



This edition of the Global Cooperation Newsletter provides an update on the activities of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors. Created in 2012, the Global Coalition, which now brings together close to 100 civil society organizations worldwide, carries out its activities on the basis of the principles of inclusiveness, integration, non-discrimination and mutual respect. The ICSW has been a member of the core group of the Global Coalition since its inception and actively participates in its various undertakings.

We deem it important for our readership to know more about the thrust of the Coalition's recent efforts.

Sergei Zelenev, ICSW Executive Director and Editor of the Newsletter.

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Overall goals



Odile Frank, France, Special Representative of ICSW to the UN in Geneva

The Global Coalition is active in various areas, on different levels and works together with various stakeholders. All its activities are embedded in a general framework aimed at achieving social protection for all. Members of the Coalition support social protection as a human right, an instrumental investment in people, and an indispensable strategy for ending poverty, insecurity and exclusion at the most fundamental level. Reaffirming this commitment, the Coalition supports the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection initiative unveiled during the UN General Assembly on 21 September 2016. Jointly supported by the ILO and the World Bank, the Global Partnerships brings together a variety of key stakeholders – including intergovernmental bodies, international agencies and non-governmental organizations. This global partnership looks to increase the number of countries providing universal social protection and supports countries in the design and implementation of universal and sustainable social protection systems. This bolsters various recent significant political breakthroughs in this field internationally, enhancing political

momentum for social protection worldwide.

Universality in the provision of social protection remains the Coalition's most important goal. The need to provide social protection to all members of society – fostering social justice, integration, cohesion and resilience – is widely recognized internationally; however, much more action is needed at the national level. Immense gaps persist between the recognition that social protection is a development priority, and the disparate reality on the ground. We cannot tacitly accept the fact that more than half of the world's population – millions of men, women and children – are deprived of even the most basic forms of social protection, including secure income and access to essential public services.

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors promotes the right of all people residing in a country to social security, regardless of documentation. Social protection floors are promoted as key instruments in efforts to achieve the overarching social goal of the global development agenda. Social protection is seen as one of the foundations for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, having the potential to address both the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability and the preservation of livelihoods. Social protection floors can play a transformative role in contributing to long-term inclusive and sustainable growth, while also enhancing resilience against natural and man-made disasters, as well as economic and social crises.

Gender-sensitive social protection.¹

The empowerment of women and girls of all ages is essential for realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, and for this to be achieved, their needs, rights and

¹ This section is based on the Written Statement of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors to the

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) convened in March 2019

preferences at every stage of their lives must be considered.

Although gender equality and women's empowerment are increasingly prominent themes on the international policy agenda, the diverse experiences and needs of women across the life course must be fully considered and women's human rights to income security through adequate and rights-based social protection need to be ensured.



Helen Mudora, Kenya, African Platform for Social Protection

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors seeks therefore to call attention to the fact that social protection systems in many countries do not reach most workers, especially those in informal employment. Social protection systems have been designed around a male breadwinner model, assuming an uninterrupted and full-time career in the formal economy. This tends to penalize women, who are paid less, are disproportionately represented in precarious and informal work, and shoulder most of the unpaid care, resulting in substantially lower coverage rates and benefit levels.

Moreover, economic, social, cultural and gender-specific processes affect the accumulation of assets and liabilities over the life course and, ultimately, social security entitlements. These intersecting inequalities often result in women arriving at older age with few economic, social and

cultural assets to call upon, which results in an urgent need for adequate social protection.

Recognizing the gendered nature of life courses and the inadequate coverage by many social protection systems around the world, the Global Coalition has developed recommendations on how to design and implement gender-responsive social protection systems that can mitigate and redress accumulated inequalities throughout the life course.

The statement emphasizes the importance of ensuring universal coverage in social protection schemes, in line with ILO standards. It stresses the need to guarantee adequate, comprehensive social protection floors, extend social protection schemes to workers in the informal economy and to those outside the labour market, and address gender bias within these schemes. The development of, and public investment in, gender-responsive quality public services such as child care, health care and elder care services, are essential.

Finally, a strategy to address gender inequalities in social protection must also include concerted action to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market and enable the transition from the informal to the formal economy as per [ILO Recommendation 204](#).

Gendered life-courses and social protection design

Gender gaps in social protection are the result of discriminatory, intersecting and cumulative inequalities that affect women throughout their lives and are being reinforced by a gender bias in the design of social protection systems.

Throughout their lives women and men are exposed to different risks and vulnerabilities, which are often specific to their gender and related to gendered inequalities or discrimination. These

inequalities stem from the accumulation of the multiple and interconnected disadvantages, discrimination, inequalities and denial of rights that women experience across their life course, such as education and wage differentials; women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work, which limits their access to paid and decent work; culturally specific gendered work norms; gendered productive and reproductive roles; mobility constraints and a lack of voice and agency. Because of a lifetime of economic disadvantage, particularly in the labour market, women end up with lower incomes, fewer assets and lower or no social-security entitlements – ultimately exposing them to a higher risk of poverty.

The disproportionate share of unpaid care work done by women significantly affects their social protection entitlements. Globally, women perform 76% of all [unpaid care work](#). Women often interrupt their careers, work shorter hours, take on flexible and informal work, and remain outside the labour market altogether owing to care responsibilities. [Women are overrepresented in informal and precarious work](#). [Women are paid less](#) compared to men for doing work of equal value. Therefore, women's contributions to social security systems are significantly lower than men's, leading women to experience lower coverage rates and substantially lower benefit levels.

Gender differences in social security are particularly acute in contributory systems. Women are less likely than men to receive a pension, and if they do, they have considerably lower benefits. Even in countries where women enjoy broad access to pensions, their benefit levels are often only a fraction of men's.

Similarly, non-contributory social protection instruments, even when specifically aimed at women or girls, such as conditional cash transfers, sometimes do not produce a positive impact in terms

of social and economic empowerment. On the contrary they might increase the care burden for women and reinforce the gendered division of care and domestic work in the household. Moreover, they are mostly directed at extremely poor women and girls, and do not address the needs and vulnerabilities of women more broadly.

While gendered labour market and life-course patterns lie at the roots of women's disadvantages in social protection systems, their impact can be magnified or mitigated by specific features of social security design. The conditions for entitlement, the links between benefits and past earnings, the elements of redistribution, the provision for widows and divorcees and the indexation and retirement age all impact on gender inequality, especially in older age. For instance, the close link between contributory pensions and labour markets means that contributory pensions tend to replicate the inequalities that women experience throughout their lives.



Meeting of the Global Coalition in Nairobi, Kenya, January 2018

Recommendations for Members States to strengthen social protection for women.

A package of measures is needed to address the root causes of gender gaps over the life course, particularly with regards to gender inequalities in education, employment and care.

- Member States should ensure adequate, comprehensive social protection systems in line with [ILO Convention 102](#) on Social Security and [ILO Recommendation 202](#) on Social Protection Floors. In this regard, they should extend social protection floors, including social pensions, child benefits, paid maternity leave and survivors' benefits through a complementary mix of non-contributory, contributory and tax-based schemes.
- Member States should address gender-biased rules in contributory schemes, which disproportionately disadvantage women. Harmful rules such as long vesting periods in pension system should be phased out. In addition, reforms should include compensatory measures addressing gendered life-course inequalities, such as adequately crediting periods of care to address the unequal sharing of unpaid care.
- Member States should ensure adequate levels of social protection benefits, including non-contributory benefits, so as to ensure income security for women. To the extent that older women rely more heavily on non-contributory pensions than men, the adequacy of those benefits is of major concern from a gender equality perspective.
- Member States should ratify and implement [ILO Convention 183](#) on Maternity Protection. Safeguarding the health of expectant and nursing mothers and protecting them from job discrimination is a precondition for achieving genuine equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women at work. Moreover, paid parental leave for both women and men can allow for a more equal distribution of work and care responsibilities.
- Member States should support the development of gender-responsive, quality public services and sustainable infrastructure, including through the creation and formalization of jobs and the enhancement of pay and conditions in the care sector, and ensuring access to affordable and quality health services, childcare and long-term care and quality public education.
- Member States should take measures to address women's lower pay, job insecurity and under-representation in formal work, which are ultimately reflected in lower social protection entitlements. This includes active labour policies, supporting the transition to the formal economy and tackling the gender pay gap.
- Member States should take appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures to address harmful social and cultural practices in the context of gender roles.

The full text of the statement is available at:

<http://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/2018/10/written-statement-gcspf-csw63/>

Financing social protection.²

The first Sustainable Development Goal of the Global Agenda for Development adopted for the period 2016 to 2030 – “Transforming Our World” – establishes the targets for ending poverty in all its forms, and countries are being enjoined, among other actions, to “*implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable*” (Goal 1, target 3).

² This section is based on the statement of the Global Coalition entitled “The legal, political, economic and

moral imperatives to finance social protection for all” dated 11 April 2019

Aside from the essential questions that arise as to the definition and content of national social protection systems and floors¹, the major focus of the discussion with regard to achieving target 1.3 has become the affordability of and means to finance social protection.

These matters have been addressed for some time by the International Labour Organization, and recently by both the World Bank² and the International Monetary Fund³.

