



# social protection floor initiative

WATER SECURITY PROTECTION  
CHILDREN FAMILY PARTICIPATE  
HEALTH EDUCATION WATER  
OLD-AGE SANITATION CO-OPERATING PROTECTION  
FOOD INFORMING ACTIVE-AGE COUNTRY OWNERSHIP HOUSING  
COUNTRY OWNERSHIP



# The human right to social security

Sufficient income for adequate food, housing, water and sanitation, education, good health, as well as taking part in cultural life, expressing oneself freely and sharing knowledge and ideas – these are all human rights, rights that should be enjoyed by everyone, all of the time. Rights that create stronger, fairer and more cohesive societies, providing in turn the foundations for longer-term peace and prosperity.

At present four out of five people worldwide do not benefit from a level of social protection that allows them to realize these human rights. Ensuring a basic level of social protection and a decent life for these people – many of whom are struggling just to survive, is a necessity and an obligation under the Human Rights Instruments. Such is the objective of the joint UN Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I).

## SPF

### COUNTRY-LEVEL ACTORS:

- **government institutions:** *ministries of labour, health, finance, education, etc., social security institutions, social protection sector groups and other stakeholders*
- **non-governmental actors:** *social partners, national NGOs, etc.*
- **UN country teams**

## Concept

Recognizing the strategic importance and necessity of ensuring universal social protection, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board adopted in April 2009 the Global Initiative for a Universal Social Protection Floor (SPF-I) as one of nine initiatives in response to the current crisis.

Several international and national documents and organisms have subsequently endorsed the SPF-I, among them the UN Resolution on Social Integration adopted during the forty-eighth session of the Commission for Social Development, the recommendations of the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers, the ILO's Global Jobs Pact, OECD-Povnet, the Forum of Ministers for Ministries responsible for Social Development, the International Council on Social Welfare etc.



The SPF-Initiative promotes access to essential services and social transfers for the poor and vulnerable for a life in dignity, thus presenting a comprehensive approach to social protection that highlights both the supply and demand side of extending social protection and ensuring effective access. The Social Protection Floor pursues a normative approach to social protection that includes:

- 1 A basic set of essential **social rights and transfers**, in cash and in kind, to provide a minimum income and livelihood security for all and to facilitate effective demand for and access to essential goods and services.
- 2 The supply of an essential level of goods and **social services** such as health, water and sanitation, education, food, housing, life and asset-saving information that are accessible for all.

The SPF emphasizes the need to guarantee services and transfers across the life cycle, from children, to the economically active with insufficient income, to older persons, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups by considering key characteristics (socio-economic status, gender, maternity, ethnicity, disability, people living with HIV/AIDS, migrants, populations exposed and/or highly sensitive to adverse external effects such as natural hazards, extreme climate phenomena, etc.).

## Improved Coordination

This initiative transcends the mandate of any individual UN agency, and it is natural therefore that it is being implemented through a coherent, system-wide approach. Joint UN country responses with each UN agency offering cutting-edge advice in their respective areas of expertise ensures the optimal use of experts, resources and logistical support.



The constitution of a Global SPF Advisory Network, the SPF manual providing guidance for joint SPF country operations, and the SPF website for sharing knowledge and experiences are key elements to foster and ensure efficient and productive cooperation between the relevant organizations under the umbrella of the joint UN initiative.

## Rationale and Feasibility

The SPF is a social and economic necessity. Investing in an SPF means investing in both social justice and economic development. Social protection contributes to economic growth by raising labour productivity and enhancing social stability as well as reducing poverty.

*“The world does not lack the resources to abolish poverty, it only lacks the right priorities”* ILO Director-General, Juan Somavia

In times of crisis, an SPF will act as an automatic counter-cyclical stabilizer for the economy by alleviating the fall in aggregate demand. An ILO analysis of the 2008 crisis, for example, found that the employment effects of social security schemes were just as important as those of the stimulus packages.

Some 30 developing countries have already taken measures to introduce elements of a Social Protection Floor. Their experiences have shown that social security schemes are a vital and flexible policy tool to counteract and soften the social and economic consequences of financial shocks and crises. They have also demonstrated the feasibility of building the social protection floors, showing that with the necessary political will, adequate resources for capacity-building and sound implementation process, a strong national consensus in favour of SPF policies can be created and developed.

Ensuring an 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.

