

FACT SHEET

DECEMBER 2010

THE SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR

The **Social Protection Floor (SPF)** is a global social policy approach promoting integrated strategies for providing access to essential social services and income security for all. Social protection is one of the four pillars of Decent Work (these four pillars are employment; fundamental rights and principles at work; social protection; and social dialogue).

The **Social Protection Floor initiative** is one of the nine United Nations system Chief Executive Board* joint initiatives to cope with the effects of the economic crisis. The International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization are the lead agencies for the SPF initiative, but they cooperate with 17 other international agencies, funds and programmes, including World Bank and International Monetary Fund. It is a core part of the Global Jobs Pact and combines income security for the elderly, persons with disabilities and child benefits with public employment guarantee schemes for the unemployed and working poor. It functions as a tool to protect and empower the vulnerable population to work out of poverty and find decent jobs.

The **UN September 2010 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Summit** outcome document supports the social protection floor and its implementation at country level through the implementation of national social protection floors.

The SPF is **relevant for both developed and developing countries**. It has its origins in a number of developing countries (such as Brazil, Mexico, Nepal, and South Africa) and is currently discussed in an intensive South-South dialogue and cooperation process that is facilitated by the UN SPF initiative. It benefits also from large experience on social protection in European Union (EU) countries and from a number of innovative developments in both developing and developed countries.

The **Social Protection Floor approach** promotes access to essential social security transfers and social services in the areas of health, water and sanitation, education, food, housing, life and asset-savings information. It emphasizes the need to implement comprehensive, coherent and coordinated social protection and employment policies to guarantee services and social transfers across the life cycle, paying particular attention to the vulnerable groups.

The SPF does not apply a one size fits all approach - on the contrary as it should be nationally owned - but it sets out a reference menu of minimum social guarantees assured by transfers and services that a country should work towards to give effects to the universal right to social security including access to health. The SPF initiative pursues a strong partnership approach with a view to promote its wider effective implementation.

Beyond the crisis, the social protection floor has gained widespread acceptance as pivotal component of the sustainable and resilient growth strategy, as tool to accelerate the achievement of the [MDGs](#) and promote Social Justice.



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The **Social Protection Floor Advisory Group**, chaired by former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, has been created to enhance global advocacy activities and to further elaborate the conceptual policy aspects of the social protection floor approach. The first meeting of the Advisory Group was held in Geneva on 11 and 12 August 2010 and convened by the ILO Director-General, Juan Somavia.

The SPF Advisory Group discussed ways to enhance policy coherence in social policies and recognized the importance of the Social Protection Floor as a key lever to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs. The group stressed that a Social Protection Floor is relevant and needed for all countries, and an important factor for the achievement of a fairer and sustainable globalization, in particular to combat poverty, empower people, reduce inequalities and build social inclusion.

The SPF Advisory Group will provide guidance and catalyze policy coherence to the work in this area. It will also promote the exchange of experiences, capacity building and implementation of the social protection floor concept according to different socioeconomic and institutional contexts. Its members are coming both from developing and developed countries. ILO Brussels very much welcomes the membership of the chair of the EU Social Protection Committee.

The SPF support team has also established the Global Extension of Social Security Web based platform (GESS) that you can access using the following link:

<http://www.socialprotectionfloor.org>

In addition ILO recently published the **World Social Security Report 2010/11**, the first in a series of reports on social security coverage in different parts of the world. It examines the scope, extent, levels and quality of coverage by various social security branches and the scale of countries' investments in social security, measured by the size and structure of social security expenditure and the sources of its financing. The thematic focus of this first report is the nature of social security responses to the financial and economic crisis. The World Social Security Report 2010/11 is available on the ILO website:

<http://www.ilo.org/gimi/gess/ShowTheme.do?tid=1985>

More detailed information on social security can be found in the book **Extending social security to all. A guide through challenges and options**. This ILO publication outlines basic concepts such as the social protection floor and the social security staircase, analyses the affordability of various approaches, and examines the results of practices around the world, especially in low- and middle-income countries. The book is available on the ILO website:

http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/ilo-bookstore/forthcoming-publications/WCMS_124454/lang-en/index.htm

* The Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) is the longest-standing and highest level coordination forum in the history of the United Nations. It comprises the leadership of 28 member organisations, including World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization.