

Global Social Policy Digest 12.1

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Global Social Policies: Redistribution, Regulation and Rights

REDISTRIBUTION

France hosted and chaired the G20 in 2011. The ‘Cannes Summit Final Declaration’ (4 November 2011) reflects concerns about high unemployment levels and ever stronger tensions in the financial markets, and reaffirms the

commitment to work together and [to] the decision to reinvigorate economic growth, create jobs, ensure financial stability, promote social inclusion and make globalization serve the needs of our people.

In terms of global redistribution the outcome was somewhat disappointing compared with the expectations set out by France in February 2011 (see Digest 11.2 and 11.3). Even though Bill Gates spoke to the G20 Summit, presenting a report that urges the world’s richest leaders to maintain their commitments to international aid, including proposals on taxes on financial transactions, tobacco and transport fuels, the G20 merely noted the report and that some countries were experimenting with such taxes, agreeing only that “over time new resources of funding need to be found to address development needs and climate change” (para 28). Despite this, ActionAid’s Martin Hearson commented:

The report is a bright spot in an otherwise bleak summit for the world’s poor, but it does not go far enough on tax havens and tax dodging by multinational companies.

The set back was particularly disappointing as the ‘Conclusions’ of the earlier G20 Labour and Employment Minister’s had made a call for innovative international funding for, for example, social protection floors in countries. The debate does not go away however – Philippe Douste-Blazy (former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, and currently UNITAID Chairman), argues for the swift imposition of a small Financial Transaction Tax (FTT).

It is noteworthy, though, that just at the point where the idea of global taxes have reached the top of the G20 agenda, there is now increased focus on the case for countries raising their own revenues for sustainable social development. For example among UNRISD’s priorities in its current research programme are the politics of domestic resource mobilization and allocation for social development. Indeed also the G20 Development Group in its Cannes Report (para 32) focused on this:

Recognizing the centrality of domestic resource mobilisation as the cornerstone of state building, social inclusiveness and better governance, we commit to deepening international cooperation to support capacity building of tax administrations and systems in developing countries.

Meanwhile, an ‘Action plan for Growth and Jobs’ was agreed on by the G20 and the Declaration announced the set-up of a G20 Task Force on Employment, with a particular focus on youth employment. The IMF, OECD, ILO and World Bank were tasked to report to Finance Ministers on global employment. The communiqué asserted that “social and employment issues, alongside economic, monetary and financial issues, will remain an integral part of the G20 agenda” (for more on this see G20 website).

The joint B20 and L20 meeting

wish(ed) to seize the opportunity of social issues being put on the agenda of the G20 to draw the attention of governments to some major issues on which they have developed a common vision. The economic, social and financial crisis has indeed created space for discussing labour market and social protection challenges in a comparative perspective, within the G20. [...] [It] urge(d) the G20

to make these issues a priority in order to reduce unemployment and prevent the risk of a growing share of the population losing faith in the global economy.

The Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness took place in Busan (South Korea), 29 November to 1 December 2011. The OECD and the World Bank presented themselves as global leaders on aid effectiveness. The World Bank further supports its position by noting a report rating the World Bank as “best performer” in terms of aid transparency. Oxfam was less convinced that things would change for the better at Busan:

New and emerging donors are trying to water down commitments to deliver aid that works better for poor countries and their citizens. [...] Donors are refusing to concede to calls for an agreement which would give poor countries and their people greater say in how aid is spent [...] This has become a conversation among donors about what kind of aid they want to give, not what the world's poorest people need.

Further comments came from Oxfam and ActionAid. A comment on the new role of China was also provided by Center for Global Development (CGD) Nancy Birdsall.

Michelle Bachelet, Executive Director of UN Women, said at a special session on gender as part of the Forum:

The majority of the world's poor are women. This brings to the forefront the challenge of addressing inequality, both between women and men, and between and within countries. [...] we need to take a critical look at the allocation of resources for women's empowerment and gender equality.