### SPF COUNTRY-LEVEL OPERATION

*Each country is facing different circumstances, social needs and fiscal constraints and will choose a distinct set of policies to achieve its development objectives. The national social protection floor policies will thus be country-defined and the implementation process country-led, also ensuring affordability at the national level.*

*The SPF-Initiative does not create additional parallel processes at country level but rather establishes SPF policies as an integral part of existing national, regional and UN planning processes. For example, the Social Protection Floor concept supports regional commitments to social security, such as the 2009 AU Social Policy Framework for Africa or the country level social protection programmes in South Asia.*

*National SPF processes are consultative, inclusive and participatory in nature, involving all stakeholders including representatives from the relevant government ministries, social partners, parliamentarians and civil society through social dialogue.*





Furthermore the SPF has a strong impact on the globally agreed development goals relating to poverty reduction, education and health (Millennium Development Goals 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6).

## Sharing experience, knowledge and tools

The Social Protection Floor Initiative is supporting a growing number of countries in their endeavours to build social protection systems at any stage of the process. To this end, SPF-Initiative actors have collected evidence, documented experiences and developed tools like Social Protection Expenditure Reviews (SPER), social budgeting, actuarial models, tools for needs' assessments, costing assessments, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation to support countries in their endeavours to build their own social protection floor. Technical assistance requests can be directed to any of the participating UN agencies. The following table presents an overview of activities for which support is offered.

OVERVIEW OF KEY ACTIVITIES IN IMPLEMENTING AN SPF	
<b>Raising awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify key stakeholders and relevant actors at the national and international level</i></li> </ul>
<b>National SPF task force</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Establish a national SPF task force composed of key experts and decision-makers and supported by UN SPF country teams</i></li> </ul>
<b>Social protection stocktaking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Map the actual social protection situation and compile available data on existing schemes and coverage gaps</i></li> <li>• <i>Collect key data that is lacking</i></li> </ul>
<b>Elaboration of measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify viable policy and/or reform options</i></li> <li>• <i>Elaborate country-specific SPF policies through national dialogue</i></li> </ul>
<b>Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Evaluate the cost of policy options</i></li> <li>• <i>Evaluate the long-term financial sustainability</i></li> <li>• <i>Reconsider measures in light of costing, reconsider costs in light of needs</i></li> </ul>
<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Build national consensus on a specific SPF framework</i></li> <li>• <i>Build up national delivery capacities</i></li> <li>• <i>Support the national budget available for sustainable financing</i></li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Implement a monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanism</i></li> </ul>

## Activities at global level

### *Global advocacy*

The Social Protection Floor Initiative has been met with great enthusiasm and support from governments, social partners, civil society and UN agencies. The concept is widely endorsed and is developing into an accepted component of the overall social development strategy in the UN system. Sustained advocacy efforts will ensure the floor remains on the agenda and moves forward.

### *South-South dialogue on the SPF-Initiative*

It is well recognized that the knowledge, skills, and technical expertise which can be exchanged through South-South co-operation are in many cases those most suited to meeting the development challenges faced by others in the South.

Considering the technical knowledge of the countries that have already successfully taken measures to introduce elements of national social protection floors, these countries can support others in their efforts in building, expanding, extending or reorienting their social protection systems. The SPF-Initiative is therefore supporting South-South exchange on SPF experiences to facilitate an exchange of knowledge, best practice, lessons learned, existing opportunities and obstacles.



## Training

The Initiative seeks to build technical capacities for the management, administration and implementation of the elements of the SPF. To this end, it offers training programmes for national social policy planners and decision-makers, as well as technical officers and those implementing schemes. Training courses are offered together with partner universities or with the International Training Centre in Turin.

*“If the crisis brings with it a broad international consensus on the fact that there will be no sustainable and equitable globalization unless every human being, starting with the most vulnerable, is entitled to a basic level of social protection and that this is now both technically feasible and financially possible, then the crisis will not have occurred in vain.”*

Assane Diop, Executive Director, ILO Social Protection Sector



**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND  
TO SHARE YOUR VIEWS AND  
EXPERIENCES :**

The ILO platform on the Global Extension of Social Security - GESS - provides further information as well as an opportunity to discuss and share your views on the SPF, including :

- SPF country pages
- a library with social protection publications, links, reports, etc.
- statistical databases on social security systems
- a discussion forum
- a “workspace” environment for joint work on projects, documents, etc.
- latest news on social protection matters

[www.socialsecurityextension.org](http://www.socialsecurityextension.org)

HEALTH EDUCATION WATER  
OLD-AGE SPECIAL TRANSFER CO-OPERATING C  
FOOD TRANS  
INFORMING ACTIVE-AGE

**lead agencies**

ILO, WHO

**cooperating agencies**

FAO, IMF, OHCHR, PAHO/WHO, UNAIDS, UNDESA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF,  
UNODC, UN Regional Commissions, UNRWA, WFP, WMO, World Bank

and **development partners**

**web platform**

[www.socialsecurityextension.org](http://www.socialsecurityextension.org)

[www.socialprotectionfloor.org](http://www.socialprotectionfloor.org)

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