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Social Protection, Climate Change and Employment in Africa



Solidarity

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May 2025

► G20 Technical Paper

Social protection, climate change and employment in Africa



Table of Contents

► Introduction	1
► 1. Exposure of Africa to climate change risks	2
► 2. Job implications of climate change in Africa	3
► 3. Current social protection systems in Africa	4
► 4. Discussion points	14
Social protection and employment approaches for climate change in Africa	14
Closing the coverage and financing gaps for social protection in Africa	16
► References	17

► Introduction

This paper discusses the current state of social protection systems in Africa, their challenges, and the relationship between social protection, climate change and employment.¹ It also provides a brief overview of the jobs implications of climate change and efforts to address it. The key message of the note is to underscore the essential role that social protection and skills can play in addressing the challenges related to climate change while providing an overview of the current state of social protection systems, including floors, in Africa.

Despite progress made since 2015 in terms of effective coverage of social protection, reaching 52.4 per cent of the global population in 2023, a strong message of the ILO World Social Protection Report 2024-26 is that vast segments of the world's population are not yet protected against everyday risks and even less so against climate-related risks. In Africa, only 19.1 per cent of the population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, which significantly hampers the capacity of the continent to address both life cycle and climate risks, and to promote sustainable economic and social development.

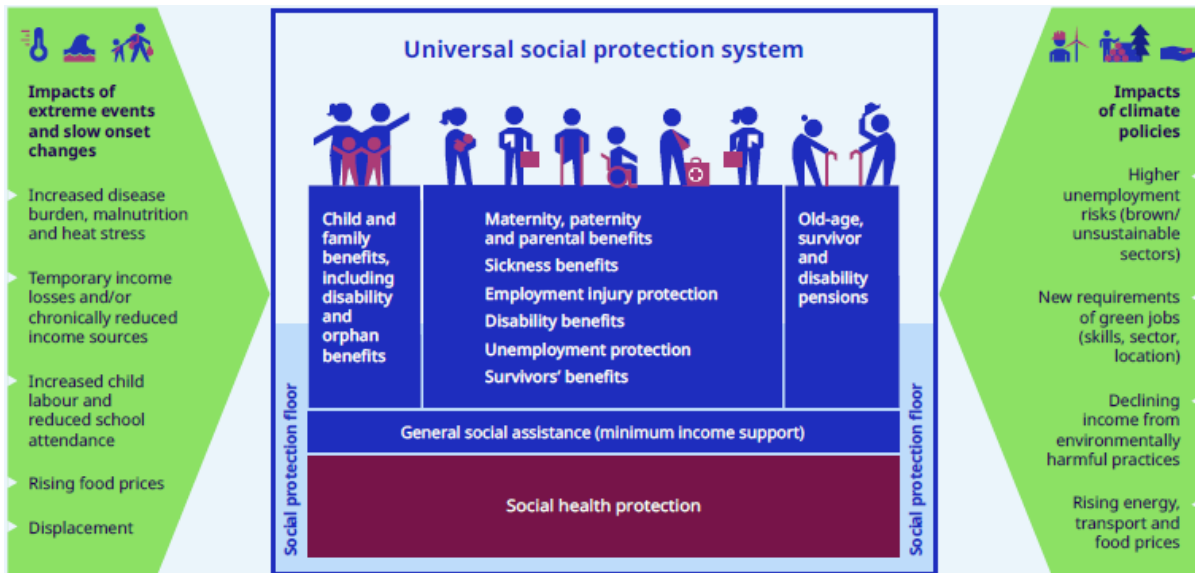
¹ This paper, prepared for the G20 Framework Working Group, draws from the ILO's *World Social Protection Report*, a flagship report of the ILO in the field of social protection, most recently published in 2024 (ILO 2024a). The report gives an overview of developments in social protection systems in the ILO's 187 member countries every three years, provides a set of indicators (which are also published in a dashboard; see 2024b), and includes a thematic chapter. The 2024–26 edition's thematic chapter addresses the challenges for social protection in the context of climate action, and the need for a just transition.

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Social protection, climate change and employment in Africa

Social protection systems, including floors, aim at covering ordinary life-cycle risks such as sickness or loss of a job, as well as having a child, and reaching old age, etc., for which all nine classical branches of social protection are needed (figure 1, central box). However, climate change risks and accompanying policies bring new adverse consequences for jobs, incomes, health and enterprises, with important impacts on, and linkages to, social protection systems (figure 1, green arrows).

► **Figure 1. Impacts of climate change and climate policies exacerbating existing life-cycle risks**



Source: ILO 2024(a).

► 1. Exposure of Africa to climate change risks

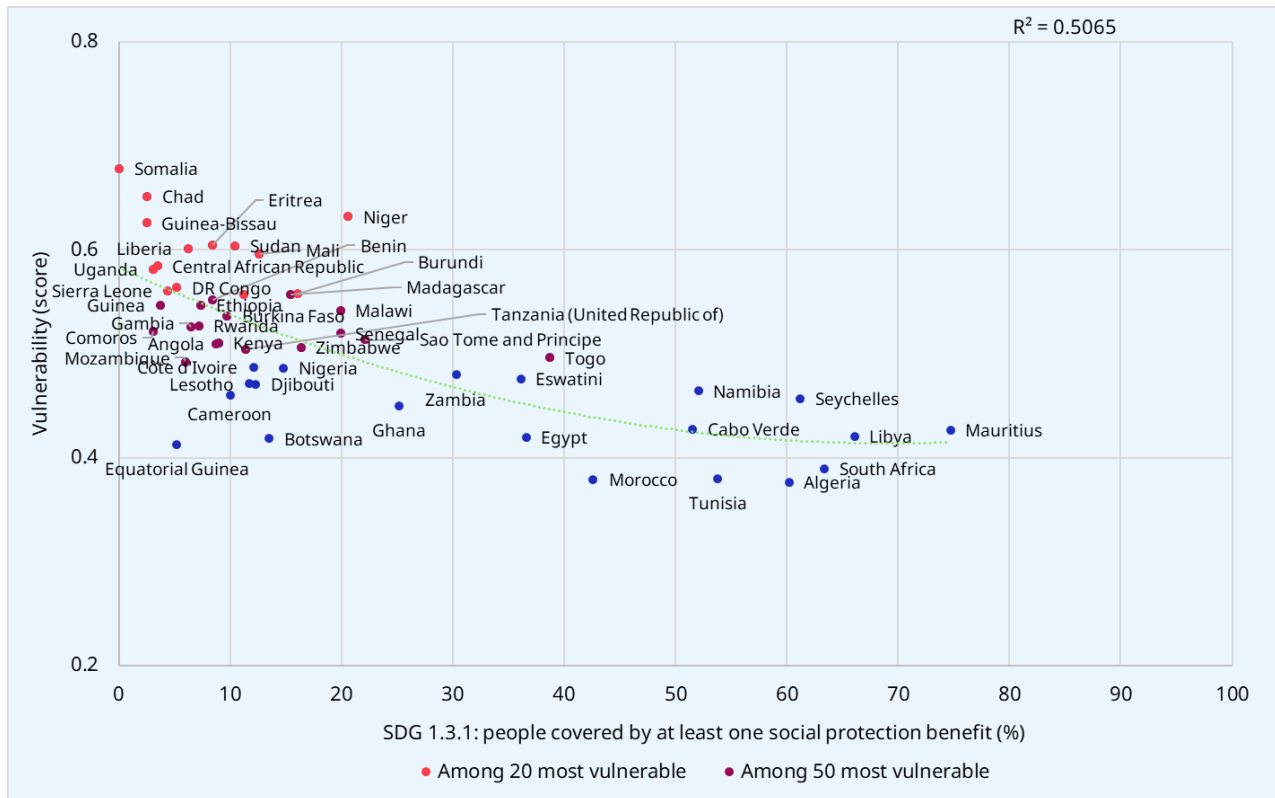
The African continent has been significantly impacted by and faces multiple risks stemming from climate change (WMO 2024). The latest regional report from the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) indicates that Africa has been warming at a rate of +0.3°C per decade since 1991, slightly faster than the global average. Severe heat waves, floods, droughts, cyclones and other natural disasters are on the rise. The WMO estimates that climate-related hazards are causing African countries to lose up to 5 per cent of their GDP. Strong impacts are measurable on agricultural production and productivity in several countries and affecting several crops, decreasing food security. A vivid example of a climate-related crisis is the water crisis of Cape Town between 2015 and 2018.