The OECD has continued the process of developing a new Strategy on Development (see also digest 11.3). A first draft is scheduled to be presented in January 2012. It has further assessed the progress on implementing the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action.

At the same time, the World Bank has continued its work on global development finance in ‘Global Development Finance 2012: External Debt of Developing Countries’. A Policy Research Working Paper ‘To Give or to Forgive’ by Tito Cordella and Alessandro Missale discusses aid versus debt relief.

The UN’s MDG Gap Task Force report was released 15 September 2011, entitled ‘The MDG Gap Task Force Report 2011: The Global Partnership for Development’. Another World Bank Policy Research Working Paper assesses the ‘Odds of Achieving the MDGs’.

In terms of redistribution *within* countries, the OECD published its very challenging report ‘Divided we Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising’. The OECD Secretary General Angel Gurría said at its launch on 5 December 2011:

Income inequality in OECD countries is at its highest level for the past half century. The average income of the richest 10% of the population is about nine times that of the poorest 10% across the OECD, up from seven times 25 years ago.

And he stressed the case for progressive tax policies within countries:

Over the last two decades, there was a move away from highly progressive income tax rates and net wealth taxes in many countries [...]. The benefits of economic growth DO NOT trickle down automatically. [...] Without a comprehensive strategy for inclusive growth, inequality will continue to rise.

REGULATION

The G20 meeting at Cannes did make some progress on tax havens and transparency. ActionAid reports the G20 having made the following steps: a convention on fighting tax evasion; considering the exchange of tax information automatically on a voluntary basis; recognising for the first time that multinational companies should improve tax transparency (but no concrete commitments to force them to do so). It received expert reports from the IMF, World Bank, OECD and UN, from the Global Forum on Tax Transparency, and from Bill Gates on financing for development. However, whilst these are important steps in the right direction, ActionAid believes the G20 has missed a chance to commit to greater transparency for multinational companies. Another report by ActionAid is 'Addicted to tax havens: The secret life of the FTSE 100'.

Of note is the seemingly progressive role of the OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría who said at Cannes that "tax co-operation and compliance are of crucial importance for all countries and citizens - and not only in times of a tight fiscal and budgetary environment" (from the OECD see also 'Tax Transparency 2011: Report on Progress' and 'Tax: Global Forum delivers concrete results to the Cannes G20 Summit').

The UN Working Group on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises, a new UN expert body charged with the promotion of respect for human rights by businesses, is inviting thoughts to help it establish its work programme. Meanwhile, the Global Compact hailed the introduction of a new directive on corporate social responsibility (CSR) for Europe, put forth by the European Commission in Brussels. In its first statement on the issue in five years, the Commission provides recommendations for companies to integrate social, environmental and ethical concerns into their core operations and strategies.

In 'Doing Business' we can read:

For the poor, starting a business or finding a job is an important way out of poverty. [...] Overly burdensome regulations and inefficient institutions that discourage the creation and expansion of businesses compound the problems.

However, it is to be noted that the criticisms levelled at the methodology of the report by the ILO and ICFTU in previous years is having an impact. They had argued that the reports endorsed the view that it was easier to do business where workers could be easily hired and fired and where social security and labour costs were low. In this year's report we read:

Pending further progress on research in this area, this year's report does not present rankings of economies on the employing workers indicators or include the topic in the aggregate ranking on the ease of doing business

The Global Forum on Migration and Development took place in Geneva in December. Three working groups on aspects of migration and development and labour migration reported recommendations to a concluding session. Of interest is the issue of domestic care workers about which the panel concluded that consideration should be given to

establishing an international (or region-wide) body to oversee the regulation and licensing of migrant recruitment agencies, and the training of recruitment agencies on the rights and the roles of domestic workers

The World Migration Report 2011 'Communicating Effectively About Migration' was released. The report also reviews the evolution of the IOM over its past 60 years. The EC-Un

Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JDMI) announced the publication of a handbook 'Migration for Development – a Bottom-up Approach'. It is designed a 'toolbox' for practitioners and policy-makers. And Branko Milanovic published a World Bank paper 'Global Inequality. From Class to Location, from Proletarians to Migration':

migration, in the absence of acceleration of growth in poor countries, will be a great 21st century mechanism of 'adjustment'. It will be driven by the self-interest of individuals but its ultimate result would be a reduction in global inequality and global poverty. Aid and migration ought to be regarded as two complementary means for achieving these goals. Policy makers in developed countries shall come to realize that either poor people will become richer in their own countries or they will migrate to rich countries.

