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## IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION OF ECOWAS GENERAL CONVENTION ON SOCIAL SECURITY BY ECOWAS MEMBER STATES

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**Social security is a basic human right enshrined in major international instruments**, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (1990) as well as various ILO Conventions and Recommendations. However, due to their particular circumstances, especially the length of their periods of employment and residence, their status as non-nationals, as well as their particular immigrant status, migrant workers are often prevented from obtaining coverage from contributory and non-contributory social protection schemes.

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*Establishing and strengthening a social protection floor in migrants' countries of origin can facilitate the return and reintegration of migrants, while respecting their human right to social security and a life in dignity.*

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Protecting the rights of migrant workers to social protection is important, not only for ensuring equality of treatment with respect to social security for migrant workers, but also for extending social protection coverage to currently unprotected migrants. In addition to supporting the conclusion and effective implementation of proper coordination mechanisms, there is a need to explore measures that could be taken either by adapting domestic legislation and/or multilateral or bilateral agreements to extend social protection coverage to specific groups of the population, including to those who have some contributory capacity, such as domestic migrant workers, self-

employed migrant workers, agricultural migrant workers and other types of migrant workers in atypical forms of employment.

## OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the action is to extend decent work and social protection to migrant workers and their families, by strengthening the Regional Economic Communities' capacities to provide, as well as drive the implementation of regional frameworks on the extension of social protection to migrant workers and their families.

## REVITALIZING REGIONAL PROCESSES

Although regional social security conventions exist in Africa, there is a real need for revitalizing regional processes and enforcing agreements. The preparation and implementation of multilateral social security agreements will require strengthening the capacity of social security policy makers and administrators in ECOWAS, SADC and the EAC, in order to guarantee that the agreed provisions and mechanisms fully match the priority and social context of the migrant workers and their families. The AUC and the ILO have chosen to focus on doing so in these three RECs – ECOWAS, SADC and the EAC - as it answers to a demand formulated by the named RECs to provide support to implement and strengthen achievements and build on ongoing work. This demonstrates strong regional political commitment to extending social protection to migrant workers and their families, which provides guaranties for a greater project impact. These portability initiatives, which this project will build on, are already well advanced in these three regions. The involvement of the AUC will also help to advance work on social protection beyond the RECs, and forge a continent wide initiative.

In the wake of the adoption of the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) an increasing number of West African countries are seeking to extend social protection and implement national social protection floors, which contain basic social security guarantees that ensure universal access to essential health care and income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level. The ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State adopted the General Convention on Social Security as an additional

act to the ECOWAS Revised Treaty in 2013. The Convention is based on the principles of equal treatment and the preservation of social security rights, and is in line with relevant ILO Conventions, as well as ECOWAS and AU policy frameworks on labour migration and employment. This project will build the capacity of ECOWAS to improve the implementation of its General Convention on Social Security in its Member States.

**Improved implementation of ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security by ECOWAS Member States:** Based on the results of the ILO study “Analysis of ECOWAS Member States’ social protection systems and their consistency with the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security” carried out under the FMM project<sup>1</sup>, this project will focus on the implementation of the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security, through: (1) Support to the establishment of the Committee of Experts for the ECOWAS General Convention; (2) Facilitation of annual technical and coordination meetings for representatives of social protection schemes and other relevant stakeholders; (3) Training of representatives of social protection schemes, funds and relevant national administrations on the provisions of the ECOWAS General Convention; (4) Development and dissemination of information leaflets or other communication tools on the principles and provisions of the General Convention on Social Security; and (5) Assess the feasibility to extend social protection coverage to migrant workers in the informal economy and develop and selectively test concrete policy proposals for a progressive extension to all.

**Improved capacity of the AUC, RECs and regional social partners to effectively coordinate and contribute to regional and sub-regional social protection programmes for migrant worker in both the formal and informal economy** through: (1) Support of the AUC to promote south-south cooperation, create a community of practices, and support intra-RECs technical cooperation, including through a high-level international conference; (2) Building the capacity of the AUC, selected RECs and regional and sub-regional social partners; and (3) Initiating the systematic collection and analysis of statistical information, amongst others, to inform policy

making and support AU member states monitor progress made towards the achievement of relevant SDG target.

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<sup>1</sup> FMM West Africa: Support to Free Movement of Persons and Migration in West Africa