Among the 20 countries most vulnerable to climate change, according to the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Country Index, 13 are in Africa. Another 18 African countries are among the 21–50 most vulnerable countries. The most vulnerable countries include Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Uganda. Among the 21–50 most vulnerable countries are Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Comoros, Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Togo, United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Most other highly vulnerable countries are in the Asia-Pacific region. The most vulnerable countries also tend to have less developed social protection systems and lower coverage rates (figure 2). Globally, the 20 most vulnerable countries present an average effective coverage rate of only 8.7 per cent (2023), while the 50 most vulnerable countries have an average coverage rate of 25.0 per cent (ILO 2024a). Therefore, in Africa, the capacity of public social protection systems to act as crisis-response mechanisms is limited, and the risk of a disaster deepening poverty and deprivation is significant (ILO 2024a).

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Social protection, climate change and employment in Africa

► **Figure 2. The relationship between a country's vulnerability (score) to climate change and social protection coverage (percentage), 2023**



Sources: Notre Dame Global Adaptability Index (ND-GAIN) and ILO World Social Protection Database.

Note: A country's Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Country Index score is composed of a vulnerability score and a readiness score. For the purposes of this figure, the vulnerability score was used. Vulnerability measures a country's exposure, sensitivity and ability to adapt to the negative impact of climate change. It takes into consideration six life-supporting sectors – food, water, health, ecosystem service, human habitat and infrastructure.

► 2. Job implications of climate change in Africa

Globally, 1.2 billion jobs rely directly on a healthy environment, including in the farming, fishing and forestry sectors. Climate change threatens many of these jobs. For example, heat stress is projected to reduce total working hours globally in 2030 by between 2.2 per cent (a productivity loss equivalent to 80 million full-time jobs) and 3.8 per cent (equivalent to 136 million full-time jobs) (ILO, 2019b). The global economic losses due to heat stress are projected at US\$2.4 trillion in 2030. In Africa, 47.8 per cent of employment is linked to agriculture, followed by services with 38.8 per cent. Informal employment corresponds to 83.1 per cent of all jobs, mostly independent self-employed workers and contributing family members. In agriculture, where 95.8 per cent of jobs are informal, exposure to excessive heat is the highest globally, with 92.9 per cent of agricultural workers in Africa affected.

As a result of a combination of both higher extreme temperatures and high shares of agricultural and vulnerable employment, the impact of heat stress on labour productivity is expected to be particularly acute in Africa: 2.3 per cent of the total number of working hours, equivalent to 14 million full-time jobs, are projected to be lost to heat stress in 2030. Heat stress translates not only into lower productivity, working hours and earnings, but also occupational diseases and even deaths (ILOSTAT; ILO 2019c; ILO 2023).

Between 2000 and 2015, 23 million working life years were lost annually due to climate-related and other disasters induced or enhanced by human activity (ILO 2018). Low-income rural workers are usually among the most affected, losing 5 per cent of their total income due to heat stress and 4.4 per cent due to floods each year (FAO 2024). The

impact of drought on employment in South Africa, especially on informal employment and in the tourism and transport sectors, has also been documented (Gray et al. 2023).

Adaptation and mitigation strategies to climate change can drive both substantive job creation and economic diversification. Nature-based solutions, climate-smart agriculture, ecosystem-based adaptation, climate-resilient infrastructure, disaster risk reduction, restoration of degraded ecosystems, sustainable forest management and conservation agriculture are examples. These labour-intensive activities may create jobs while building resilience to climate impacts and constitute important opportunities for African countries.

Overall, the net employment impact of efforts to address climate change are expected to be modest yet positive (Scheja and Kim 2024). For example, ILO research indicates that globally 18 million net jobs could be created under an “energy transition scenario” while a net of 7 million jobs could be created under a “circular economy scenario.” Most of the jobs created are expected to be in medium to high-skilled occupations, highlighting the importance of technical and vocational training to support such growth, which is even more important in African countries with a young population facing difficulties finding decent work (ILO 2019a). Furthermore, the net employment gains are likely not be equally distributed among men and women, as more job opportunities are likely to be created in sectors that will benefit from the green transition and are currently male dominated, such as construction, manufacturing and electricity production.

Nonetheless, net effects will be contingent on how policies influence overall economic activity, investment in green industries and spillover to supplier industries, among other factors. Critically, focusing solely on net employment figures obscures the significant employment disruptions and losses that will disproportionately affect certain workers, even in scenarios where the aggregate net impact is positive. The transition is unlikely to be seamless for all workers without supportive public policies due to potential labour market frictions and misalignments. These misalignments stemming from the green transition can manifest in several ways: temporally, geographically, sectorally and in terms of skills. A temporal lag may occur, with job losses preceding the creation of new green jobs, potentially leading to a temporary rise in unemployment. Geographically, job losses are often concentrated in specific regions, particularly those reliant on carbon-intensive industries like coal mining, and new green jobs may not emerge in these same areas, with labour mobility often proving more limited than anticipated. Sectoral misalignments mean new jobs may arise in different sectors and regions from those experiencing losses, posing challenges for workers transitioning between them, an issue potentially more acute in low and middle-income countries and carrying gender implications. Finally, skills mismatches can occur when the qualifications of displaced workers, especially older individuals who face greater displacement challenges, do not align with the requirements of newly created jobs. Failure to address these misalignments could heighten structural and frictional unemployment, exacerbate inequality and poverty and undermine the political feasibility of climate change policies. Without strategic investments in reskilling and upskilling and targeted policies to ensure a just transition, the negative employment shocks could deepen existing inequalities and impede sustainable development across the continent.

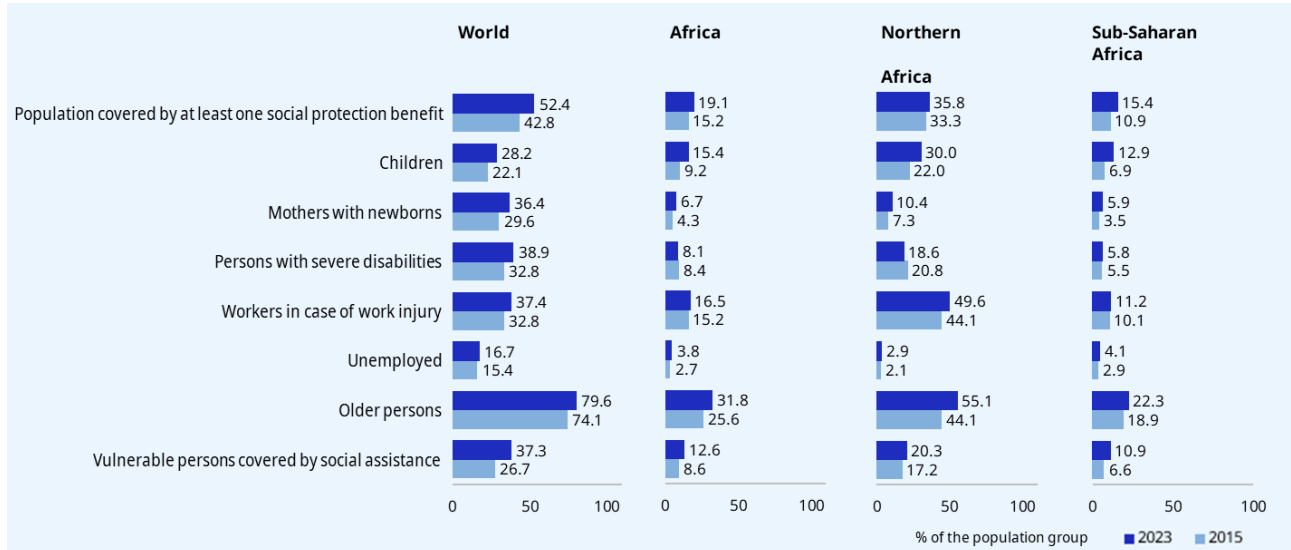
► **3. Current social protection systems in Africa**

As previously noted, despite the positive fact that there was a modest increase if compared to the 15.2 per cent effective coverage in 2015, Africa requires decisive action to accelerate the development of its social protection systems and floors (figure 3).

