



► Social protection

2022

Key messages

- Social protection is a human right and essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. However, more than half of the global population do not have access to any social protection.
- The COVID-19 crisis has shown that everyone is vulnerable to shocks and has highlighted the urgency of building national social protection systems that are universal, adequate, comprehensive, resilient and sustainable.
- Through its [Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All](#), the ILO provides support to over 70 countries in building social protection systems, based on international social security standards and inclusive social dialogue.
- In 2021, the International Labour Conference reaffirmed the ILO's mandate and leadership in the multilateral system to support the extension of social protection.
- Universal social protection is at the core of the ILO's agenda for a [human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis](#), and "[Our Common Agenda](#)" of the UN Secretary-General. To support countries in building universal social protection systems, the UN Secretary-General launched on 28 September 2021 the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions. The ILO coordinates the design and implementation of the Global Accelerator, which aims to close the social protection gaps for the 4 billion people still uncovered, and thus speed up the achievement of universal social protection by 2030.

This programming note provides an overview of the ILO vision and value proposition to build national social protection systems that are universal, comprehensive, adequate, resilient and sustainable. The note offers concise information about the ILO's approach, tools, ongoing initiatives and partnerships in this area. The ILO's mandate and expertise can impactfully contribute to the achievement of the priorities on social protection set within the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

Achieving universal social protection by 2030

► More than 70 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was promulgated, **the human right to social security** is not a reality for more than half the

global population who has been left totally unprotected and [without access to any social protection benefit](#).

► The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted even further the **persistent coverage gaps in social protection**, including social health protection, particularly among own-account and workers in the informal economy, and migrant and unpaid family workers. Women, youth and people with disability were also particularly hit by the COVID-19 crisis and often left with no or limited social protection benefits.

► Coverage gaps are also associated with financing gaps: **countries that had invested in social protection in the past were better prepared to respond to the COVID-19 crisis**, by facilitating their population's access to health care and vaccines, preventing them from falling sharply into poverty, mitigating the socio-economic impact of the lockdown measures, and smoothing consumption for avoiding deep economic recession.

▶ Social protection is at the core of the ILO's agenda for a [human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis](#).

In his report entitled "[Our Common Agenda](#)", the UN Secretary-General recently emphasized the importance of universal social protection and the urgency of closing the financing gap through domestic resource mobilization efforts and international solidarity. To this end, the UN Secretary-General launched the **Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions**, which will support countries technically, financially and politically to create 400 million jobs in the green, care and digital economy, to develop national social protection systems providing adequate protection to the 4 billion people currently without coverage, and to facilitate "just transitions" enabling the structural transformation of the economy and society (decarbonisation, digitalization, formalization). The [ILO coordinates the Global Accelerator's design and implementation](#), including by establishing a transversal system-wide technical support facility.

▶ At its [109th session in 2021](#), the International Labour Conference reaffirmed the **ILO's mandate, leadership and policy coherence in social protection** and called on the Member States, supported by the ILO:

- ▶ to realize, through strong social dialogue, universal social protection, which provides comprehensive, adequate and sustainable protection for all, over the life cycle, applying a rights-based approach;
- ▶ to strengthen social protection systems under the primary responsibility of the state; and
- ▶ to mobilize sustainable and adequate financing for social protection systems with due regard to equity and social justice.

▶ Through its [Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All](#), the ILO provides support to over 70 countries in building social protection systems, based on international social security standards and inclusive social dialogue, to protect people from today's risks and meet tomorrow's challenges. It uses its diverse expertise in policy reforms, the application of international standards, the development of laws, the costing and financing of policies, the design, implementation of programmes and schemes for all branches of social security, the administrative and financial governance, the monitoring and evaluation of social protection systems, and the building of a culture of social protection.

Levers of change

▶ International social security standards

The ILO follows a rights-based approach anchored in the Human Rights Declaration, 1948 and international social security standards and promotes the ratification and application of relevant ILO Conventions and Recommendations, in particular, Social Security

(minimum standards) Convention No. 102 and the Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202.

▶ **Inclusive social dialogue** and consultation with organizations of persons concerned are essential for social protection systems to be responsive to specific needs, respect the rights of beneficiaries, promote sustainable enterprises, and ensure the social acceptance of policy decisions and the ownership and trust in public institutions.

