

## Social Protection, Freedom and Justice for Workers Network

### Consultation Meeting Minutes

Geneva, 24 October 2017 –ILO, Room X (R.2)

#### Participants

##### On-site

Andrea Schill, Program Officer, Trade and Development, Employment and Social Policy, FES Geneva

Baba Aye, Public Services International

Bart Verstraeten, Political Secretary, WSM

Evelyn Astor, Policy Officer, Economic and Policy Department, ITUC

Hubert René Schillinger, Director, FES

Karuna Pal, SOCPRO

Luis Cotinguiba, Social Protection Officer, SOCPRO

Quynh Nguyen, Junior Social Protection Policy and Research Officer, SOCPRO

Rafael Peels, Specialist in Workers' Activities, ACTRAV, ILO

##### Online

Ath Thorn, CLC Cambodia

Cécilie Schildberg, Social Protection Coordinator, FES

Carolina Dantas, Technical Officer in Social Protection, TUCA

Eduard Marpaung, General Secretary, KSBSI

Ghislaine Saisonou, Spécialiste des questions d'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes et de la protection sociale, ITUC Africa

Isabel Ortiz, Director Social Protection, ILO

Jean Jacques Schul, President, IDAY (Network of Coalitions of African Civil Society Organisations, Domestic Workers in West and East Africa)

Jesus Garcia, ACTRAV Turin, Cooperation Projects with TUs in Latin America

Suzanne Wu, Campaign Officer focused on SP, HKCTU

Tauvik Muhamad, Workers Education Expert, ILO

#### Objectives

- To highlight the importance of workers' organisations in the field of social protection
- To discuss the need for the network "Social Protection, Freedom and Justice for Workers Network"
- To define the objectives of the network in alignment to the priorities of workers' organisations
- To present and further the working methodology envisaged so far
- To help develop a preliminary work-plan for the coming year

## Introductory remarks – key messages

[Social protection is a critical issue for trade unions](#). It is a fundamental component of decent work, and a key tool for reducing poverty, inequality, supporting education, promoting gender equality, and boosting and stabilising the economy through aggregate demand.

[Trade unions play a crucial role in the field of social protection](#) in a number of ways: doing advocacy work; negotiating the terms of social protection in the context of tripartite dialogue; monitoring its progress; and, in some countries, administering social protection benefits and services.

[Further support could benefit many trade unions in the promotion and defence of social protection](#). The network will serve as an opportunity for unions across the globe to come together, share experiences, exchange and learn from each other. The network's goal is to create a workers' community to support workers' organisations to establish and defend sound and effective social protection floors (SPFs). The idea is to allow trade unions to extend their technical capacities through training workshops, access to educational materials, and tools for monitoring the implementation of SPFs.

[Despite significant progress in the expansion of social protection, we observe worrying trends of contraction, as discussions on social security reforms are being undertaken in more than 100 countries](#). In light of this challenge, it is crucial to defend universal and rights-based social protection in the face of austerity and adjustment reforms, to fight for as much fiscal space as possible for developing comprehensive schemes, and to strive for extending social protection coverage, depth and adequacy. The extension of social protection in times of austerity is a challenging but very important issue.

[The network builds on the progress put forward by three main references](#):

- [ILO standards](#), including the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 ([No. 102](#)), the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 ([No. 202](#)), and the Recommendation Concerning the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy, 2015 ([No. 204](#)).
- [The ILO's Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All](#). (For more information, please click [here](#)).
- [The Sustainable Development Agenda](#), notably manifested in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 1.3 on the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems and floors for all.

## The Role of Trade Unions in the Field of Social Protection

*Representatives of several confederations and trade unions presented their contributions to the extension and defence of social protection.*

### [Trade Union Confederation of the Americas \(TUCA\)](#)

Social protection is a priority area for TUCA since its creation, as expressed in the policy tool "Development Platform of the Americas" ([PLADA](#)). This document defines how comprehensive social protection systems should be established according to the views of Latin American workers, emphasizing principles such as universality, solidarity and the public nature of the benefits.