RIGHTS

The 18th session of the Human Rights Council concluded in the end of September 2011. The adopted texts included preventable maternal morbidity and human rights; the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation; on human rights and international solidarity; human rights and indigenous people; and human rights and climate change. On the human rights of migrants, the Council called upon States that have not yet signed, ratified or acceded to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, as a matter of priority, to consider doing so, and to strengthen measures to protect the human rights of migrant workers in times of humanitarian crisis (see also Habitat section).

On 16 September, the Human Rights Council was concerned with the right to health for older persons. UN Human Rights chief Navi Pillay said "it is clear that the situation of older persons should rank among the most pressing policy issues for governments, public institutions and societies at large." The WHO's statement can be found here: http://www.who.int/hhr/news/health_of_older_persons.pdf.

On the occasion of World AIDS Day (1 December), UNFPA stated:

In a world of 7 billion people, for every person to enjoy equal rights and dignity, we must focus on equity and reach out to the most vulnerable and underserved populations. By ensuring equal rights and dignity, we can empower people so that they can reach their full potential. And as our numbers grow in the years ahead, it is critical that we take actions now to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe and that every young person is free of HIV and AIDS.

And on International Migrants Day (18 December 2011), the IOM remarked that

the lack of adequate access to health services for migrants in most countries is a worrying public health omission requiring urgent redress in a world increasingly dependent on human mobility. [...] Migrants have proved time and again their positive contribution to the development of societies and economies. Their exclusion from health services and policies is not only a denial of the basic human right to health but also a misguided pandering to public fears and perceptions of migrants as a burden on social services. [...] It is now time for countries to be bold, to take action and uphold a tenet they ascribe to - the right to health for all.

The World Bank's World Development Report 2012 focuses on 'Gender Equality and Development' (related documents can be found here:

<http://go.worldbank.org/A74GIZVFW0>). While the executive summary and documents appear as usual for the Bank to avoid any hints to rights, the report itself includes thoughts about women's rights:

The[...] different international legal frameworks reflect the rising global consensus on equal rights for men and women – a consensus that did not emerge overnight but rather evolved from a long, slow struggle for equal rights for women [...] Reinforced by the emphasis on gender equality in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). [...] expanding women's rights can foster agency in some realms. But the expansion of rights for family formation and control over household resources has been limited. And the effectiveness of expanding rights in bringing about change depends on their applicability – often linked to multiple legal systems – and their reinforcement.

However the Bretton Woods Project criticised it for not being rights-focused. A thorough assessment was made by Shahra Razavi for UNRISD. She argued that the report was a welcome opportunity for widening the intellectual space.

However, it is also a missed opportunity. By failing to engage seriously with the gender biases of macroeconomic policy agendas that define contemporary globalization, and by reducing social policy to a narrow focus on conditional cash transfers, the report is unable to provide a credible and even-handed analysis of the challenges that confront gender equality in the 21st century and appropriate policy responses for creating more equal societies.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Bank's private sector arm, has concluded a two-year review of its performance standards on environmental and social sustainability, but according to the Bretton Woods Project its weak human rights approach has angered rights organisations. Nevertheless, the IFC highlights the role of women in business in its 'I am opportunity – IFC Annual Report 2011', and in 'Women and Business'.

A two day international conference on women's economic empowerment, co-hosted by the UN Women and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) issued a joint call of action with concrete actions to strengthen women's economic security and rights.

UNICEF remarked many children not in school have with disabilities and are denied dignity and rights.