▶ Integrated social protection and decent employment policies for just transitions

The ILO combines the expertise necessary to come with innovative solutions and accelerate results in building social protection systems and achieving full and decent employment. We link social protection policies with other policies that can contribute to the sustainable development and financing of social protection (e.g. transition to formal economy, youth employment, women's employment and entrepreneurship, care economy, sustainable enterprises among other key issues) and promote social protection as an enabler of structural transformations of the economy and society (e.g. just transition to decarbonized economies, gender equality, transition to formal economy).

What the ILO can offer

At the global level, the ILO acts to:

- ▶ Promote the ratification and application of the ILO's up-to-date social security standards which have been adopted by ILO Member States and cover all areas of social protection.
- ▶ Monitor progress towards achieving universal access to social protection. This includes monitoring access in achieving SDG targets 1.3 and 3.8 and assessing the current level of social protection expenditures and financing gaps and advocacy for more investments.
- ▶ Provide specialized technical and advisory services based on knowledge, through its global technical support facility.
- ▶ Develop and disseminate knowledge, policy and technical methodologies, guides and tools, such as [ISPA tools](#), aligned with ILO principles and good practices collected from countries' interventions through global networks ([SPIAC-B](#) and [USP2030](#), International Training Centre of the ILO, UN Staff College and so on).
- ▶ Engage in partnerships with development partners, UN agencies, International Financing Institutions (IFIs), the European Union and other development partners, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society organizations and academia to multiply our impact; work towards providing harmonized and joint messaging on social protection and coordinated support to countries; and increase the dissemination channels for the learning outcomes.

At the national and sub-national levels, the ILO provides support through a step-by-step approach:

Step 1. Adopting national social protection strategies based on evidence

The ILO supports countries in:

- conducting diagnostic studies and participatory assessment-based national dialogue, involving social security institutions, workers and employers’ representatives, UN agencies, civil society and IFIs to identify policy options to close social protection gaps;
- estimating the cost of the policy options and projected over time;
- conducting a fiscal space analysis that helps identify financing options for newly proposed programmes or adjustments to existing schemes and provide recommendations on the mobilization of domestic resources; and
- supporting the adoption by the government of a national social protection strategy.

Step 2. Designing, reforming and financing social protection systems

The ILO provides technical services to:

- design policy reforms and programmes for extending social protection to groups that are so far excluded or not adequately protected (such as people with disabilities, workers in the informal economy, migrant workers and refugees, among others) and improving adequacy of benefits.

- enhance linkages between social protection and public finance management, identifying financing options for social protection, conducting actuarial assessments for setting the parameters of new or expanded schemes, and strengthening capacities for improved public finance management.

Step 3. Improving operations, administration and governance of social protection schemes and programmes

The ILO support countries in:

- strengthening administrative and delivery capacities, including management information systems and one-stop-shops for beneficiary registration and payment of benefits, as well as a complaints and appeals mechanism;
- improving coordination across the schemes and institutions involved in policy design, financing and delivery of social protection;
- strengthening the tripartite governance of the scheme and ensuring the participation of those concerned at the national, regional and local levels;
- carrying out actuarial studies to improve the financial governance of the scheme;
- developing communication and education of the wider public necessary to create a national consensus around proposed policy reforms, build ownership and trust in the system.

The ILO provides specialized technical services adapted to each country’s context and based on applied knowledge and research in the following thematic areas:

Realizing the human right to social security for all	Universal, robust and sustainable social protection systems
<p>Protection across the life cycle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Expanding social health protection towards universal health coverage (including health, maternity, sickness and long-term care) ► Unemployment protection ► Old-age, disability and survivors pensions ► Child and maternity benefits ► Employment injury insurance 	<p>Building blocks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Inclusive and effective social dialogue ► Building national systems of social protection statistics and monitoring and evaluation frameworks ► Financing social protection ► Building rights-based social protection systems (including a ratification campaign) ► Financial governance and sustainability – actuarial valuations ► Digital transformation ► Adaptation of social protection systems to new and emerging challenges ► Culture of social protection
<p>Protection for all people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Protecting workers in all types of employment ► Disability-inclusive social protection systems ► Social protection for migrants, refugees and host communities ► Just transition to a more environmentally sustainable economy and society ► Leveraging social protection to promote gender equality 	