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Social protection, climate change and employment in Africa

► **Figure 3. SDG indicator 1.3.1: Effective social protection coverage (only cash benefits), regional and subregional estimates, by population group, 2015 and 2023 (percentage)**



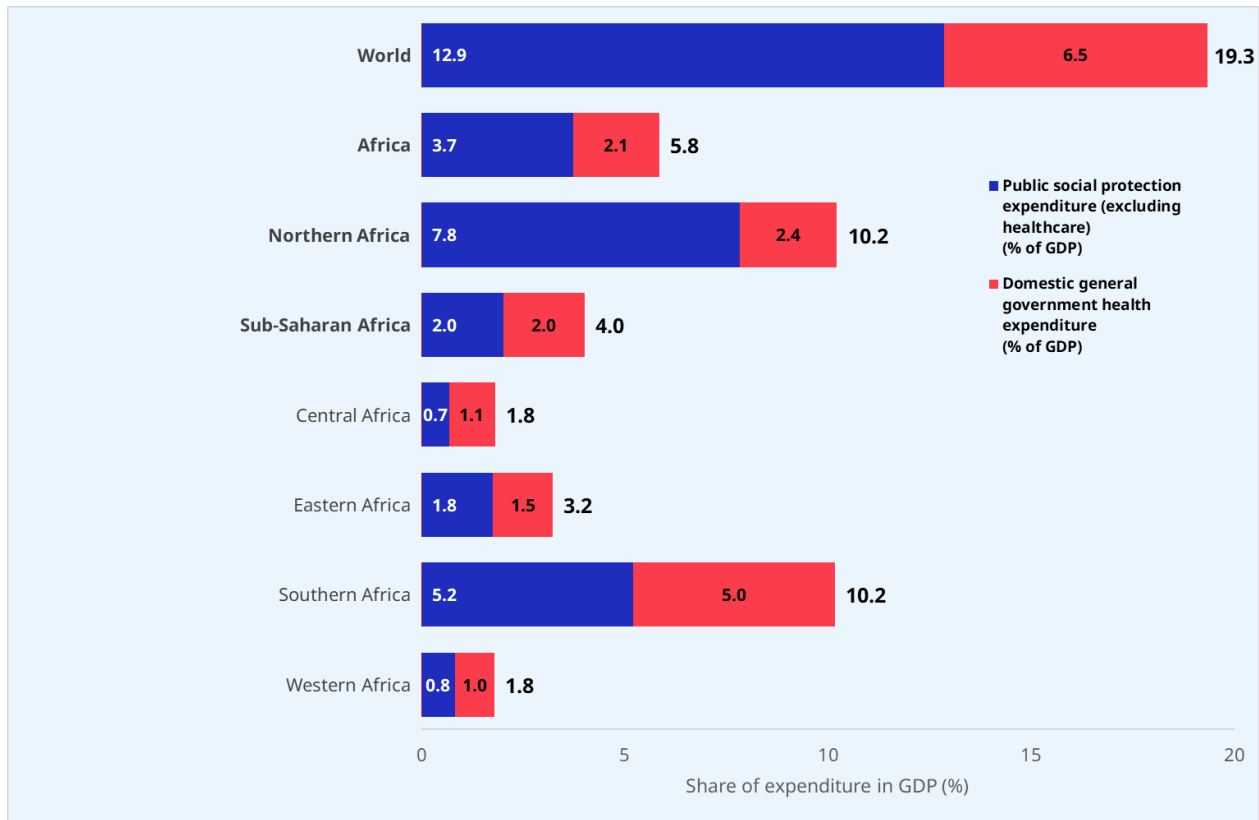
Sources: ILO modelled estimates, 2024; [World Social Protection Database](#), based on the [Social Security Inquiry](#); ISSA [Social Security Programs Throughout the World](#); [ILOSTAT](#); national sources.

Notes: See ILO (2024a), Annex 2, for a methodological explanation, and Annex 4 for more detailed data. Global, regional and subregional aggregates are weighted by population group. Estimates are not strictly comparable to those in the previous *World Social Protection Report* (2020–22) due to methodological enhancements, extended data availability and country revisions.

Another challenging aspect is that effective coverage in Africa grew on average only 0.5 percentage points per year between 2015 and 2023. The impacts of COVID-19, debt crises, armed conflicts, environmental and climate-related disasters, among others, are part of the explanation. More substantive increases in effective coverage rates of social protection among African countries between 2015 and 2023 were registered among upper-middle-income countries (for example Libya, Namibia and South Africa). Lower-middle-income countries performed less well in terms of coverage extension, with increases registered in Eswatini, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, Tunisia and Zambia, while low-income countries tended to stagnate, except for Togo. The *World Social Protection Report 2024–26* raises an alert regarding the growing gap between high- and upper-middle-income countries, which are moving towards universal coverage, and low- and lower-middle-income countries, which stagnated or grew insufficiently in terms of social protection coverage in the period 2015–2023 (ILO 2024a).

The underinvestment in social protection is one of the key reasons for low coverage, as shown by several editions of the ILO's *World Social Protection Report*. Social protection expenditure in Africa at about 5.8 per cent of GDP per year for 2023 is well below the global average of 19.3 per cent of GDP, for both cash benefits and health services (see figure 4). Notwithstanding, Northern Africa (with the strong weight of Egypt) and Southern Africa (with the strong weight of South Africa), both coincidentally with 10.2 per cent of GDP, are closer to the average of 11.0 per cent for G20 emerging economies. South Africa, with 10.4 per cent (5.4 per cent cash benefits and 5.0 per cent healthcare) and Egypt with 11.2 per cent (9.5 per cent cash benefits and 1.7 per cent healthcare) push the African average upwards. In contrast, Nigeria currently presents a low level of expenditure, at only 1.2 per cent of GDP (0.7 per cent on cash benefits and 0.5 per cent on health services). Therefore, the extension of coverage in Nigeria and in several other countries could significantly increase the regional coverage indicators. For comparison, the G20 advanced economies spent on average 25.7 per cent of their GDP on social protection in 2023, with 16.6 per cent on cash benefits and 9.1 per cent on health.

► **Figure 4. Public social protection expenditure (percentage of GDP), 2023 or latest available year, and domestic general government health expenditure 2021 (percentage of GDP), by region and subregion**

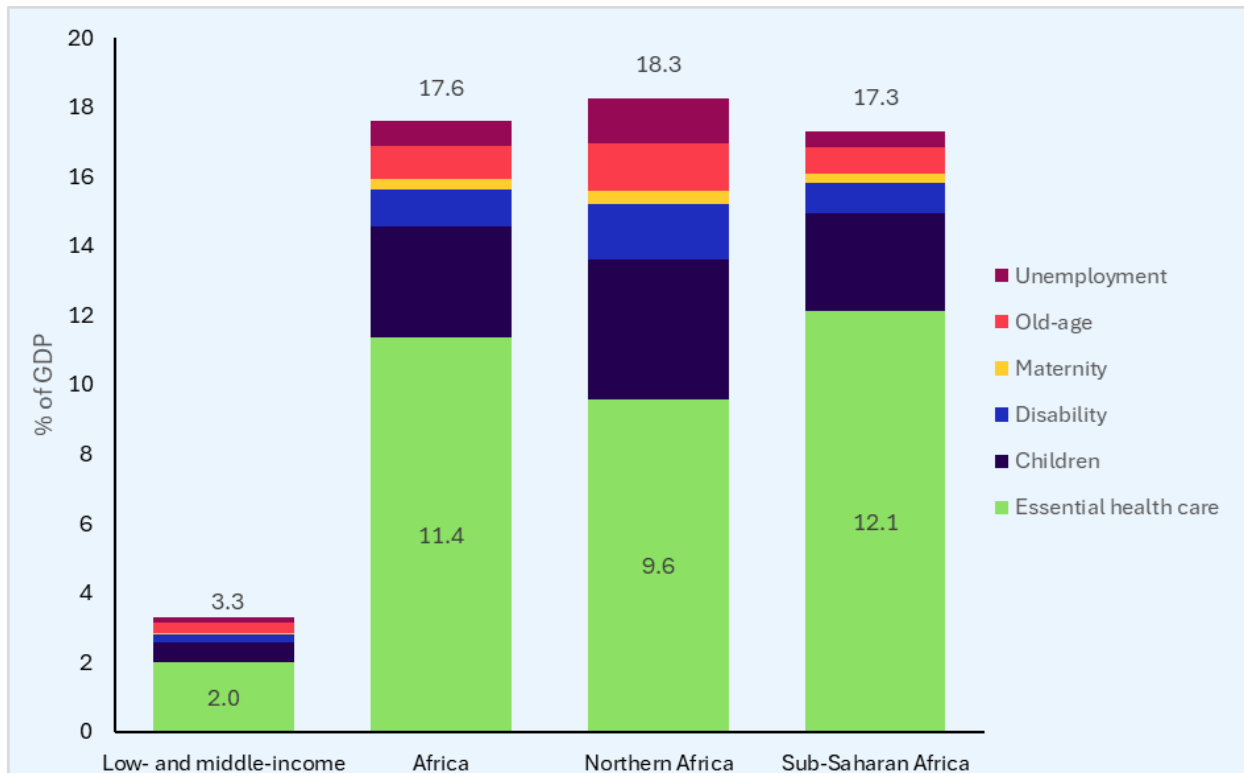


Source: Cattaneo et al. (2024); ILO (2024a).