Global Social Governance

The increased importance of the G20 as an instrument of global governance has generated contradictory tendencies from the point of view of those concerned to see the development of a fairer globalization and a more effective means of global social governance. On the one hand, the G20 in paragraph 31 of the Cannes Communiqué called on

international organizations, especially the UN, WTO, the ILO, the WB, the IMF and the OECD, to enhance their dialogue and cooperation, including on the social impact of economic policies, and to intensify their cooperation

On the other, the new role given to the emerging economies such as China and India has led to a focus on all G20 "global" policies being expressed with the caveat that these should be undertaken according to the resources and conditions pertaining in each country. Andrew Cooper of the Canadian Centre for Innovation in Global Governance asserts:

The G20 had an opportunity to push forward with some constructive initiatives on innovative financing for development, with the mobilization of a major report by Bill Gates commissioned for Cannes by French president and host Nicolas Sarkozy. This opportunity was missed as no agreement was reached on any of the major options most notably with regard to “contributions to globalized activities.

The G20 Development Group since the 2010 Seoul Conference has also set itself a huge agenda with nine pillars of activity but with very little focus on social policy issues except the work on ‘Growth with Resilience’ which touches on social protection issues. The G20 Development Group Report at Cannes does support the development of social protection floors in countries (para 53) (see Social Protection section).

Given that there is now the UN High Level Forum on Development, the OECD DAC’s work on Development Cooperation, the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness and the G20 Development Group international governance in this field is becoming absurdly complicated. Commenting on this new G20 Development process Barry Herman (Graduate Program in International Affairs, The New School) writes:

Many commentators are saying that the November 3-4 Cannes Summit of the Group of 20 (G20) did not produce any policy results that justified the meeting. And yet, below the surface, the G20 is succeeding in something important. It is, in effect, institutionalizing the role it gave itself as executive committee of international development policy. However, not only was the G20 not asked by the international community of nations to take on this role, it is not doing a good job of it. The work is mainly carried out behind closed doors by the Development Working Group (DWG) that the G20 set up a year before at its Seoul Summit. That work in 2011, in essence, directs the multilateral institutions in their programs in infrastructure investment; International trade; private investment, job creation and skills; agricultural production, food security and humanitarian needs; domestic resource mobilization (i.e., cooperation on taxes); social protection of vulnerable populations; remittance transfers and other issues. G20 members adopted the DWG conclusions but did not commit themselves to national policy changes or to breaking negotiation deadlocks among their members that impede realizing potentially important contributions to development.

Concerned about this development UNRISD organized the ‘2nd Development Forum for G20-G8: Exploring Alternative Development Strategies’ which created a space for analysis aimed at developing a conceptual and policy framework to position alternative development strategies at the centre of the G20 agenda.

The 2011 Social Forum of the Human Rights Council took place 3-5 October 2011 in Geneva. It concerned the right to development and international assistance and cooperation.

Meanwhile the 2011 Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF took place in Washington, 23-25 September 2011. A statement of the Development Committee was issued. Interestingly in the light of the above the first ever meeting of G20 Ministers of Finance together with the G20 Ministers in charge of Development and International Cooperation took place on 23rd September in the shadow of the World Bank/IMF Development Committee. A further Communiqué came from ‘Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the IMFC: Collective Action for Global Recovery’. Meanwhile, the Bretton Woods project hints at a report by the IMF’s arms-length evaluation body, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), suggesting that Fund research does not allow room for alternative perspectives, while academics attack the World Bank for pursuing ideologically driven research agendas.

The UN General Assembly on 1 December 2011 renewed the UN Global Compact's Mandate by adopting a resolution on the evolving relationship between the UN and the private sector.

International Actors and Social Policy

HEALTH

The WHO's Executive Board concluded a three-day special session with Member States expressing strong support for WHO's work and reaching agreement on broad proposals for reform. Among the five core areas of work should be strengthening health systems and institutions, and generating evidence on health determinants. Also at the WHO, Director-General Margaret Chan was proposed to be re-elected on 21 November 2011, as the only candidate. The final decision will be made at the World Health Assembly 21-26 May 2012.