Examples of ILO resources

Areas	ILO Data, Materials and Resources	Summary
Multi-stakeholder initiatives	Global Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All	The programme contributes to the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions and supports the ILO Member States in building national social protection systems that are sustainable and adapted to new and emerging challenges, universal, comprehensive across the life cycle, and coherent with other policies. During its 1st phase (2016-20), the ILO targeted 21 countries in strengthening their social protection systems, and extended its support to an additional 50 countries; it also encouraged knowledge exchange, developed tools and engaged in strategic partnerships. With this support, social protection coverage was extended to more than 23 million people in the 21 target countries. The 2nd phase (2021-25) is focused on: a) In-country support: providing technical assistance to 50 priority countries to develop their social protection systems, b) Thematic support to a larger number of countries (potentially all ILO Member States), strengthening the knowledge base of countries in thematic areas, and c) Strategic partnership: working with social partners, development partners, the UN family and IFIs. The EU is currently the biggest donor of the Flagship Programme.
	Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection by 2030 (USP2030)	In 2016, the World Bank and the ILO jointly initiated the USP2030 to transform the SDG Agenda's vision of universal social protection into reality. USP2030 has grown into a worldwide alliance which brings together governments, international and regional organisations, social partners and civil society organisations, in a shared commitment towards ensuring social protection for all. The EU is part of USP2030.
	Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B)	The SPIAC-B is a lean and agile inter-agency coordination mechanism composed of representatives of international organizations and bilateral institutions, including the EU - to enhance advocacy and coordination in international cooperation on social protection. The establishment of the Board in 2012 responds to a request from the G20 Development Working Group.
Policy research	Fiscal Space for Social Protection: A Handbook for Assessing Financing Options	This handbook provides guidelines to assess financing options to extend social protection coverage and benefits.
	Financing gaps in social protection Global estimates and strategies for developing countries in light of the COVID-19 crisis and beyond	This paper provides regional and global estimates of the costs and financing gaps for targets 1.3 and 3.8 of the SDGs relating to social protection and health care in 2020 and projections for reaching universal coverage in 2030.
Capacity development	Extending social security coverage to workers in the informal economy	This policy resource package serves as a reference for policymakers, workers' and employers' organizations engaged in the development and implementation of social protection systems.
	Extending social protection to migrant workers, refugees, and their families	This ILO/ISSA guide provides an overview of policy options and country practices to extend social protection to migrant workers, refugees and their families.
Data and statistics	World Social Protection Data Dashboards	This is the leading global source of in-depth country-level statistics on various dimensions of social protection systems, including key indicators for policymakers, international organizations and researchers.
	ILO Quantitative platform on social security	QPSS tools support evidence-based policy analysis and reforms

Examples of ILO interventions

Projects	Countries	When	Partners	Activities
All the projects presented below are part of the Global Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All.				
Improving Synergies Between Social Protection and Public Finance Management (SP&PFM)	24 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America	2019-2023	EU Implementation partners: UNICEF and Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors	The programme supports partner countries in their efforts toward achieving universal social protection coverage. Activities focus on enhancing the design and implementation of social protection systems, ensuring they are gender-sensitive, disability-inclusive and shock-sensitive, as well as improving their financing through strong public finance management. (Details)
Inclusive Growth, Social Protection and Jobs	Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Viet Nam, Zambia	2016-2022	Irish-Aid	The programme focuses on social protection and employment to promote resilience, access to services and employment opportunities for poor and vulnerable people. (Details)
ACTION/Portugal – Strengthening of the Social Protection Systems of the PALOP and Timor-Leste	Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste	2019-2023	Portugal	The project contributes to improving the social protection coverage and the quality of statistics in PALOP and Timor-Leste within the framework of the Global Flagship Programme on Social Protection Floors and Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. (Details)
Accelerate social protection reform in Iraq	Iraq	2021-2025	EU Delegation in Iraq Implementation partners: UNICEF and WFP	The project aims to support the Government of Iraq to catalyse a more effective social protection response and to accelerate reform to build a coherent and sustainable national social protection system. (Details)
Universal Access to Social Protection, Health and Occupational Safety and Health	Madagascar, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire	2020-2024	France	This project strengthens universal access to social protection and occupational health and safety through the transition to formal work with a special focus on workers in the informal economy and in the construction sector in Madagascar. (Details)
Advancing Social Protection in Cambodia	Cambodia	2021-2024	EU Delegation in Cambodia Implementation partner: UNICEF	The project extends social protection coverage and quality of provisions by improving the operational capabilities of social protection institutions and the adaptability of existing schemes to those working in the informal economy and the vulnerable. (Details)
Building Social Protection Floors for All – Phase II	Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Lao PDR	2021-2025	Belgium, Luxembourg Multi-Donor	The 2nd phase of the SPF Flagship Programme supports the strengthening of national social protection systems in the partner countries and thematic work on the financing of social protection, the improvement of quality of social protection data and statistics and social health protection. (Details)

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