In this statement, the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors elaborates its position on the subject of financing social protection. This follows on its own earlier work on the issue – notably a 2017 global study of the fiscal size of national social protection gaps⁴ and a 2019 review of the emerging IMF framework on social expenditure⁵.

The Global Coalition distinguishes four imperatives for financing social protection:

1. The **moral and humanitarian arguments**, which rest on the global commitment to end poverty, as articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 1, and on the well-known benefits of social security in reducing inequality and exclusion and elevating dignity, hope and ambition.
2. The **established legal obligations of States** to apply ILO Conventions, to follow ILO Recommendations, and to respect and protect human rights, notably the right to social security enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, as well as to ensure through every means possible the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted unanimously by the Member States

of the United Nations in 2015 to transform our world. Furthermore, ILO Recommendation 202 provides specific and concrete guidance on the components of social protection that are needed, as agreed unanimously by the ILO Member States.

3. The **economic rationale** rests on the evident requirement to dedicate social policy for social protection so as to ensure that economic benefits are deliberate; the failure to target social policy and invest purposefully in the social sphere raises the cost of social protection owing to inefficiencies.
4. From all of the foregoing arguments, it follows that political will must be mobilized in order to ensure investment in social protection. At the same time, political will is independent of economic development, and countries can take action at all levels of income. There is no trade-off between growth and redistribution; redistribution has historically led to growth. **Planned and considered social protection requires systematic governmental policies and action.**

The 2017 Global Coalition study on the **fiscal size of national social protection gaps** showed that only 21 of 116 countries would require increases in spending above 4 per cent of GDP to close their gap. A small number among them would require at least short-term international financial support amounting to about 0.09 per cent of estimated global annual military expenditures, which is affordable. A global solidarity mechanism has been proposed and is discussed in the paper.

Coherent systems of large and stable risk pools can be created on the basis of existing informal social protection schemes and other existing resources, as

well as additional new resources from a range of schemes and their various combinations, resulting in greater reliability, fairness and equality.

Universal benefits are the most efficient means needed to protect the very poorest, because targeting and means tests are very costly and highly error-prone and violate human rights. Universal benefits should be funded through progressive and effective taxation on income, and not on the taxation of consumption, which is regressive and defeats the purpose of protecting the poor.

In order to **sustain effective social protection systems**, governments must strive for effective revenue collection and efficient disbursement, which in turn requires a regimen of progressive, corruption-free taxation, based on financial transparency, the deterrence of tax evasion, and a functional administration with good governance. International initiatives to reform taxation and technical assistance to reduce uncaptured taxes and to reform tax systems that incentivize largely exported gains at the expense of national expenditure priorities play a role in building sustainable systems. Basic spending on social protection must be preserved in times of national hardship and economic stress and loan repayment arrangements should reflect the precedence of such spending in all circumstances.

Getting to universal social protection requires swift action by national governments and global institutions. To this end, the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors requests a number of specific actions on the part of national governments and parliaments; international financial institutions; and the United Nations system and several specialized agencies. The critical role of civil society and trade unions in the democratization and strengthening of the

social contract is stressed. They play a transformative role in the realization of the right to social security. To this end, the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors pledges a number of actions on behalf of civil society and trade unions.

Notes:

1 These questions are already largely addressed by the substance of the ILO's Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors of 2012.

2 The World Bank Group, forthcoming. "Risk-Sharing for a Diverse and Diversifying World of Work", A Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice White Paper (Draft, November 20, 2018). See also World Bank Group, 2019. "Strengthening Social Protection", chapter 6 in The Changing Nature of Work, World Development Report 2019. Washington, D.C.: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, pp. 105-121.

3 Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the International Monetary Fund, 2017. "The International Monetary Fund and Social Protection", 2017 Evaluation Report. Washington, D.C.: The International Monetary Fund. See also individually authored articles in "Age of Insecurity: Rethinking the social contract", Finance & Development (quarterly publication of the IMF), Vol. 55, No. 4: 14-15 (December). Note that the expected IMF's New Social Expenditure Framework, which was the subject of consultations in 2018 (see <https://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/consult/2018/socialspending/>), is forthcoming at this writing.

4 Mira Bierbaum, Cäcilie Schildberg and Michael Cichon, 2017. "Social Protection Floor Index – Update and Country Studies". Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) for the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors.

5 Peter Bakvis, Miriam Brett and Barry Herman, 2019. "The IMF's new policy framework on social protection", A view from the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (16 January 2019). Accessible on 9 April 2019 at <http://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/2019/01/the-imfs-new-policy-framework-on-social-protection/>.
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The full text of the statement is available at:
<http://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/2019/04/ilo-100-statement/>

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