Based on data for 133 developing countries, the ILO estimates the financing gap for universalizing coverage of a set of cash benefits and health services to reach 3.3 per cent of GDP (2.0 per cent for universalizing social health protection and 1.3 per cent for extending cash benefits) (Cattaneo et al. 2024). In the Framework Group Meeting of June 2024, the ILO presented the estimated value of the social protection financing gap for the G20 countries (and invitee countries) of 0.9 per cent of GDP per year.

Compared to other regions/subregions of the world, Africa has the highest financing gap for a social protection floor at 17.6 per cent of GDP per year (see figure 5). The reasons are manifold: high informality and low effective coverage rates, strong impacts of recent crises, pandemics, disasters and conflicts, younger demographic structure with gaps among child benefits. Most of the financing gap is due to the cost of universalizing health services and to the importance of children in the demographic structure of the continent. The figures for Northern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa do not deviate much from the average, but there is a larger gap in terms of health services in sub-Saharan Africa and in cash benefits in Northern Africa. Most countries, among them many low-income ones, have been hard hit by crises and conflicts in recent years. They saw their GDP plummeting and poverty soaring, and consequently their financing gap is significantly high. The recent inflationary process (within the context of the “cost-of-living crisis”) raised the bar of the respective national poverty lines, hence increasing the financing gap for social protection benefits/floors that use the national poverty line as a reference. Since domestic resource mobilization is not a realistic alternative for providing the funds required to close the gap, African countries – and especially the most vulnerable – will need various forms of international solidarity, including official development assistance (ODA), for the development of their social protection systems and floors.

► **Figure 5. Financing gap for achieving universal social protection coverage per year, by social protection benefit, region and income level, 2024 (percentage of GDP)**



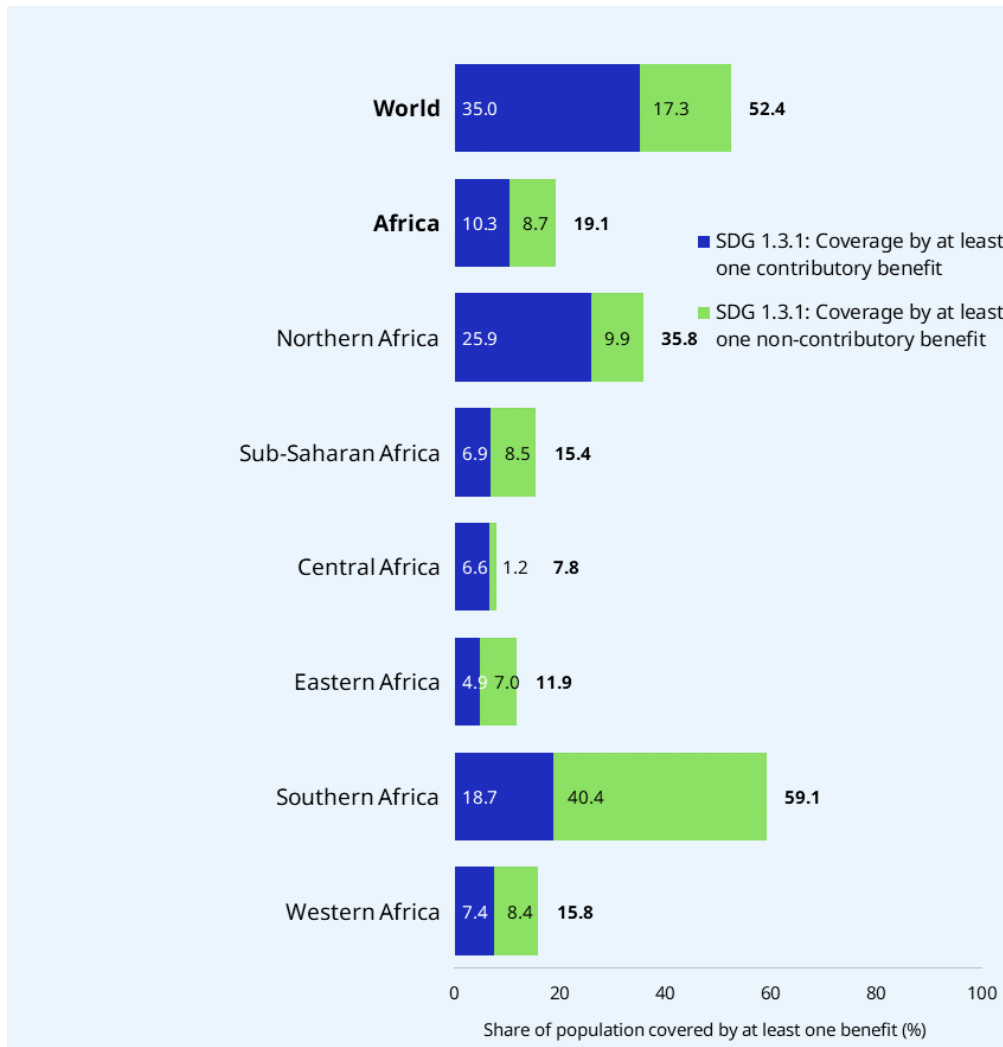
Source: Cattaneo et al. (2024).

Returning to the analysis of effective coverage by type (figure 3), it is important to recognize that benefits for children and older persons grew more than other branches between 2015 and 2023, by 6 percentage points (pp) each. In Northern Africa, there was greater progress in coverage among contributory schemes, notably for old-age pensions (+11 pp) and employment injury protection (+5.5 pp) with examples from Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. Maternity benefits show an extremely low coverage in African countries of only 6.7 per cent of mothers with newborn children. It is known that maternity leave and cash benefits tend to increase the proportion of newborn children who benefit from breastfeeding, with important effects on their future health. Only 8.1 per cent of people with disabilities in Africa are estimated to be covered by cash benefits, which reduces opportunities for their social inclusion and increases the burden on their families.

Among workers who suffer employment injury (due to an accident at work or on the way to or from the workplace) only 16.5 per cent in Africa receive a cash benefit that replaces their income while they are not able to work. This low coverage figure links with the more general challenging occupational safety and health situation in many developing countries, where the lack of benefits and rehabilitation services causes an enormous loss of human capacities. The African figure is less than half of the global average of 37.4 per cent. Notwithstanding, in Northern Africa the coverage figures are comparatively higher at 49.6 per cent.

Unemployment benefits, public employment programmes, active labour market policies, and social assistance benefits play an important role in tackling the impacts of climate change and supporting transitions in the labour market. The lack of unemployment benefit schemes and high informality rates result in a very low coverage rate of unemployed workers of 3.8 per cent. Finally, the extension of social assistance coverage to 12.6 per cent of vulnerable persons (those not covered by other benefits) is commendable, but still approximately only one third of the average effective coverage rate for the world as a whole.

► **Figure 6. SDG Indicator 1.3.1 on effective social protection coverage by at least one cash benefit, regional and subregional estimates for contributory and non-contributory benefits, 2023 (percentage)**



Sources: ILO modelled estimates, 2024; [World Social Protection Database](#), based on the [Social Security Inquiry](#); ISSA [Social Security Programs Throughout the World](#); [ILOSTAT](#); national sources.