The 'World Conference on Social Determinants of Health' on social conditions that drive health inequities was convened by the WHO and hosted by the Government of Brazil (19-21 October 2011). Participants from various countries and representing governments, health experts, CSOs and other stakeholders discussed how social, economic and environmental conditions could be improved to reduce the health gaps within and between countries. The outcome was the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health that expressed recognition that "governments have a responsibility for the health of their peoples, which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures". Further it says that "health inequities within and between countries are politically, socially and economically unacceptable, as well as unfair and largely avoidable", and that "good health requires a universal, comprehensive, equitable, effective, responsive and accessible quality health system."

Whatever one can expect from this Declaration, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy said at the 5th High-Level Symposium on Global Health Diplomacy on 23 November 2011 that "a decade-old WTO declaration [the Doha Declaration] has allowed the WTO and its partners to collaborate on helping governments target medical treatment for their poorer populations and understand their room for manoeuvre under intellectual property agreements". The WTO also held a workshop in October 2011 about TRIPS and public health.

Meanwhile, the Global Fund adopted a new strategy for 2012-2016. The Strategic Objectives includes to "maximize the impact of the Global Fund investment on strengthening health systems [and] on improving the health of mothers and children", to "integrate human rights considerations [...], [and] increase investments in programs that address human rights-related barriers to access".

The Independent Expert Review Group to follow up the work of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health released the proceedings of its first meeting 21-22 November 2011 I Ottawa, Canada. Among its priorities are human rights and public health equity, gender and family planning – the iERG "agreed further that human rights should be considered separately from equity, which encompasses an array of parameters such as socio-economic, age, gender, etc."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan established the 'Global Health Policy Division', a step that had been announced at the 2010 UN MDGs summit in 2010. The work will focus on the health-related MDGs (maternal and new-born health; the three major infectious diseases,

and the response to international health threats). In vain, though, one searches for signs of earlier attempts to approach global health considering health systems more thoroughly (see digest 8.3).

The High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases took place 19-20 September 2011 in New York. UNFPA co-sponsored a side-event on Integrating Non-Communicable Diseases: the Next Frontier in Women's Health.

World Bank staff have published a 'Health Insurance Handbook: How to Make it Work'. It says:

Despite the many benefits that health insurance may offer, [...] the journey to implement insurance and achieve the benefits is challenging, long, and risky. Policy makers and technicians that support development and scale-up of health insurance must figure out how to increase their country's financing capacity, extend health insurance coverage to the hard-to-reach populations, expand benefit packages, and improve the performance of existing schemes.

The OECD's Health at a Glance 2011, released in November, includes international comparisons of health expenditure and financing and access to care. Here we can read:

Despite public concerns about privatisation of health financing, the public sector continues to pay 72% of all health expenditure on average across OECD countries, a share that has not changed over the past years.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Following upon the International Labour Conference decision in June 2011 (see GSP Digest 11.3) to discuss in 2012 a Recommendation on a Social Protection Floor the Social Security Department of the ILO in preparation for that Conference issued a new Report IV(1) Social protection floors for social justice and a fair globalization. It provides information on the law and practice concerning the establishment of a social protection floor or elements thereof at national level, including an overview of the main developments and emerging trends worldwide. The report, accompanied by a questionnaire, was communicated to governments. These replies will inform the nature of the draft Recommendation to be published in 2012 (see GSP Digest 12.2).

Meanwhile the focus of the ILO work in this field turned to its efforts at influencing world opinion in general, and the G20 in particular that Social Protection Floors were a good thing to be supported. The Advisory Board of the Social Protection Floor Initiative (which is wider than the ILO and is a UN Chief Executive Board initiative agreed at its 2009 meeting) published its Bachelet Report in October - Social Protection Floor for a Fair and Inclusive Globalization. The report called on the G20 Leaders Summit in Cannes to consider an "action plan" for implementing social protection floors through existing and new financing mechanisms. It shows that some countries – such as El Salvador, Benin, Mozambique and Vietnam – could provide a major social protection floor for as little as 1 to 2 per cent of GDP. The report shows that nationally-designed social protection floors are affordable even in low income countries.

