titled ["Protecting Temporary Workers: Migrant Welfare Funds from Developing Countries"](#)¹⁶⁹ argues that the usual protection measures offered domestically such as emergency relief, government assistance, workers compensation, or health insurance (social protection and safety nets) are in many instances unavailable for migrants in the destination country. Private companies in origin and destination countries are usually reluctant to provide an insurance scheme that would fund services for migrants. A migrant welfare fund that is government-operated in the origin country and financed by migrants or their employers offers a potentially efficient and feasible solution to protecting migrants. Some countries of origin, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, have created migrant welfare funds that serve as the centrepiece for protecting their migrants.

EDUCATION POLICY

The [International Conference on Education](#)¹⁷⁰ (ICE) took place in Geneva, hosted by the International Bureau of Education from November 25-28. The theme of the conference was [‘Inclusion’](#)¹⁷¹, aimed at ensuring access to education for all children, in particular those from marginalised groups; for example girls, migrants, children with disabilities or HIV orphans. The conference was the most prominent event dealing with education in a social policy context for many years. In its [conclusions](#)¹⁷², the conference calls upon member countries ‘adopt an inclusive education approach in the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of educational policies as a way to further accelerate the attainment of Education for All (EFA) goals as well as to contribute to building more inclusive societies. As in the context of any ICE conference, national reports on the education system and ways to guarantee inclusion were published and are [available online](#)¹⁷³.

In the context of the conference, the annual [Global Monitoring Report of the Education for All](#)¹⁷⁴ (EFA) initiative was published. It deals with management, governance and financing of education systems, and evaluates the impact of these factors on educational inclusion. It contains chapters that analyze the role of governance in relation to realising the EFA goals. The ongoing disparities are widely examined, and explicit policy recommendations are given to ensure provision. Education planners need to ensure that the benefits of expanded provision are shared by disadvantaged groups and underserved regions. Practical strategies for strengthening equity include the removal of user fees, the introduction of financial incentives for the education of girls and children from disadvantaged backgrounds, targeted support to keep children in school and the deployment of well-trained teachers proficient in local languages. More equitable public spending patterns are also critical to ensure that schools, teachers and resources are skewed towards those with the greatest need rather than those with the greatest wealth (p.236)’. Like the conference, the report puts the social dimension of education centre-stage. Education International has [quickly reacted](#)¹⁷⁵ to the publication of the report, applauding the explicit acknowledgement of public responsibility for primary schooling

The OECD is concerned with the education of migrants, a marginalised group in many education systems. A second expert meeting on the migrant education review took place in October, preparing the review process of several countries. Presentations focussed on how different international organisations and countries deal with the education of migrants. As short summary of the meetings, as well as the presentations given are [available online](#)¹⁷⁶. The OECD has also published its new version of [“Education at a Glance](#)^{177”}, including some indicators of non-member countries too. Together with the World Bank, an OECD [education policy report](#)¹⁷⁸ of South Africa was

published in October, and a policy review on Chile is to be presented in the course of December.

HABITAT, LAND AND HOUSING

Policy-makers, development practitioners and non-governmental organisations seeking sustainable solutions on how to manage rapid urbanisation met at the fourth [World Urban Forum](#)¹⁷⁹ in Nanjing, China, November 3 to 6. A new UN-HABITAT report, [State of the World's Cities 2008/9: Harmonious Cities](#)¹⁸⁰ (available for purchase [here](#)¹⁸¹) notes that (a) American cities are as unequal as African and Latin American cities; (b) 3 million people per week are added to cities in the developing world; (c) one out of three people in cities in the developing world live in slums; (d) few coastal cities are likely to be spared the effect of climate change; and (e) cities are key to the reduction of carbon emissions and sustainable use of resources. UN-HABITAT has also released 'The State of the African Cities Report', the first of its kind for Africa, and is [available online](#)¹⁸². Finally, the theme of the 2009 World Bank's [World Development Report](#)¹⁸³ is Reshaping Economic Geography with a focus on density, distance and division.

The UN has declared 2008 as the [International Year of Sanitation](#)¹⁸⁴. Its five pronged message is that: (1) Sanitation is vital for human health; (2) Sanitation generates economic benefits; (3) Sanitation contributes to dignity and social development; (4) Sanitation helps the environment; and (5) Improving sanitation is achievable.

