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A collage of diverse people, including an elderly woman, a man with a beard, a young girl, and a woman, overlaid with a blue circular and rectangular graphic.

Social protection for the eradication of poverty: Goals, Targets and Indicators

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Lessons from the past

- When the alleviation of poverty made it to the centre of the global development policy debate during 1990s culminating in the Millennium Summit in 2000, the term and concept of social protection was absent in the discussions
- Social security systems as a means of poverty alleviation did not play a role in the debates on “halving” poverty as one of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as a means to make a meaningful contribution to a number of other MDGs
- The MDGs were an effort to introduce global social governance by formulation outcomes rather than concrete governance tools: rights, processes and policies necessary to achieve goals were missing
- The absence of social protection in the designing of the MDGs was partly due to the fact that ILO standards in social security were not ready to support a wider social policy and development agenda
- Situation has changed with the adoption of Social Protection Floors Recommendation no 202 (2012)

Debate on post-2015 development goals

- The goal that all people should live in a minimum of social security can clearly serve as a development objective, but
- Social protection can also alternatively be seen as means to achieve a set of related major objectives such as the alleviation of poverty and the reduction of inequality, achieving access to health care for all, achieving gender equality etc.
- In any case the establishment and maintenance of at least floors of social protection available to all should be seen as indispensable development policy tool
- Whether people have access to social security is measurable (although still major effort is needed to make data available everywhere) and gaps in protection can be filled by concrete policy tools rather than fuzzy theoretical policy concepts

Social protection post-2015: debate until now

- The Report of the first thematic consultation on the post-2015 framework for development “Growth, Structural Change and Employment” (May 2012) which includes some recommendations related to social protection (<http://www.worldwewant2015.org/employment>)
- Synthesis Report from the global thematic consultation on inequalities (<http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/299198>) includes some but rather weak recommendations related to social protection
- The final report of the Thematic Consultation on Health in the post 2015 development agenda (<http://www.worldwewant2015.org/health>) also includes references to the importance of social protection in achieving various health related outcomes
- The NGO Committee proposal to have a goal on universal social protection coverage
- The ILO GB agreed in 2012 that the global development agenda beyond 2015 should develop and implement a strategy for the adoption of full and productive employment and decent work, including social protection floors.

Debated next steps

- a) Social Protection as a goal itself, in line with human rights frameworks and social protection as critical to enhancing human capabilities
- b) A goal on poverty and social protection, specifically linking social protection to multidimensional poverty eradication
- c) Incorporation of social protection across a number of other relevant goals, as targets and/or indicators. This relates to ongoing discussions on options for other sustainable development goals, for instance the discussion in health on universal health coverage and access and the role of financial risk protection for everyone
- d) A combination of b) and c), whereby a goal of poverty reduction may include a specific target on social protection coverage and other targets/indicators are included under the respectively relevant goals.

Possible targets

- Possible set of targets may reflect commitments in the Social Protection Floors Recommendation:
 - All in need have access to essential health care and to basic income security which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary
 - Guaranteed access to defined set of goods and services, constituting essential health care, including maternity care, that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality
 - Guaranteed basic income security for children providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services
 - Guaranteed basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability
 - Guaranteed basic income security for older persons
 - Persons in need of health care should not face hardship and an increased risk of poverty due to the financial consequences of accessing essential health care
 - Basic income security should allow life in dignity

How to measure it? Some proposed indicators

- Access to essential health care (combined with health status indicators):
 - Affiliation: share of population affiliated to social health protection scheme
 - Availability: ILO Staff Access Deficit Indicator
 - Affordability and financial protection: Share of OOP in total health expenditure (THE)
 - Quality: THE as % of GDP and maternal mortality ratio
- Income security of children (combined with poverty indicators)
 - Percentage of families with children receiving regular social protection benefits cash and in kind
 - Public social protection expenditure on programmes targeting children (and families with children) as a percentage of GDP or as proportion of total government expenditure.
- Income security of those unable to have employment (combined with poverty indicators)
 - Percentage of the unemployed receiving unemployment benefits (either contributory or not)
 - Public social protection expenditure on programmes targeting the working age population as a percentage of GDP
- Income security of older persons (combined with poverty indicators)
 - Percentage of elderly receiving cash periodic benefits (pensions)

Instead of conclusion

- Whatever the final decision, two things are important:
 - Any selected goals have to have clear identified links to range of institutions, policies and governance measures which have to be put in place to achieve these. Social protection policies, institution and governance principles as enumerated in R202 have to be there
 - Goals have to include necessary efforts to put in place information and statistics necessary to assess progress. This is particularly relevant in the area of social protection