In terms of the influence upon the G20, the Conclusions of the G20 Labour and Employment Minister's conference (para 15) were that the G20 help "develop nationally defined social protection floors with a view to achieving strong, sustainable and balanced economic growth and social cohesion". The Conclusions went on to say that the floors should include "access to

health care, income security for the elderly and persons with disabilities, child benefits and income security for the unemployed and working poor”. The main G20 meeting in Paris echoed these conclusions but with a notable emphasis that the SPFs should be adapted to each country’s circumstances. “We recognize the importance of social protection floors in each of our countries, adapted to national situations”.

As part of the attempt to influence the G20, the ILO and OECD published the G20 Labour Ministerial: Joint Statement by OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría and ILO Director-General Juan Somavia which warned that “200 million people are out of work worldwide, close to the peak recorded at the depth of the Great Recession.” One significant recommendation of the Bachelet Report was that the World Bank should endorse the UN’s (ILOs) Social Protection Floor approach:

We recommend that the social protection floor approach be fully integrated into the World Bank Social Protection Strategy 2012–2020 as well as in the social protection technical assistance programmes implemented by the regional development banks.

Whether this happens is yet to be seen. The World Bank has launched the Second round of consultations on its Social Protection and Labour Strategy but irritatingly the second draft of the new policy is loaded on the web site in the form of a power point, which does not make the thinking any clearer. The SPF is this time not mentioned. The summary of the responses to the first round of consultation pointed out that one of the often mentioned issues was that of the need for more interagency cooperation. The power point maintains the three Ps approach of Prevention (insurance), Protection (assistance) and Promotion (human capital) and talks of developing social protection systems, expanding coverage, supporting productivity and developing knowledge. Consultation ends at the end of December 2011, and the new strategy to be published early 2012 will be subject to further consultation.

On pensions, the power point is not very informative. It lists a new kind of three pillar approach: Mandatory Pensions (without specifying whether defined contribution or defined benefit), Elderly Social Assistance (without specifying if universal or mean tested) and Voluntary Savings.

Meanwhile there is still the ‘World Bank Core Course on Safety Nets 2011’ and its continuing Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA): A Knowledge-Sharing Platform and its A User Manual for ADePT Social Protection.

An interesting discussion on the World Bank’s forthcoming World Development Report on Jobs can be found at Duncan Green’s website.

UNICEF continues to be active in this field not only by continuing its email discussion on ‘Recovery with a Human Face’ but also by establishing an Advisory Board on Economic and Social Policy. A recent working paper ‘Austerity Measures Threaten Children and Poor Households: Recent Evidence in Public Expenditures from 128 Developing Countries’ examines the latest IMF government spending projections for 128 developing countries, comparing the three periods of 2005-07 (pre-crisis), 2008-09 (crisis phase I: fiscal expansion) and 2010-12 (crisis phase II: fiscal contraction). It discusses the possible risks for social expenditures; assesses the most common adjustment measures being considered by developing countries in 2010-11 and their potentially adverse impacts on vulnerable populations; and summarizes a series of alternative policy options that are available to governments to expand fiscal space and ensure a Recovery for All, including children and poor.

While Christine Lagarde and staff at the Fund begin to acknowledge that too much austerity is risking jobs and growth and civil society groups call for an end to IFIs policy conditions, IMF programmes are criticised by the Bretton Woods Project for continuing to promote fiscal retrenchment.

Interesting is an ILO-WTO co-publication which looks at how to make globalization socially sustainable. It says that social protection, investment in public goods and well-functioning markets are vital to make globalization socially sustainable.

In addition to the report 'Divided We Stand' (discussed in the Redistribution section) the OECD asked if the European Welfare State is really more expensive?, and the OECD launched new report on measuring well-being.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities was on 3 December. To mark this, the World Report on Disability produced jointly by the Bank and the WHO was published. Also the ILO launched its first global business and disability website.