Water has been in the news lately. In [Drinking at the Public Fountain: The New Corporate Threat to Our Water Supplies](#)¹⁸⁵ Tom Dispatch argues that the collapsing global economy causes a new wave of privatisation of water. In their pursuit of profit multinational corporations want customers to use extra water and pay more for it. This caused people in communities to campaign to the water supply to return to public ownership. Since the 1990s, many countries have handed over [water management to private companies](#)¹⁸⁶. Water became a commodity instead of a public good, leaving millions of poor people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation. And as water resources dwindle, conflicts over water intensify. In Bolivia, South Africa, Ghana, the Philippines and Indonesia violent struggles have broken out against companies seeking to privatise water.

Following a three-month consultation process, the UN Global Compact Office today announced a comprehensive [Transparency Policy for the CEO Water Mandate](#)¹⁸⁷, an initiative launched in July 2007 to advance corporate water sustainability practices.

Aid donors [should focus on water and sanitation](#)¹⁸⁸ as this would do more to end poverty and improve health than any other measure says [UN University policy brief](#)¹⁸⁹. WaterAid and Tearfund have also published a report calling for

a [global framework for action](#)¹⁹⁰ in sanitation and water. Also of interest is the [UNESCO water site](#)¹⁹¹.

The article “[The World Bank and water privatisation: public money down the drain](#)¹⁹²” by Molina and Peter Chowla (2008) observes that although the World Bank may be changing its formerly dogmatic approach to full privatisation of the water sector, key cases in [Tanzania](#), Armenia, Zambia and India highlight that the Bank may not be learning quickly enough and that the poor may be left both without improved water and paying for botched privatisations.

The recently launched Global Health Watch 2 report (2008) contains sections on urbanisation and water and sanitation (see Health section).

FOOD POLICY

Although the rise of food prices has been stopped in some places, the [food price has remained high](#)¹⁹³ in many [developing countries](#)¹⁹⁴, leaving large parts of the population still hungry - UN experts estimated [nearly 1 billion](#)¹⁹⁵. The UN high level committee on food security has published a [survey](#)¹⁹⁶ of the UN responses to the food crisis, listing the activities of its several agencies. In November, the president of the UN General Assembly, Miguel D’Escoto, called for a [global food supply](#)¹⁹⁷ that is oriented on democratic principles and less dependent on large corporations.

Until the end of September, the World Bank has granted [loans](#)¹⁹⁸ of US \$ 83 million to developing countries for food distribution and the implementation of food policies. World Bank activities also include the distribution of [fertilizers](#)¹⁹⁹ to increase the agricultural production. Agriculture is announced to become a [higher priority](#)²⁰⁰ in development policies.

Several papers authored by NGOs emphasize the role the industrialised countries and their policies played as [cause of the crisis](#)²⁰¹: Subsidized agriculture in industrialised countries, the dependence of developing countries on world food markets without a large domestic agriculture, and the difficulties of organising food aid when food prices are high. The reports also underline that the [dependence of developing countries on world markets](#)²⁰² are caused by policies recommended by industrialised countries and international organisations.

Trade and Social Policy

Trade negotiations during autumn 2008 were affected by the demise of the July WTO 2008 negotiations and the evolving global financial crisis so there is

less to report on trade. More space is given to the global financial crisis (See also Redistribution, Regulation and Governance above). The global financial crisis has raised new calls for the reform of international financial institutions and global action on global financial regulation as well as for governments to maintain national policy space for development. The latter aspect was analysed in a side event to the Doha Conference. The [background note](#)²⁰³ prepared by UNCTAD concluded that a right balance between international rules and regulation, on the one hand, and national policy space, on the other, would require an extension of the scope of multilateral rules and disciplines in the area of international monetary and financial relations, which reflects the interests and needs of the different parties in a balanced and equitable manner.

The global financial crisis has been analysed and assessed by a variety of institutions and actors. The [World Economic Situation and Prospects report 2009](#)²⁰⁴ is a joint publication of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD and five United Nations regional commissions with focus on the background and evolution of the global financial crisis.

UNCTAD has released [policy briefs](#)²⁰⁵ on the global financial crisis and the World Bank has contributed with a [background paper](#)²⁰⁶ on the issue. The IMF has also a dedicated [site](#)²⁰⁷ on the matter. Critical civil society views and assessments can be found in [Cornerhouse](#)²⁰⁸. A compilation of critical views from the [Transnational Institute](#)²⁰⁹ and [Casinocrash](#)²¹⁰ is also available electronically. Finally, a collection of views from the South has also been compiled by [Institute of Development studies](#)²¹¹.