[Uruguay](#) has a long history of social dialogue. Trade unions have long been participating in the *Banco de Previsión Social* (national social security institute) and, since 1992, they are organized through a political technical team, successfully building a stronger critical mass in the country with the support of the ILO. The

national body in charge of implementing social security policies ensures tripartite dialogue, enabling organized workers to participate in the discussions in an institutionalized way. The first social dialogue was held in 2007 to evaluate the existing social security system and discuss inputs for potential amendments in the system, strengthening democratic government. Trade unions have been actively participating of the national dialogue to reinforce social protection in a number of ways: taking agreements, making proposals, exercising a dynamic impact in the drafting of laws, and participating in the implementation of public policies. Workers presented alternative proposals by putting forward a number of improvements for reducing inequalities in the existing social security system. Considering financial sustainability, trade unions managed to achieve flexibility in terms of access to retirement funds, reducing the contribution time from 35 to 30 years. Trade unions have also managed to include a special calculation for the contribution time of women, adding one year of recognized work per child, thus taking into account women's contributions to the care economy. Thanks to the participation of workers, there is now larger freedom of choice between public pensions and private funds. In addition, changes in sickness and disability benefits allowed many workers to access those benefits. Currently, Uruguayan workers are fighting to create a comprehensive national care system.

In the [Dominican Republic](#), trade unions played an important role in the tripartite commission to reform the social security system in 2001. The consensus built in this forum led to a draft bill that served as a basis to the discussions that took place in the Senate, culminating with the approval of the law No. 87- 01 that creates the Dominican System of Social Security. To guarantee the full application of this new law and accomplish a part of the regulation that established the contributory family health insurance scheme, the trade union movement faced resistance from the private health sector. The unions mobilized protests to guarantee the health system as a constitutional right for workers and their families. In response to that, the president formed a commission to discuss the implementation of the familiar health benefit with trade unions and other CSOs. Trade unions played an important role in the commission, presenting proposals and suggestions to set up the benefit in a viable way. These consultations led to the adoption of a great tripartite agreement in 2006, defining the basis of a familiar health benefit that is now accessible to about 2.8 million workers and their families.

#### [The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation \(ITUC-Africa\)](#)

In [Africa](#), the trade union movement has been key in furthering social protection, and ITUC-Africa is closely following reforms in the social security systems of many countries to ensure the extension of social protection to workers in the informal economy. In [Senegal](#), trade unions are working on the legal reform of the pension scheme. In [Burkina Faso](#), ITUC-Africa has set up a network on social protection to facilitate the coordination among trade unions, so that they are stronger and united through a common voice on social policies and social protection strategies. Thanks to the efforts of the trade union movement, [Sierra Leone](#) has recently implemented a minimal wage. In [Guinea](#), ITUC-Africa is coordinating efforts with CSOs, such as WSM, to support unions to develop their strategy and policy on social protection. In [Benin](#), the government is holding discussions on changes in the existing social protection schemes, and relevant knowledge is needed to equip workers' organisations and guarantee their active and meaningful participation in the social dialogue.

At the [sub-regional level](#), ITUC-Africa is launching a campaign on Recommendation 202, producing materials to explain the recommendation to workers, notably those in the informal economy. They have also been working on capacity building for enhancing the capacities of representatives of trade unions to make relevant contributions in the context of social dialogue. Given that 80% of African workers are in the informal economy, ITUC-Africa also works within trade unions across the continent to mobilize the union movement to enlarge its scope for including informal and domestic workers.

### [The Confederation of Indonesia Prosperity Trade Union \(KSBSI\)](#)

In [Indonesia](#), KSBSI and other trade unions have been involved in changing social security laws, including advocacy for free medical care, governance by tripartism, the inclusion of informal economy workers, and in the struggle for making the social security institution operate as a non-profit body. The trade union movement has been working to increase social protection coverage by a number of actions, such as by requesting that social protection offices are more easily accessible in far and remote locations, or by verifying the actual number of workers in each company, so as to avoid that employers hide workers in their declarations. Indonesian trade unions have also been conducting a campaign on social security for all, as well as training activities for workers on what the existing benefits are and how to access them. In 2017, trade unions started to raise the need for extending social protection to migrant workers.

For KSBSI, the Social Protection, Freedom and Justice for Workers Network is very important, as many workers are still excluded from enjoying the right to social protection, and several countries have not yet ratified the ILO Recommendation No. 202. Technical support from the ILO and knowledge sharing on successful practices for pushing forward and defending social protection are thus fundamental.

### Discussions

- Given the huge gap in social protection coverage, [it is crucial to establish active collaboration and meaningful partnerships with civil society organisations \(CSOs\)](#), such as those participating in the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors. These organisations have gathered relevant experience on building community-based initiatives for extending SP, including providing concrete services to workers either in the informal economy or under precarious work conditions. These organisations are keen to extend their hands to the ITUC and to other trade unions for making social protection a reality for people excluded from it.