EDUCATION

The 36th session of the UNESCO General Conference was held 25 October to 10 November 2011 in Paris. The most remarkable and media decision of the Conference was the acceptance of Palestine as a full member of the organisation. As a consequence, the US suspended its membership fees to UNESCO, which represent nearly one-quarter of the organisation's budget. It is still early to assess the effects of this for the organisation, but it might accelerate the current trend in UNESCO to establishing partnerships with private corporations to keep their educational programmes going.

The international community met in Copenhagen, 7-8 November 2011 to replenish the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), formerly known as the Education for All Fast Track Initiative. The conference aimed at re-energizing support for basic education worldwide as well as to highlight the critical impact of education on health, economic development, gender equality and peace in poor countries. First and foremost, the meeting had a 'pledging objective' since it aspired to collect \$2.5 billion dollars over three years from public and private donors. However, at the end of the conference, donors only promised \$1.5 billion dollars. The Global Campaign for Education welcomed the renewed "commitment and energy" shown in Copenhagen, but also stated that "more finances are needed urgently if we are to complete the journey to school for all of the world's poorest children".

Before the GPE meeting, a report released by the Centre of Universal Education at the Brookings Institute, entitled 'Prospects for Bilateral Aid to Basic Education Put Students at Risk' already warned about the reduction of the commitment of aid to education of donors such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Spain and the US in the context of the current financial crisis. Civil society is also sceptic about the increasing centrality acquired by private donors in *fora* such as the GPE. Education International launched 'Global Corporate Taxation and Resources for Quality Public Services' in which it challenges the philanthropic role of multinational corporations in the aid to education, and requests them to contribute to quality public education via fair taxation.

The World's Teachers Day was celebrated in 5 October. Taking advantage of the occasion, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, ILO and Education International released a joint statement that warns about the fact that the feminisation of teachers labour (today, 62% of primary teachers in the world are women) has been accompanied by a deterioration of teacher conditions in

many countries of the planet. These organisations also call for improving gender equality in the educators' careers:

We must promote equal opportunities for women to be school leaders, institutional managers and decision-makers within ministries of education, for more women to become science, mathematics and technology teachers, and for more men to be recruited as early childhood and primary school educators

The World Bank, UNESCO and the Korean Ministry of Education organised the Global Symposium on ICT in Education 2011 (Seoul, 7 – 10 November 2011). The main objectives of the symposium were to share and discuss results of on-going initiatives related to ICT in education indicator frameworks and to retrieve what evidence is there for ICT in education policy.

The OECD's Education at a Glance 2011 report was published on 13 September, and includes indicators on the human and financial resources invested in education, on how education systems operate and evolve, and on the returns to educational investments.

The Bretton Woods Project discusses the annual report of the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank. The report found “quite uneven results” in education, and that only 56 per cent of education projects were rated satisfactory (substantial decline). The IFC's work in education was also challenged by the IEG report.

FOOD

The Global Monitoring Report 2012 is currently at work and focuses on Food, Nutrition, and the Millennium Development Goals. The new Food Price Watch, already released by the World Bank ahead of the G20 Summit in Cannes, is concerned about “millions of people around the World are still suffering” (a chat on the Food Price Watch 2011 can be viewed here: <http://live.worldbank.org/qa-global-food-prices-nov-2011>). The FAO Food Price Index illustrate that global food prices remain high and volatile. But Richard King struggles with the numbers.

This development in food prices are also reflected at the WTO. The WTO's Agriculture Committee was heard on 17 November 2011, discussing destabilizing food prices, and that standards on health and other issues are becoming new trade barriers (more at the new website on food security). The organisations also came together at the first IMF-World Bank-WTO Joint Trade Workshop on 2 December 2011 with food prices among the major issues.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter, wasn't impressed and said:

The world is in the midst of a food crisis which requires a rapid policy response. But the World Trade Organisation agenda has failed to adapt, and developing countries are rightly concerned that their hands will be tied by trade rules. [...] the excessive reliance on food imports has left people in developing countries increasingly vulnerable to price shocks and food shortages.