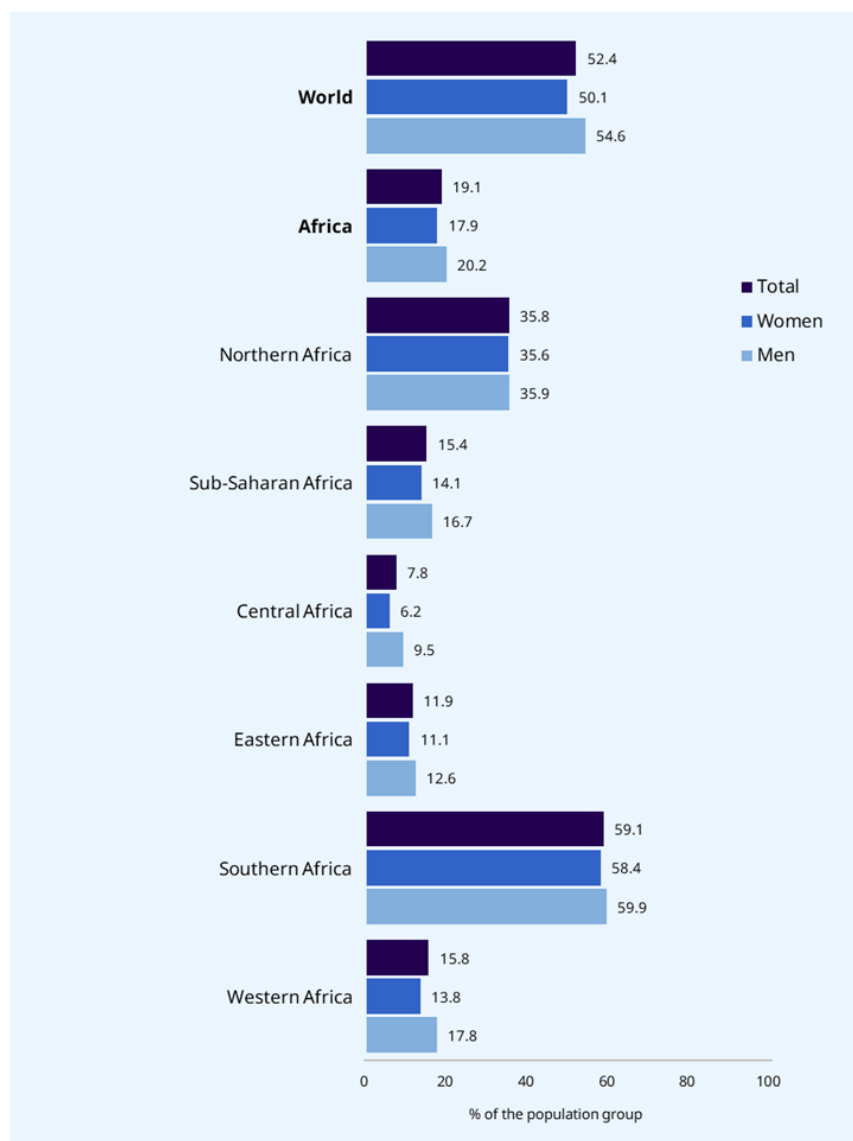
Notes: See Annex 2 for a methodological explanation. Global, regional and subregional aggregates are weighted by population. Estimates are not strictly comparable to the previous *World Social Protection Report* (2020–22) due to methodological enhancements, extended data availability and country revisions.

Given the informality of labour markets, non-contributory social protection programmes have played an important role in ensuring at least a basic level of social protection coverage in Africa, yet they have been hampered by limited fiscal space, also associated with high levels of informality. At the same time, the extension of social insurance coverage has contributed to better social protection in some countries, while also contributing to transitions from the informal to the formal economy (ILO 2021; 2024a). In Northern Africa, contributory benefits are comparatively strong, whereas in sub-Saharan Africa (except for Central Africa) and especially in Southern Africa, non-contributory programmes account for a greater share of coverage (figure 6).

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► **Figure 7. SDG indicator 1.3.1: Effective social protection coverage, regional and subregional estimates, by sex, 2023 (percentage)**



Notes: See ILO (2024a), Annex 2, for a methodological explanation. Global, regional and subregional aggregates are weighted by population group. Estimates are not strictly comparable to those in the previous *World Social Protection Report* (2020–22) due to methodological enhancements, extended data availability and country revisions.

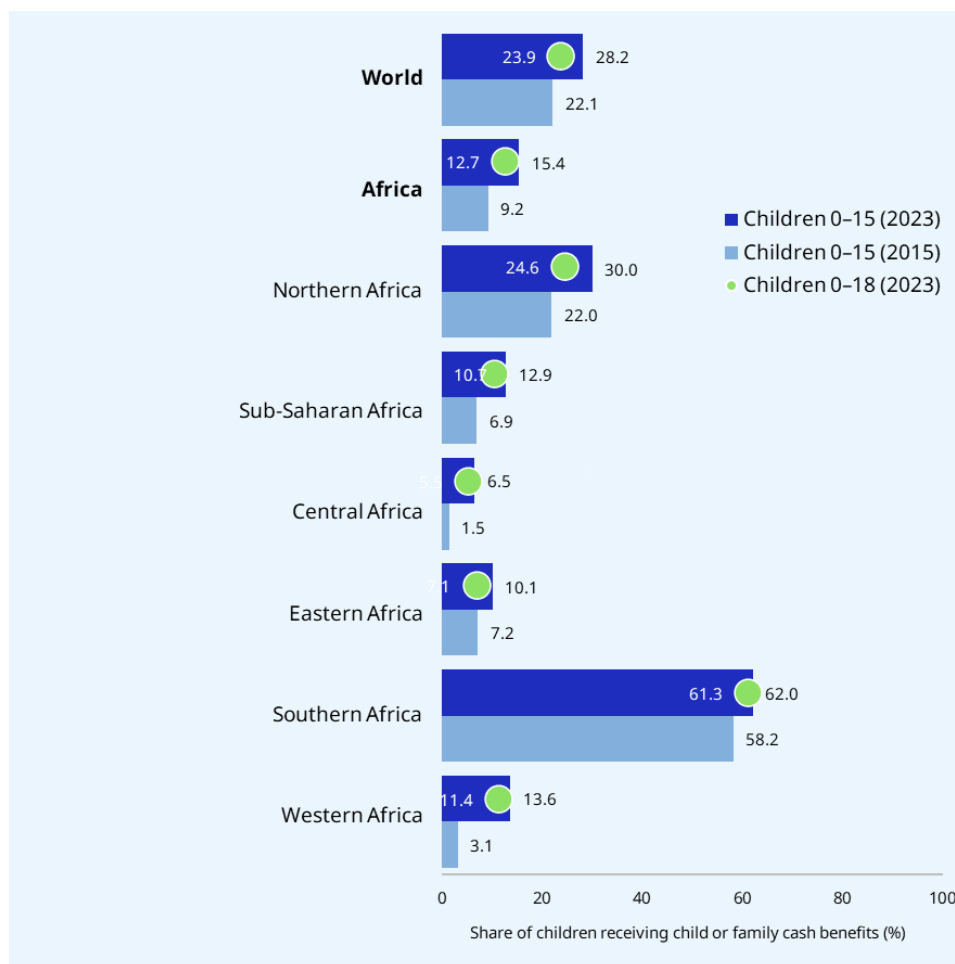
Sources: ILO modelled estimates, 2024; [World Social Protection Database](#), based on the [Social Security Inquiry](#); ISSA [Social Security Programs Throughout the World](#); [ILOSTAT](#); national sources

When comparing access to social protection by men and women, on average across Africa the proportion of women with effective coverage by at least one social protection benefit is 2.3 percentage points lower than that of men (figure 7). The gender gap is larger in Central and Western Africa, whereas Northern and Southern Africa present proportionally smaller gaps. In the case of Southern African countries, lower gaps may be partially explained by the role of non-contributory benefits, which tend to compensate for lower female labour market participation rates. In the case of Northern Africa, many of the sectors covered by contributory social security schemes – for example, public services such as education and health – usually have a strong female participation. However, as will be seen below, currently men end up being the majority of pension scheme beneficiaries also in Africa.

Social protection benefits for families and children present a low level of effective coverage, with only 15.4 per cent of children aged up to 15 receiving a cash transfer (see figure 8), which constitutes just over half of the already low

global average of 28.2 per cent. On a more positive note, an increase of 6 percentage points was registered in all subregions of the continent between 2015 and 2023. Western Africa on average increased social protection benefit coverage of children and/or families by 10 percentage points and Northern Africa by 8 percentage points during this period. Southern Africa had a higher level of effective coverage (62.0 per cent in 2023) due to more developed child benefit programmes, including the widely known Child Support Grant of South Africa. The higher coverage levels are also linked to expenditure levels: Southern African countries spend on average 1.5 per cent of GDP on child benefits, whereas Northern African countries, at 0.9 per cent of GDP, are also above the global average of 0.7 per cent. The two regions have a lower proportion of children in their total populations than the rest of the African continent.