The [2008 World Investment report](#)²¹² has its focus this year on transnational corporations and the infrastructure challenge. The UNCTAD Trade and Development report on the other hand has its focus on commodity prices, capital flows and the financing of investment, highlighting the paradox that capital poor developing world is exporting capital to the capital rich developed countries.

In health trade policies as governments struggle with pharmaceutical prices, issues related to pricing and access to pharmaceuticals are becoming more prominent across the globe with more critical insights emerging on industrial and trade policies in the field. The [European Commission](#)²¹³ has brought up some problematic aspects of pharmaceutical industry behaviour, including use of patenting policies to restrict entry of generic drugs to the markets. The inquiry estimated that as result of corporate delaying tactics 3 billion € were lost within 17 Member States between 2000 and 2007. The European findings seem to be broadly supportive also to the efforts in Brasilia to [curb expanded patent](#)²¹⁴ on pharmaceuticals.

The negotiation of the anti-counterfeiting treaty (ACTA) remains an issue on the global trade-related agenda (see GSP Digest 8.3). The South Centre and

the Centre for International Environmental law have provided an [analysis](#)²¹⁵ of international medical products and the role of the WHO anti-counterfeiting taskforce (IMPACT). While there are real and widely recognised problems with respect to counterfeited medicines and in particular substandard products in poorer countries with limited regulatory capacities, health and pharmaceutical policy concerns in this context relate to the extent to which global action on counterfeiting is driven by particular pharmaceutical and other corporate interests in intellectual property rights enforcement, rather than addressing the core health and safety concerns.

Southern Voices

Senior Officials of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) met for the 6th [ASEAN Meeting](#)²¹⁶ on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (SOMRDPE) in Singapore from 13 to 14 October 2008. They re-affirmed their commitment to the 2004-2010 Framework Action Plan on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication. Following the meeting, delegates from China, Japan and South Korea participated for the first SOMRDPE+3 meeting, which called for closer collaboration between the ASEAN Plus Three countries in matters relating to sustainable rural development, poverty reduction, rising food prices and natural disasters.

At the conclusion of the two-day High Level Regional Policy Meeting on Networking Towards Gender and Poverty Sensitive Energy Policies in Bangkok on 4 November 2008, policy-makers and experts from the International Network on Gender And Sustainable Energy and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP) [launched a regional forum](#)²¹⁷ to assist women and the poor with reliable access to energy in the region. The forum was a result of increasing concerns that countries in the region will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) due to the lack of energy supply reaching rural areas.

The [Seventh Asia Europe Meeting](#)²¹⁸ (ASEM7) held from 24 to 25 October 2008 in Beijing, China, brought together Heads of State and Government Officials from 16 Asian and 27 European nations under the banner Vision and Action Towards a Win-Win Solution. The Leaders held in-depth discussions on issues including efficient and prompt delivery of humanitarian aid and expertise in natural disasters, strengthening energy security cooperation, the challenge of climate change and improving social cohesion under the framework of sustainable development.

Key officials from African Union (AU) Governments and UN Development partners together with land experts, members of civil society and farmers' organisations met in Addis Ababa from 10 to 20 September 2008 to develop a framework that would guide African countries towards land policy reforms.

Initiated by the AU, the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa, the [Land Policy Initiative](#)²¹⁹ is set to outline definitive guiding principles in land allocation, equitable access and proper governance to avoid related conflicts and ensuring peace and security. The AU conference of African Ministers in charge of Social Development met from 27 to 31 October 2008, in Windhoek, Namibia, and approved the document "[Social Policy Framework for Africa](#)"²²⁰ (SPF), which will be presented to the AU Heads of States in January 2009. The SPF is aimed at achieving an integrated policy approach with a strong developmental focus to social security measures such as job creation, equitable and accessible health and other services, social welfare, quality education, etc.

