



# social protection floor initiative

*To have an education, to be healthy and have enough income to take part in cultural life, to express oneself freely and share knowledge and ideas – these are all human rights that should be enjoyed by everyone all the time. This creates stronger, fairer and more cohesive societies, which in turn are the foundations for longer term peace and prosperity.*

## lead agencies

ILO  
WHO

## cooperating agencies

FAO, IMF, OHCHR,  
UN Regional Commissions,  
UNAIDS, UNDP, UNDESA,  
UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF,  
UNHABITAT, UNHCR,  
UNODC, UNRWA, WFP,  
WMO, World Bank

**T**he UN Social Protection Floor (SPF) Initiative promotes universal access to essential social transfers and services. Presently 80% of the global population do not enjoy a set of social guarantees that allow them to deal with life's risks. Ensuring basic social protection for these people, many of whom are struggling just to survive, is a necessity.

## ***SPF is a social and economic necessity***

Investing in a SPF is investing in social justice and economic development. Social protection contributes to economic growth by raising labour productivity and enhancing social stability. In times of crisis, a SPF acts as an automatic stabilizer for the economy by alleviating the drop in aggregate demand. Ensuring a SPF for the entire world population represents a considerable challenge, but calculations by various UN agencies show that a basic floor of social transfers is globally affordable at virtually any stage of economic development, even if the funding is not yet available everywhere.

Recognizing the importance and necessity of adequate social protection systems, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) recently adopted (April 2009), "the Social Protection Floor Initiative" as one of its nine key priorities to cope with the current global crisis. In the context of the "One UN", all United Nations' agencies join forces and adopt common priorities and solutions for a larger impact in support of effective national responses.

The SPF corresponds to a set of essential transfers, services and facilities that all citizens everywhere should enjoy to ensure the realization of the rights embodied in human right treaties. By working on both supply and demand side measures, the SPF takes a holistic approach to social protection including:

- 1) Services: Ensuring the availability, continuity, and geographical and financial access to essential services, such as water and sanitation, food and adequate nutrition, health, education, housing, life and asset saving information and other social services.
- 2) Transfers: Realizing access by ensuring a basic set of essential social transfers, in cash

and in kind, to provide a minimum income and livelihood security for poor and vulnerable populations and to facilitate access to essential services. It includes social transfers (but also information, entitlements and policies) to children, people in active age groups with insufficient income and older persons.

There are no best solutions or 'one-size-fits-all' formulas to set up the SPF. Each country has different social needs, development objectives and fiscal capacity to achieve them, and will choose a different set of policies. Through a coordinated country response, the SPF facilitates and accelerates the introduction or strengthening of sustainable context-specific social protection systems. The Initiative supports countries in their efforts in building, expanding, extending or reorienting their social protection systems by offering high-quality/low-cost technical assistance to countries through a mechanism of increased interagency collaboration.

The Initiative has national, regional and global dimensions. The national SPF task forces support the development of national SPF definitions that will be integrated into existing national development planning frameworks like UN Development Assistance Frameworks, Decent Work Country Programmes, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) or Accelerated Growth Strategies. Upon request, SPF partners also provide technical assistance for all other activities related to the implementation of the SPF including raising awareness/advocacy at national level, identifying viable policy options and concrete proposals, elaborating country-specific measures, evaluating the cost and long-term financial sustainability, carrying out fiscal space analysis, supporting the implementation of identified policy measures,... . The global Technical SPF Advisory Network provides technical support to the country teams and they advocate for the SPF at the global and regional level.

The Initiative is owned by national stakeholders, including governments (Ministries of labour, health, finance, agriculture ...), social partners and national NGOs, with support from the UN system.

ILO and WHO are lead agencies at the global level. Leading and cooperating agencies may vary at the country level based on which agencies are best equipped to lead the SPF Initiative in concrete country contexts. Collaboration is also sought from development partners: i.e. bilateral donor agencies, development banks and NGOs working in social protection. ■

**web platform**

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