► **Figure 8. SDG indicator 1.3.1 on effective coverage for children and families: Share of children aged 0 to 15 receiving child or family cash benefits, by region and subregion, 2015 and 2023, and share of children aged 0 to 18, 2023 (percentage)**



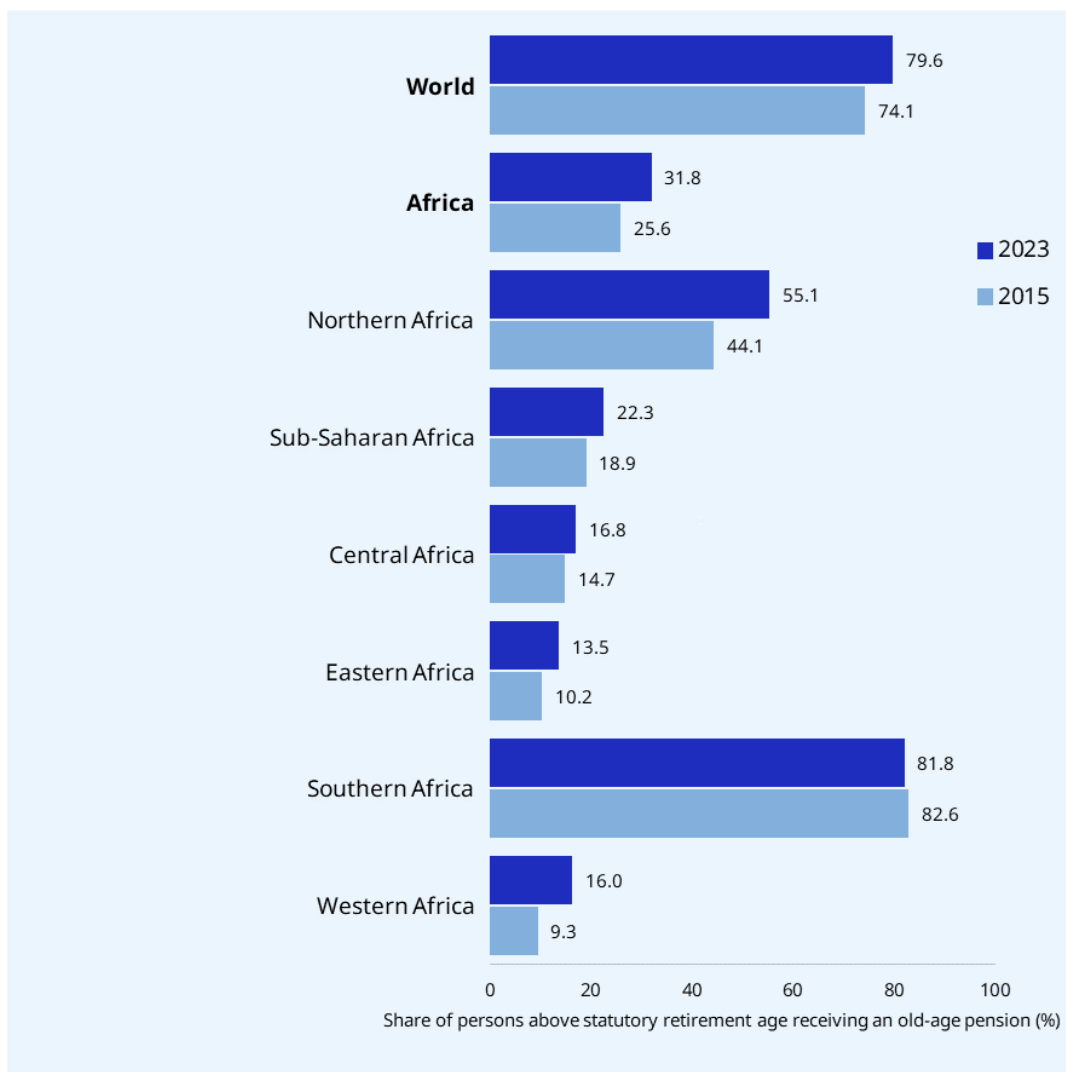
Sources: ILO modelled estimates, 2024; [World Social Protection Database](#), based on the [Social Security Inquiry](#); ISSA [Social Security Programs Throughout the World](#); [ILOSTAT](#); national sources.

Notes: See ILO (2024a), Annex 2, for a methodological explanation. Data for coverage of children aged 0 to 18 is available for 2023 only. Global, regional and subregional aggregates are weighted by population aged 0 to 15 and 0 to 18. Estimates are not strictly comparable to those in the previous *World Social Protection Report* (2020–22) due to methodological enhancements, extended data availability and country revisions.

Worldwide, old-age pensions are the branch with the highest effective coverage rate, with almost four out of five people in retirement age receiving a benefit (figure 9). Despite an increase of 6 percentage points since 2015, Africa as a whole still presents a low pension coverage rate of less than one third of older persons (31.8 per cent). A distinct

situation is seen in Northern Africa, with an important role played by contributory pension schemes, and in Southern Africa, with a key role played by tax-financed pensions that reach 76.2 per cent of older persons. Contribution-based pension schemes present a 20 percentage points higher coverage rate for men than women, due to the lower labour force participation rates of women in some parts of the region, whereas tax-financed benefits include more women, while often providing only modest pension levels (see figure 10). The proportion of active contributors to pension schemes in Africa is far below the global average, except for Northern Africa (see figure 11). In sub-Saharan Africa, the low coverage of contributory social security schemes is associated with high levels of informality.

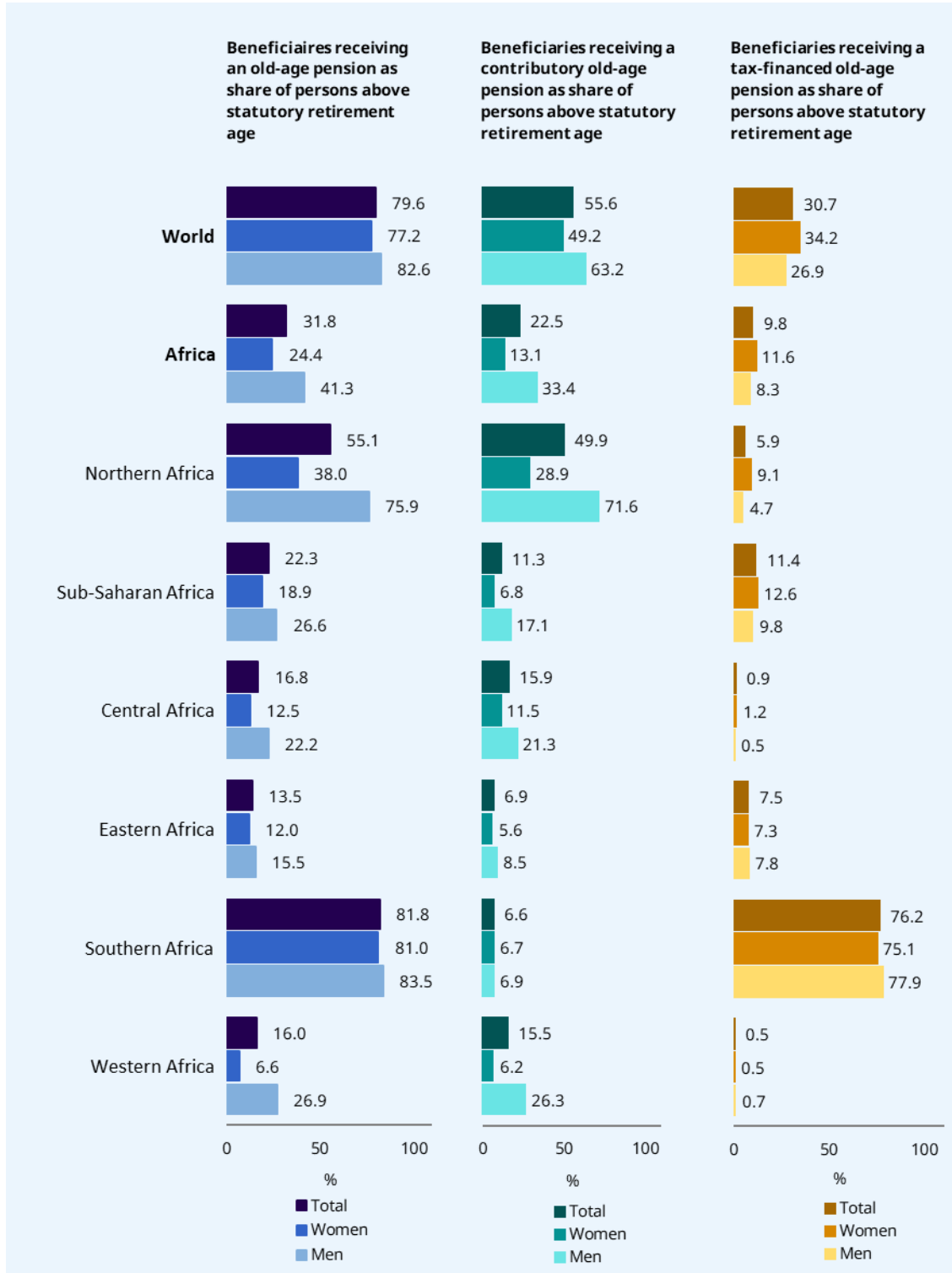
► **Figure 9. SDG 1.3.1 on effective coverage for old-age protection: Share of persons above statutory retirement age receiving an old-age pension, by region and subregion, 2015 and 2023 (percentage)**



Sources: ILO modelled estimates, 2024; [World Social Protection Database](#), based on the [Social Security Inquiry](#); ISSA [Social Security Programs Throughout the World](#); [ILOSTAT](#); national sources.