A more comprehensive illustration of the conflict can be found at Duncan Green's blog (20 December 2011). Also, the Bretton Woods Project takes these policies of the international financial institutions (IFIs) under critical scrutiny.

If the Committee on World Food Security that gathered in November 2011 and released its final report will be able to make a change, remains to be seen. Oxfam commented that

it is up to its role as the central body of the global governance on food security, agriculture and nutrition. However a number of governments, notably G20 food exporters' countries, showed that they are not yet ready to address the structural causes of the broken food system and recognize the inconvenient truths that expose their flawed policies.

At a high-level event on scaling up nutrition at the UN headquarters in New York, 20 September 2011, the UN Secretary-General said:

Under-nutrition is a serious and neglected challenge. The Scaling Up Nutrition initiative has support from more than 20 countries. They understand that food and nutrition security is a human right. They know that food and nutrition security drives economic, social and human development. And they have detailed plans for Scaling Up Nutrition

(a related factsheet is also available, and more information at the SUN website).

The International Day of Rural Women (15 October) focused on the key role of women in making social progress, including their role in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty.

HABITAT, LAND, HOUSING

World Habitat Day on *Cities and Climate Change* was held on 3rd October. The report can be downloaded at <http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3108> (for more on climate change see also special section).

World Water Week 2011 was on 'Responding to Global Changes: Water in an Urbanising World'. Gaurav Dwivedi (Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, India) notes that "(World) Bank-funded private water projects across the world are facing serious financial, socio-political and operational problems, but recent trends show that more such are projects coming up" (more at <http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/art-569208>).

The 18th session of the Human Rights Council was, amongst other things, concerned with the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, it called upon States to continuously monitor and regularly analyse the status of the realization of the right to safe drinking water and sanitation on the basis of the criteria of availability, quality, acceptability, accessibility and affordability (see also Rights section).

UN-Habitat contributed several publications, such as 'Affordable land and housing in Latin America and the Caribbean', Building Urban Safety through Slum Upgrading, and Youth and Prosperity of Cities).

Special Section: Climate change and Social policy

The UN's climate summit 'United Nations Climate Change Conference 2011' took place 28 November - 9 December 2011 in Durban, South Africa. The Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity Virginia Dandan (appointed in June 2011 by the UN's Human Rights Council) stressed "the imperative of revitalising the collective values built on cooperation and solidarity among nations and peoples, imbued with human rights principles, equality and justice".

In advance of the summit, the Global Migration Group had already met on 15 November at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. The participants discussed a book entitled 'Migration and Climate Change', considered to be the first authoritative UN report on the subject.

Also, the G20 Cannes Declaration includes a section 'Pursuing the Fight against Climate Change' with a particular focus on the private sector (para 64):

We reaffirm that climate finance will come from a wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including innovative sources of finance. We recognize the role of public finance and public policy in supporting climate-related investments in developing countries. We underline the role of the private sector in supporting climate-related investments globally, particularly through various market-based mechanisms and also call on the MDBs to develop new and innovative financial instruments to increase their leveraging effect on private flows.

A publication by the World Bank 'Gender and Climate Change: Three Things You Should Know' centers women as actors for change in the discussions (see also <http://go.worldbank.org/TN0KYRX8Q0>). Lead Social Development Specialist Robin Mearns said:

Women very often don't enjoy the same rights or the same socio-economic status as men and that structural disadvantage means that they are often more vulnerable than men to the impacts of the same climate or hazard events.

More explicitly making the link between social protection and climate change, the World Bank further contributed with a Social Development Dialogue. As part of this, the report from an international workshop 'Social Protection and Climate Resilience' was released. More from the Bank can be found on its 'Climate Change' website.

On the link between food security and climate change, the President of the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development, Kanayo F. Nwanze, said: "there is no trade-off between feeding people and saving our planet."

The OECD contributes with data, and let's its head demand 'political courage to combat climate change'.

Oxfam critically discusses expectations and results of the Durban summit (see also <http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=7753>).