

# The Social Protection Floor Initiative



The Social Protection Floor (SPF) Initiative is driven by a coalition of UN agencies and development partners promoting universal access to essential social transfers and services.

## SPFs are a social and economic necessity

Presently, 80% of the global population is lacking an adequate set of social guarantees that allows them to deal with life's risks. Ensuring basic social protection for these people, many of whom are struggling to survive, is a necessity. Investing in a SPF is investing in social justice and inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. Social protection contributes to economic growth by raising labour productivity and enhancing social stability. In times of crisis, a SPF acts as an automatic stabilizer for the economy by alleviating the decline in aggregate demand. Calculations by various UN agencies show that a basic floor of social transfers is affordable at virtually any stage of economic development.

## Creation of the SPF Initiative

Recognizing the importance and necessity of adequate social protection systems, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) adopted in April 2009 "the Social Protection Floor Initiative" as one of its nine key priorities to cope with the global crisis. Since its launch, the SPF-I has made significant progress in gathering partnerships within and beyond the UN system.

### Actors involved in the SPF Initiative

*(non-limitative list)*

**Lead agencies:** ILO and WHO.

**Coalition Members:** Asian Development Bank, CEPAL, Concern, Education and Solidarity Network, ESCAP, European Commission, FAO, Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France, German Development Cooperation, GIP SPSI, HelpAge International, IMF, International Council of Social Welfare, Luxemburg, NGO Committee for Social Development, OECD, OHCHR, Save the Children, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Netherlands, UN Habitat, UNAIDS, UNDESA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNRWA, UNWOMEN, WFP, WMO and the World Bank.

*At national level, the process is country-led.*

## Knowledge sharing

[www.socialprotectionfloor-gateway.org](http://www.socialprotectionfloor-gateway.org)

SPF Initiative website.



[www.socialprotectionfloor.org](http://www.socialprotectionfloor.org)

ILO's knowledge sharing platform on the extension of social security.

## National extension strategies

At the International Labour Conference (ILC) in 2011, tripartite delegates of the 183 ILO Member States called for:

... the rapid implementation of social protection floors, containing basic social security guarantees that ensure that over the life cycle all in need can afford and have access to essential health care and have income security at least at a nationally defined minimum level. Social protection floor policies should aim at facilitating effective access to essential goods and services, promote productive economic activity and be implemented in close coordination with other policies enhancing employability, reducing informality and precariousness, creating decent jobs and promoting entrepreneurship. (ILO, 2011a, para. 9).



Regarding national strategies of social protection, the ILC concluded that:

"Closing coverage gaps is of highest priority for equitable economic growth, social cohesion and Decent Work for all women and men. Effective national strategies to extend social security [...] should aim at achieving universal coverage of the population with at least minimum levels of protection (horizontal dimension) and progressively ensuring higher levels of protection guided by up-to-date ILO social security standards (vertical dimension)." Conclusions, 100th Session of the International Labour Conference.

## Towards a Social Protection Floor Recommendation

At the 100th Session of the ILC, governments, employers' and workers' representatives of 183 countries called for the rapid implementation of national social protection floors and recognized the need for an international recommendation complementing existing standards in providing guidance to member States in building SPFs within comprehensive social security systems tailored to national circumstances and levels of development. Accordingly, the 101th Session of the ILC in June 2012 is going to discuss a proposed Recommendation concerning national floors of social protection. If adopted, this Recommendation would provide essential guidance to ILO Member States in building SPFs within comprehensive social security systems tailored to national circumstances.

## Fostering international recognition

The Social Protection Floor Advisory Group (SPF-AG) was convened in August 2010 and chaired by the former President of Chile Michelle Bachelet. The SPF-AG final report was launched by the end of 2011 with the aim of enhancing global advocacy and providing guidance on the conceptual and policy aspects as well as on the design and implementation principles of SPFs.

SPFs also gained substantial recognition from a number of international bodies and fora such as the MDG Summit, the UN ECOSOC Social Integration Resolution and the G20 summits.

## Supporting countries in building SPFs

Subject to the country context and local needs, members of the coalition support countries in different activities including: awareness raising, social protection stocktaking, needs and gap analysis, priority setting, SPF policy formulation, social dialogue, consensus building, capacity building, costing of SPF benefits, fiscal space analysis, legal analysis, social protection training, design, administration and implementation of benefits as well as monitoring and evaluation of SPF policies and schemes.

### In total there are over **25 ongoing country advisory activities**

undertaken by members of the SPF-I. These activities include in particular:

- Collection of evidence, documentation of experiences and South-South cooperation facilitation. For example, members contributed to a publication on 18 SPF success stories (ILO-UNDP-SU/SSC).
- Rapid SPF policy assessments including costing studies in a number of countries.
- In-depth studies on coherent social protection and employment policies in Burkina Faso, Cambodia and Honduras (ILO – EU).
- Collaboration with the IMF in the context of pilot projects exploring the fiscal space available to extend social security and close parts of the SPF gaps in Mozambique, El Salvador and Viet Nam.
- Implementation projects of specific SPF level benefits.

## Developing tools and methodologies



The SPF Initiative has developed a set of analytical instruments that provides the factual bases for national dialogues, such as:

### → Assessment-based National Dialogue

A procedure to assess the state of national Social Protection Floor Policies and identify coverage gaps through national tripartite consultations.

### → Costing tools

Several costing tools were developed in order to facilitate costs estimates of policy options aiming at closing coverage gaps at national level.

### A story from Cape Verde

Lúisa Oliveira Marques, 81, Cape Verdean, lives in a fishing community with a granddaughter and a great-grandson in a house with only one room and a small kitchen that she built with money spared from selling fish and shellfish that she herself caught. When she was no longer able to ensure her livelihood, she relied on occasional help from her family, going through many difficulties.



*"Life is difficult, my children helped as they could, but they also have a family and the sea is uncertain, I could not always count on them."*

In 2011 Luisa started to receive a social pension granted by the State, which is roughly 50 dollars a month. The allocation of a non-contributory social pension makes a big difference in the lives of many women, especially in rural areas, who have worked all their lives but never received proper recognition for the value of their work.

*"It's not much but my life has changed because I know I can count on it to buy the basics. If I need something for myself, I don't have to wait for charity from others".*

The social pension covers 90% of the target group. It is financed by taxes and costs 0.4% of GDP. The social pension, which receives technical assistance from the ILO project STEP Portugal, is an important element for constituting a SPF in Cape Verde.

SPF-I Secretary