Notes: See ILO (2024a), Annex 2, for a methodological explanation. Global, regional and subregional aggregates are weighted by population aged 65 and over. Estimates are not strictly comparable to those in the previous *World Social Protection Report* (2020–22) due to methodological enhancements, extended data availability and country revisions.

► **Figure 10. SDG 1.3.1 on effective coverage of old-age protection: Share of persons above statutory retirement age receiving an old-age pension, regional and subregional estimates for contributory and tax-financed pensions, by sex, 2023 (percentage)**



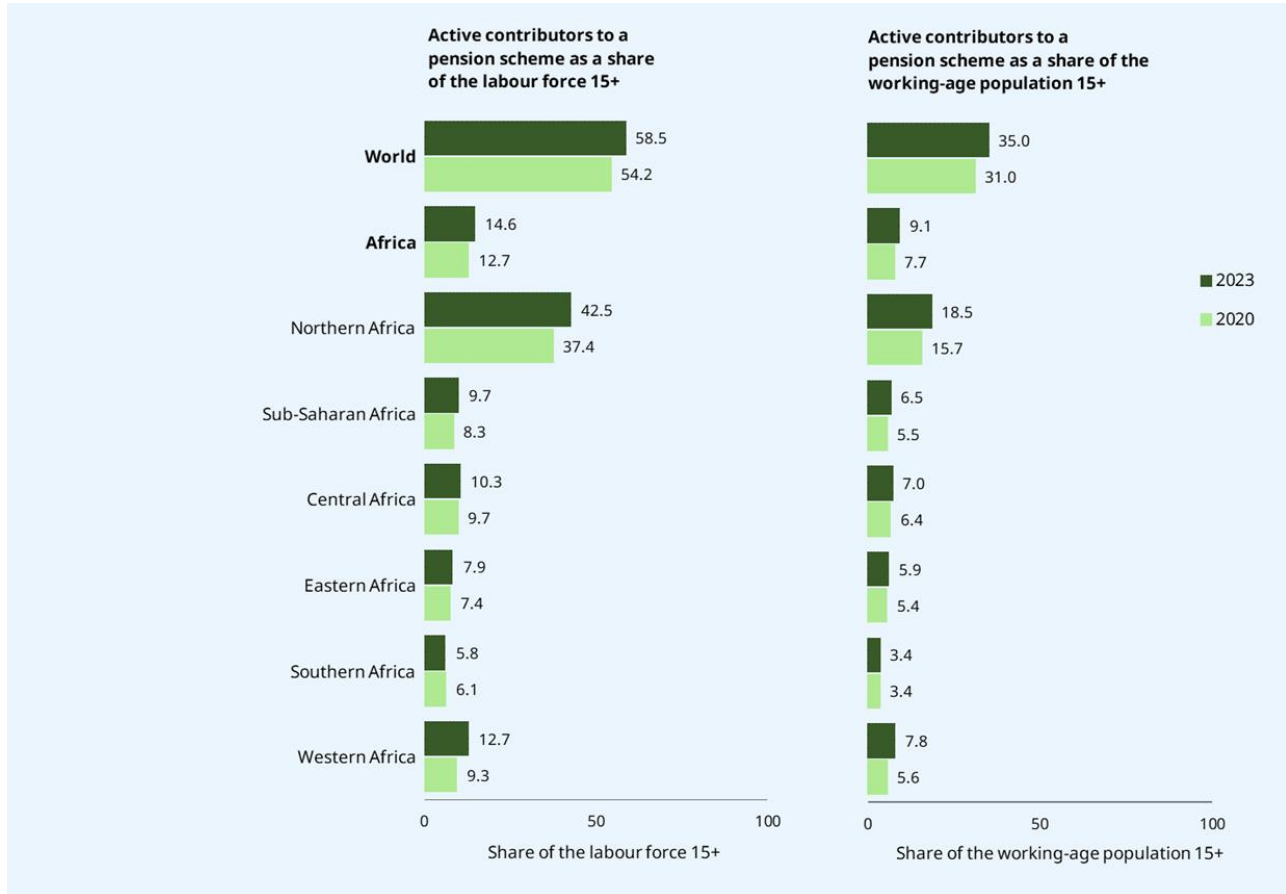
Sources: ILO modelled estimates, 2024a; [World Social Protection Database](#), based on the [Social Security Inquiry](#); ISSA [Social Security Programs Throughout the World](#); [ILOSTAT](#); national sources.

Notes: See ILO (2024a), Annex 2, for a methodological explanation. Global, regional and subregional aggregates are weighted by population aged 65 and over. Estimates are not strictly comparable to those in the previous *World Social Protection Report* (2020–22) due to methodological enhancements, extended data availability and country revisions.

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Social protection, climate change and employment in Africa

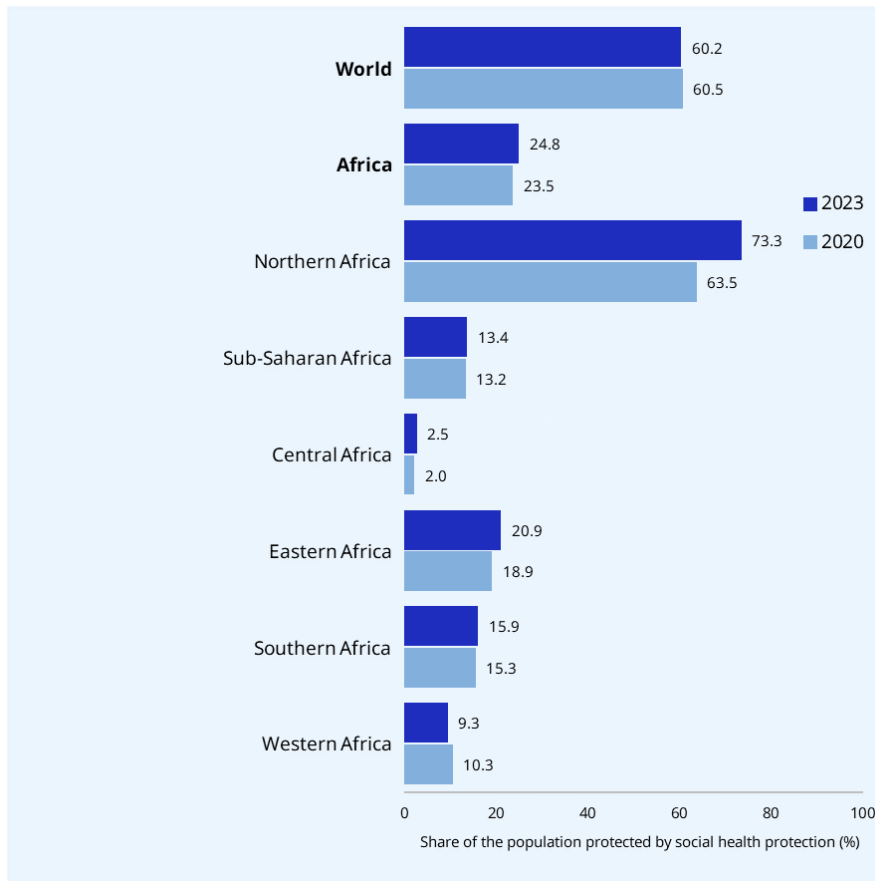
► **Figure 11. Effective coverage for old-age protection: Share of labour force and working-age population aged 15 and over covered by a pension scheme (active contributors), by region and subregion, 2020 and 2023 (percentage)**



Notes: See Annex 2 for a methodological explanation. Global, regional and subregional aggregates are weighted by the labour force aged working-age population aged 15 and over.

Sources: ILO estimates; World Social Protection Database, based on the Social Security Inquiry; ISSA Social Security Programmes Throughout the World; ILOSTAT; national sources.