#### [Examples of collaboration between CSOs and trade unions:](#)

- World Solidarity (WSM) is active in 21 countries, having established multi stakeholder networks that bring together social partners (such as mutual healthcare organisations and women's organisations) with the aim of sharing knowledge and building a common advocacy agenda on social protection. These networks help social actors to coordinate efforts to make their voices heard by governments regarding the development of SPFs.
  - IDAY has successful experiences in the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda. In the past years, IDAY has been conducting surveys with domestic workers on their needs of training and social services, launching campaigns to fight against violence towards child and youth domestic workers, and struggling for the recognition of domestic workers as a full-fledged profession.
  - FES has an ongoing project to build national coalitions of trade unions and workers' organisations in many countries across the globe to enable workers to participate in the national dialogue on SPFs.
- [ACTRAV has important record supporting trade unions on social protection issues in accordance to the priorities of workers in each country/region.](#) It has developed many training materials, guides and relevant cooperation projects, training around 1,500 trade unionists only in Latin America. In Africa, ITUC-Africa and ACTRAV cooperated through a programme with workers' organisations from Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to build the capacities of national trade union leaders to enhance their participation in social dialogue, including improving their ability to give inputs to actuarial work. As a result, there are now more than 60 trade union leaders trained with relevant knowledge and skills to discuss social protection.

- The platform can become an important reference for multiple stakeholders interested to learn how trade unions and workers' organisations around the world have been contributing to extend social protection.
- Participants underlined several common challenges in the area of social protection systems, and highlighted their interest in organising specific discussions and/or developing support materials on how unions can address these challenges. These included:
  - How to extend social protection in the informal economy (and good-practice examples of how unions manage to incorporate informal economy workers into their structures)
  - How to foster discussions/joint campaigns between unions and civil society
  - Gender inequalities in accessing social protection
  - Financing social protection in the context of austerity

## Opportunities and challenges

- The network can potentially support trade unions in preparation for the International Labour Conference in 2020, which will focus on social protection. Another opportunity ahead is the ILO's centenary in 2019, when many activities on social protection will take place.
- It is important to spread the existence of the platform and help workers to access such content.
- Information should be easily accessible, including regarding translation of materials.
- Trade union confederations and CSOs could try to identify target countries where there are genuine opportunities for national dialogue with tripartite constituents.
- The network could benefit from regular webinars as a means to share knowledge on topical areas, such as on the extension of social protection to workers in the informal economy, on financing options, campaigning, etc.

## Working methodology

- The goal of the network is to coordinate and support workers' organisations to promote and defend SPF's by building up their capacities to participate meaningfully in the national debates.
- The network will facilitate peer-to-peer learning, and also result in the development of advocacy materials, policy briefs, guides, country cases, training materials, studies on the importance of social protection for economic prosperity, and tools for implementing and monitoring SPF's. The sharing element implies an active role of trade unions in exchanging their technical expertise with each other. Workers' organisations are thus expected to both benefit from and contribute to the expansion of the network.
- The main component of the proposed network will be a global knowledge-sharing platform. Through this online space, workers' organisations can learn from and share their experiences, tools and instruments for pushing forward and defending social protection floors.
- Specific tools will also be developed by ILO/ACTRAV to aid workers organisations in this network. These include:
  - Research papers and policy briefs
  - Training materials on social protection, including a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)
  - The ILO Social Protection Financing Calculator
- These activities and outcomes intend to provide workers' organisations with knowledge and arguments that they can use in the context of national dialogues to move other stakeholders, including governments and employers' organisations, towards the establishment, improvement and extension of SPF's.

## Work Plan

- Network's official launch: early 2018 (Date TBC).
- Announcements of the "Call for papers" and of the next webinar during the launch.
- Development of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) module on workers' organisations and social protection within the Global Labour University.
- Development of a monthly newsletter to share knowledge and promote capacity building and awareness raising events.
- Translation of the online platform into French and Spanish
- Project proposals for resource mobilisation to allow the organisation of on-site capacity building events at the subregional and national levels, as well as to provide technical support to trade unions in the development and defence of SPFs

## Help the Social Protection, Freedom and Justice for Workers Network become a reality

- [Share](#) all relevant materials that your organisation have produced in the field of social protection, from research, advocacy and strategies for defending it, to monitoring, capacity building, and campaigning for social protection.
- [Call for papers](#): Send us any briefs/reports/campaign materials in order to tell others about your successful experiences or challenges in expanding SPFs.
- [Send us](#) your proposals for specific topics that you would like to see covered in this network through dedicated discussions/reports/support materials
- [Communicate](#) on relevant events organized by your trade union or organisation so that others can participate, we will make sure to promote them in our future newsletter.