In an earlier meeting, on 16 October 2008, the International Social Security Association (ISSA) organised a [Technical Seminar on the Extension of Social Security Coverage](#)²²¹ to solicit the opinions of major international organisations on the role of the ISSA and its members in extending social security coverage. The seminar discussed current schemes vis-à-vis meeting the needs of those uncovered in order to design a strategy for universal access to health care within one national system. The Chair, Professor Carmelo Mesa-Lago reminded participants of the main conclusion of an earlier ISSA-Initiative that "providing adequate social protection for excluded groups will mean moving away from the principle of contributing and that universal benefits and services are the most realistic policy instruments for extending coverage."

Economic Ministers from Australia and the small island nations of the Pacific met in Port Vila, Vanuatu from 27 to 29 October 2008 for the [12th meeting](#)²²² of the Forum Economic Ministers. Among the issues discussed at the meeting included food and energy security, labour mobility and the global financial crisis. The Ministers acknowledged the resulting effects of food and fuel price increase and the pressure on real incomes of the people, particularly the urban poor and further stressed the need to maintain the momentum on the various reforms and adjustment efforts.

The Third Session of the United Nations [Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia](#)²²³ (SPECA) Governing Council was held in Moscow, Russian Federation, on 20 October 2008. The Governing Council is SPECA's supreme management body and is composed of senior policymakers from SPECA member countries (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and the Executive Secretaries of UN ESCAP, and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP called on Central Asia to Strengthen Ties with Rest of Asia for Inclusive Economic, Food and Energy Security.

Finance ministers and high-level officials from 21 economies of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) gathered in Trujillo, Peru, on 17 November 2008 to discuss economic issues in [preparation for the 15th APEC](#)

[Ministers](#)²²⁴, which was held in Lima on 21-22 November 2008. The [Joint Statement](#)²²⁵ of the 20th APEC Ministerial Meeting advocated for, among other things, food security in the Asia Pacific region and Corporate Social Responsibility in the context of the current international financial crisis.

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³ http://african.worldbank.org/will-the-financial-crisis-reduce-foreign-aid?cid=ISG_E_WBWeeklyUpdate_NL

⁴ http://www.ideaswebsite.org/news/oct2008/news20_Finance.htm

⁵ <http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/5668>

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<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28440&Cr=MDG&Cr1=&Kw1=FINANCIAL+CRISIS+THREATENS+EFORTS&Kw2=&Kw3>

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¹⁵ www.oecd.org/dev/insights

¹⁶ http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2008/MDG_Report_2008_En.pdf

¹⁷ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel/>

¹⁸ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28276&Cr=mdg&Cr1>

¹⁹ <http://www.who.int/medicines/mdg/MDG8EnglishWeb.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/odi-publications/annual-report/2008-article-mdgs.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/develop/2008/09mdgcrisis.pdf>

²² <http://go.worldbank.org/C9GR27WRJ0>

²³ <http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/art-562473>

²⁴ <http://www.socialanalysis.org/>

²⁵ <http://www.undp-povertycentre.org/pub/IPCOnePager66.pdf>

²⁶ http://www.socialwatch.org/en/noticias/noticia_251.htm

²⁷ <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/>

²⁸

[http://www.eurodad.org/uploadedFiles/Whats_New/News/SOMO%20Taxation%20and%20Financing%20for%20Development_October%202008%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.eurodad.org/uploadedFiles/Whats_New/News/SOMO%20Taxation%20and%20Financing%20for%20Development_October%202008%20(2).pdf)

²⁹ <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2008/09/gupta.htm>

³⁰ <http://www.eurodad.org/whatsnew/articles.aspx?id=3000>

³¹ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/gena/103971.pdf

³² <http://www.eurodad.org/whatsnew/articles.aspx?id=3100>

³³ <http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/ffd/conference/doha/index.htm>

³⁴ <http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/ffd/conference/doha/2008/0924currencytax.pdf>

³⁵ <http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/ffd/conference/doha/2008/11openletter.pdf>

³⁶ http://www.un-ngls.org/site/doha2008_article.php3?id_article=650

³⁷ <http://www.eurodad.org/whatsnew/articles.aspx?id=3218>

³⁸ http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/pressreleases/?pr=pr_081110

³⁹ http://www.joinred.com/News/Articles/ArticleDetail/08-10-29/Starbucks_Joins_RED_to_Help_Save_Lives_in_Africa.aspx

⁴⁰ www.accrahf.net

⁴¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/16/41202012.pdf>

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59 <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inst/download/dp19108.pdf>

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67 More documentation at <http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration/index.html>

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71 http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/seventhcoord2008/CM7_ Objectives.pdf

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