Finally, figure 12 shows the level of effective coverage attained by the different African subregions in terms of social health protection. Many countries have prioritized reaching Universal Health Coverage, as promoted by the SDGs. Northern Africa, with a mix of contributory and non-contributory regimes, has achieved a level of coverage (73.3 per cent) above the global average, whereas many sub-Saharan countries, while having adopted increasingly strong legal frameworks, still struggle to transform the promise into reality.

► **Figure 12. Share of the population protected by social health protection (protected persons), by region and subregion, 2020 and 2023 (percentage)**

Note: Based on data collected for 127 countries and territories, representing over 90 per cent of the world's population. Regional estimates are weighted by the total population. The figure represents the best estimate of people protected by a healthcare scheme for their primary coverage. Mechanisms include: national health insurance; social health insurance mandated by the State (including subsidized coverage for the poor); national healthcare services guaranteed for free or with small co-payments; and other programmes (such as user fee waivers and vouchers). For primary coverage, 202 schemes were identified and included. This is substantially more than in 2020. Therefore, in order to generate trends, the 2020 estimates were recalculated, including the new countries and schemes for which data points are available in both periods. Only public or publicly mandated, privately administered primary healthcare schemes were included. Supplementary public and private programmes were not included.

Source: Based on data from ILO [Social Security Inquiry](#) and OECD [Health Statistics 2023](#); national administrative data published in official reports; information from regular national surveys of target populations on awareness of rights.

► 4. Discussion points

Social protection and employment approaches for climate change in Africa

Social protection plays a central role in a just transition to environmentally sustainable economies and societies, serving as an enabler for both climate change adaptation and mitigation. As a fundamental adaptation strategy, social protection allows people to cope with climate-related shocks *ex ante* by providing an income floor and access to healthcare (ILO 2024a). It also enhances human development and productive investments, thereby supporting mitigation policies and improving the adaptive capacities of people, communities and economies, fostering a just transition. However, social protection coverage is lowest in the countries and regions most vulnerable to climate change. Where systems are adequately prepared, they can further expand to provide additional support during crises. Countries with well-designed social protection systems with broad coverage are generally better positioned to respond to climate-related shocks than those relying on temporary and narrowly targeted “safety nets”. To

increase resilience, all countries should take action to reinforce and adapt their social protection systems to be more resilient and responsive to large-scale covariate shocks, including those related to climate change.

All branches of social protection systems, including floors, can play a relevant role in relation to climate change. Well-established child benefit, social assistance, unemployment protection and old-age pension schemes – contributory and non-contributory – with broad coverage, allow countries to quickly roll out additional support to affected families in case of crises, using existing databases, communication mechanisms, identification processes, and payment/delivery channels. Likewise, well-functioning social health protection schemes are indispensable in dealing with the impacts of climate change and other crises that affect health. These are also key to establishing predictable financing for social protection schemes in crises, including through disaster risk financing approaches and the inclusion of required social protection in nationally determined contributions, climate finance plans, loss- and damage mechanisms, as well as through adjustment of actuarial valuations to consider the impacts of higher risks from climate change.

There are two main approaches to unemployment benefits, social assistance, and public employment programmes to help address the impacts of climate change on employment, income and livelihoods. One option is to integrate climate risks into unemployment protection schemes (where they exist), for example by modifying legal frameworks, or temporarily adapting parameters or eligibility criteria to provide adequate protection (contribution rates, benefit amounts, duration, qualifying conditions). All schemes need to develop contingency plans, accelerate the digitalization of operations, and create backups of databases, increasing operational preparedness to ensure resilient delivery and surge capacity. A second option, typical in countries with low coverage of unemployment benefits (the case of most countries in Africa), is to implement a combination of basic income security through public employment programmes (PEPs) and social assistance schemes. Seasonal and emergency PEPs provide for jobs, some income security and service provision, including in the phase of reconstruction, conservation, adaptation, etc. (ILO 2024a).

Examples of countries that have adapted their schemes to tackle climate-related risks include Algeria, Brazil and Switzerland. For example, in Brazil, during the floods of 2024, several modifications were put in place, including the following: affected persons were authorized to withdraw funds from severance accounts; the duration of unemployment benefits was extended by two additional payments; mobile payment measures were deployed; protocols for accessing payments despite lost IDs were established; and social security and cash transfer payments were anticipated. In Algeria and Switzerland, unemployment schemes include criteria for accessing benefits in case of bad weather and/or extreme heat. In Brazil, the unemployment scheme includes a special benefit for artisanal fisherpersons for the annual fishing ban period established to prevent the depletion of fish livestock – hence compensating a specific sector for policies needed in regard to a fair transition. International examples of social assistance and PEPs linked to climate risks include the employment guarantee scheme MNREGA in India, which offers additional days of employment during droughts and provides ecosystem services; the Hunger Safety Net Programme of Kenya that covers most drought-affected households; as well as several cases of emergency employment programmes for workers affected by natural disasters, for example, in the Philippines.

Examples of programmes that support the transition and adaptation from “brown” to “green” and “blue” jobs include Spain, where the closure of the remaining coal mines in 2018 was supported by local re-employment and reskilling for coal workers, as well as early retirement schemes; from 1998–20, China provided early retirement, unemployment benefits and job placement services for over 700,000 forestry workers affected by a logging ban and reforestation programme; and a public works programme in Malawi was used to increase the uptake of climate-smart agriculture practices by reducing budget and risk constraints and by transferring skills. In particular, new and emerging jobs in growing sectors will require different sets of technical and core/soft skills, while the unemployed and people who are at risk of losing their jobs have to be reskilled. Access to training for women, young people and disadvantaged groups facilitate their access to green jobs. The full employment potential of efforts to address climate change cannot be realized if effective training and active labour market policy measures are not implemented. Rethinking skills and lifelong learning for all ages and sectors will need to be integrated with

other key policy areas. Policy packages required to foster transitions, promote compensations and allow for adaptations need to be well integrated and coordinated.

As a conclusion on this point, strong social protection systems with broad coverage, shock-responsive and adaptive to the new situation need to be in place to quickly react to emergencies and crises, as part of a policy package.

Closing the coverage and financing gaps for social protection in Africa

Catching up in terms of social protection coverage and fighting poverty in developing countries will require strong domestic revenue mobilization. Given that the commitments of rights-based social protection systems, including floors, are of a long-term nature, the backbone of the financing of a social protection system must be built around tax revenues and social security contributions. Hence, the deployment of formalization strategies – formalizing enterprises, jobs and economic transactions – is at the heart of the efforts to close coverage and financing gaps. In the case of Northern African countries, with greater coverage of contributory schemes, social contributions may play a larger role, for example, in Tunisia and Morocco. In South Africa, despite a stronger role of tax-financed programmes including grants for old-age, disability and children, social contributions finance the unemployment and maternity scheme (OECD Tax Revenue Statistics for Africa 2022; ILO 2024a). Based on OECD data, Calligaro and Cetrangolo (2023) document the fact that social security contributions revenue in Africa has grown from 1.3 per cent of GDP in 2000 to 2.2 per cent of GDP in 2019, increasing its share as a proportion of total revenues from 8.4 per cent in 2000 to 9.7 per cent in 2019. There is a potential of further increase with improvements to governance, inspection and collection mechanisms.

However, the high financing gap in Africa to extend social protection floors to all cannot be closed without significant support from the international community (Cattaneo et al. 2024). Only a modest proportion of the current global ODA portfolio is dedicated to supporting employment and social protection in developing countries, with a worrying trend towards reduction. In addition to complying with the international goal of providing 0.7 per cent of GNI for ODA, especially to low-income countries, the G20 may consider effective solutions to the acute debt problems African countries face, which significantly restrict their fiscal space. The G20 may also consider reforms to the international financial architecture and strong tax cooperation to fight illicit financial flows. Technical support and exchanges, including in the form of South-South and Triangular Cooperation, represent an important additional contribution.

To respond to a heating planet, among many other challenges, it is important that national budgets include funds for additional social protection needs, to allow for adaptation and mitigation policies. As countries develop their Nationally Defined Contributions to the Paris Agreement and COP30, they should take into account just transition policies, social protection policies and financing needs.

Finally, the UN is currently preparing for the Fourth Financing for Development (FfD4) Conference, renewing and updating the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015), as well as the Second World Summit on Social Development (ILO 2025b). The G20 and the African Union may consider supporting the inclusion of an action paragraph in the FfD4 outcome document (to be adopted in Seville, Spain, in early July 2025) that tasks countries with planning and providing for sustainable and sufficient financing for their social protection systems, at a level that – at the least – allows for a coverage expansion of 2 percentage points per year, in order to prepare for the additional challenges stemming from climate change (ILO and USP2030 2024).

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Social protection, climate change and employment in Africa

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