

STAKEHOLDERS & TARGET GROUPS

The project is implemented as part of the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP), which was developed with Africa's Regional Economic Communities and organizations representing the interests of business, workers and migrants.

It is funded by the European Commission, through the Pan-African MMD Facility implemented by ICMPD and is a key component of ILO's Flagship programme on building social protection floors for all which contributes to the achievement of SDG 1.3.

Stakeholders and target groups in the ECOWAS include the ECOWAS Commission and other ECOWAS policy organs in charge of labour, migration and social protection issues, regional social partners, social security institutions, and Member States.

Within the AUC component of the Project, the Action aims to support ECOWAS and its sub-regional social partners to effectively coordinate and contribute to regional and sub-regional social protection programmes for migrant workers in both the formal and informal economy through:

- 1 Supporting ECOWAS and other RECs to participate in south-south cooperation initiatives and intra-RECs technical cooperation, including the participation and involvement in communities of practice at the continental and RECs level;
- 2 Building the capacities of the AUC, selected RECs including ECOWAS and regional and sub-regional social partners to advance social protection for migrant workers; and
- 3 Initiatives for systematic collection and analysis of statistical information, to inform policy making and support ECOWAS member States monitor progress towards the achievement of social protection related SDGs and relevant AU Agenda 2063 targets.

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Extending access to social protection and portability of benefits to migrant workers and their families



International Labour Organization



Improving the implementation of the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security



EXTENDING SOCIAL PROTECTION TO MIGRANT WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES TO FOSTER DEVELOPMENT

Social security is a basic human right enshrined in major international instruments, such as the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), and the *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families* (1990) as well as various ILO Conventions and Recommendations.

Social protection is also at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, which recognizes the role social protection plays in achieving sustainable development and leaving no one behind.

However, migrant workers face significant challenges accessing social protection. This is due to the particularity of their circumstances such as the length of their periods of employment and residence, their status as non-nationals, as well as their immigrant status.

They risk loss of entitlement to social security benefits in their country of origin due to their absence, and may at the same time encounter restrictive conditions under the social protection system of the host country.

Moreover, their dependents often remain excluded from health care provisions, even when migrant workers are covered during their employment period by the social protection system of the host country.

Extending social security access and portability to migrant workers and their families would realize numerous global and continental priorities, including the African Union Migration Policy Framework, which recommends to “provide social protection and social security benefits particularly unemployment insurance, compensation for employment injury and old age pension for labour migrants while working abroad and/or upon their return.”

It also contributes to the Agenda 2063 and to various Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 1.3 on implementing social protection systems, including floors for all and SDG 8.8 on protecting labour rights and promoting safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers.



REVITALIZING REGIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY FRAMEWORKS

Following the adoption of the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), an increasing number of West African countries are seeking to extend social protection and implement national social protection floors, which contain basic social protection guarantees that ensure universal access to essential health care and income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level.

In 2013, the ECOWAS Heads of State adopted the General Convention on Social Security as a Supplementary Act to the ECOWAS Revised Treaty.

The Convention is based on the principle of equality of treatment between migrant workers and citizens of the host country in line with relevant ILO Conventions, as well as ECOWAS and AU policy frameworks on labour migration and employment. The Convention is applicable to eight (8) out of the nine (9) branches of social security and guarantees the portability of acquired social security rights. It covers all migrant workers (and their families) employed in the formal sector of ECOWAS Member States.

The Convention is a good practice in extending of social security to migrant workers. However, an ILO study “Analysis of ECOWAS Member States’ social security systems and their consistency with the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security” revealed inconsistencies between the provisions of national social security systems and the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security. The studies also revealed significant knowledge gaps and lack of awareness of the Convention.

THE PROJECT

To enhance decent work and social protection to migrant workers and their families, the ILO is implementing an EC/ICMPD funded project: **Extending social protection access and portability of benefits to migrant workers and their families in selected RECs in Africa.**

The project aims at strengthening the Regional Economic Communities’ capacities to provide, as well as drive the implementation of regional frameworks on the extension of social protection to migrant workers and their families.



THE ACTION IN ECOWAS

Based on the results of the ILO study “Analysis of ECOWAS Member States’ social security systems and their consistency with the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security”, the project aims to **improve the implementation of ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security by ECOWAS Member States**, through the following key activities:

- 1 Support the establishment and effective functioning of the Committee of Experts for the ECOWAS General Convention. The Committee is the organ for supporting Member States in the implementation and monitoring the implementation of the Convention.
- 2 Facilitate regional dialogue on implementation of the Convention through technical and coordination meetings for representatives of social protection schemes, funds and national administrations;
- 3 Develop training material and conduct training on social protection for migrant workers in the ECOWAS region and the provisions of the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security. The training will target technical and administrative representatives of social protection schemes, government ministries, social partners and other relevant stakeholders;
- 4 Promote awareness of the Convention through appropriate information and communication tools and tools and channels, on the principles and provisions of the General Convention on Social Security;
- 5 The Convention is only applicable to workers in the formal section. The project therefore, assesses the feasibility of extending social protection coverage to migrant workers in the informal economy and develops concrete policy proposals for progressive extension to all.

With these interventions, social security institutions will be better equipped to implement the provisions of the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security.

Concrete proposals will be explored on how to cover migrant workers in the informal economy. The effective implementation of the General Convention will enable retired migrants who had worked in one of the ECOWAS Member States, to exercise their right to social security in their country of origin. The Convention will encourage regular intra-regional labour mobility by making it easier for migrant workers to access their social protection benefits, by creating job opportunities for young people and by improving regional cooperation on labour and employment issues.