

Social protection floors, sustainable development and human rights

A contribution of the NGO Coalition for A Social Protection Floor to
the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (New York, 17-19 June 2013)

The Rio+20 outcome document considered the eradication of poverty the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. It recognizes that social protection floors are an indispensable component in achieving internationally agreed development goals. It also recognized that national governments are responsible for achieving poverty eradication, gender equality and social protection.

The **Social Protection Floor (SPF)** constitutes the foundation of a national social protection system. It is a basic set of social rights derived from human right treaties, including access to essential services (such as health, education, housing, water and sanitation, and others, as defined nationally) and social transfers, in cash or in kind, to guarantee income security, food security, adequate nutrition and access to essential services. The term “social floor” corresponds to the existing notion of “core obligations”, to ensure the realization of, at the very least, minimum essential levels of rights embodied in human rights treaties. Because it combines a set of basic rights, it can respond to the need for a set of universal goals that are few in number, but adaptable to the specific situation in each country. This range of essential goods and services has been referred to in ILO Recommendation No.202, and they provide the building blocks for a social protection floor that corresponds to the first transformative shift as suggested by the High-Level Report “**Leave no one behind**”.

In the discussion on the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda, the NGO Coalition for a Social Protection Floor considers that implementation of national floors of social protection is a comprehensive, concrete and practical strategy towards ending poverty, guaranteeing gender equality, promoting decent work and equitable growth. It therefore proposes the following goal, with six targets, that could be considered the building blocks of social protection floors. Some of these targets are based on the Report of the High-Level Panel on the post-2015 development agenda, and some on the OHCHR Manual on Human Rights Indicators (OHCHR, 2012).

Goal: End poverty and establish a social protection floor for everyone, including

- a) Food security:** End hunger and malnutrition and protect the right of everyone to have access to sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious food.
- b) Health care:** Ensure access to affordable health care, including essential drugs, on a sustainable basis.
- c) Education:** Ensure that every girl and boy, regardless of circumstances, completes secondary education and has access to technical and vocational training.
- d) Social security:** Guarantee income security up to at least the level of the national poverty line.
- e) Housing:** Ensure decent housing for all with security of tenure.
- h) Water and sanitation:** Ensure universal access to safe drinking water at home, and in schools, health centres, and refugee camps; end open defecation - ensure universal access to sanitation at school, in the workplace and in the home.

Regular and reliable income transfers and access to basic social services will help to unlock productive entrepreneurial capacity, increase labour market participation and boost local development and job creation.

National governments have a number of options to create the required fiscal space for implementation of national floors of social protection which are supported by policy statements from United Nations and International Financial Institutions:

- Reallocation of public expenditures, - e.g. from the military budget to health or education,
- Increasing tax revenues,
- Fighting illicit financial flows, tapping into fiscal and foreign exchange reserves,
- Restructuring debt and
- Adopting a more accommodative macroeconomic framework (e.g. tolerance to some inflation, fiscal deficit).

Some countries may need to be supported by the international community through the provision of technical and other capacity-building assistance to formulate and implement national strategies to provide and extend social security, social services and fully implement national floors of social protection.

The NGO Coalition is convinced that the adoption of a rights-based social protection floor will make it possible to eradicate all poverty by 2030.

Annex: NGOs supporting the statement on the social protection floor

Action Aid International, South Africa
 Association Points Coeur, France
 Brot fuer die Welt, Germany
 Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento, Argentina
 Child Poverty Action Group, United Kingdom
 Community Law Centre, South Africa
 Concern Worldwide, Ireland
 Concern Worldwide UK, United Kingdom
 Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, United States
 Congregation of the Mission, United States
 Development Initiatives, Kenya
 Development Research and Training, Uganda
 Dominican Leadership Conference, United States
 European Anti-Poverty Network
 Franciscans International, Switzerland
 Free Trade Union Development Center, Sri Lanka
 Friends of the Disabled Association, Lebanon
 Global Social Justice, United Kingdom
 HelpAge International, United Kingdom
 Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, United States
 International Council on Social Welfare, France
 International Disability Alliance, Switzerland
 International Movement ATD Fourth World, France
 International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, United States
 International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, United States
 International Trade Union Confederation
 JusticeMakers, Bangladesh
 Labour Education Foundation, Global Network Pakistan
 Labour Research Service, Global Network Africa, South Africa
 Loretto Community, United States
 Marianists International, United States
 Oxfam GB, United Kingdom
 Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (PWESCR), India
 Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales (PRODESC), Mexico
 Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, United States
 Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, United States
 SOLIDAR, Belgium
 Trickle Up, United States
 UNANIMA International, United States
 VIVAT International, United States
 Youth For Action, India