



Social Security for All: The ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation

SOCIAL SECURITY FOR ALL BRIEFING NOTE — June 2012

A new international social security standard

The International Labour Conference (ILC) adopted a new international labour standard, the [Recommendation concerning national floors of social protection](#) (referred to as Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)) in June 2012. Government, employer and worker delegates of the International Labour Organization's 185 member States adopted this Recommendation nearly unanimously. The Recommendation completes the [social security strategy of the Organization](#).

The new Recommendation provides guidance to member States in building comprehensive social security systems and extending social security coverage by prioritizing the establishment of national floors of social protection accessible to all in need.

The ILO normative framework for the extension of social security provides a unique set of internationally-accepted standards that serve as reference for national social security systems. The new Recommendation complements the existing Conventions and Recommendations. In particular, it assists member States in covering the unprotected, the poor and the most vulnerable, including workers in the informal economy and their families. It thereby aims at ensuring that all members of society enjoy at least a basic level of social security throughout their lives.

"Recommendation No. 202 sends a clear and bold message ... it is high time to make decisive progress and to provide at least basic social security to all women, men and children, and it will make a fundamental difference to the lives of billions of people." Helen Kelly, Worker delegate and Vice-Chair of the Conference Committee

The Social Protection Floors Recommendation

Objective

Reaffirming that social security is a human right and a social and economic necessity, the Recommendation provides guidance to countries

- in establishing and maintaining national social protection floors as a fundamental element of national social security systems and
- in implementing their floors within strategies for the extension of social security that progressively ensure higher levels of social secu-

... rity to as many people as possible, guided by ILO social security standards.

This two-fold objective of the Recommendation reflects the International Labour Organization's [two-dimensional strategy to the extension of social security coverage](#), adopted by the ILC in June 2011.

"Growing awareness about the social insecurity faced by the majority of the world's population and the dramatic consequences for people lacking access to even essential health care and basic income security ... was converted into action through the implementation of policies and programmes that constitute social protection floors covering all those in need."

Trevor Kaunda, Government delegate of Zambia and Rapporteur of the Conference Committee

Principles

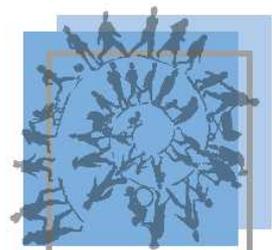
The Recommendation comprises a set of principles, including the overall and primary responsibility of the State; a rights-based approach based on entitlements prescribed by national law; diversity of methods and approaches; progressive realization; universality of protection based on social solidarity; adequacy and predictability of benefits; protection of rights and dignity of beneficiaries; non-discrimination, gender equality and responsiveness to special needs; financial, fiscal and economic sustainability; transparent, accountable and sound financial management and administration; as well as tripartite participation and consultation with representatives of persons concerned.

Social protection floors and basic social security guarantees

In order to ensure effective access to essential health care and basic income security throughout the life cycle, national social protection floors should comprise at least the following social security guarantees, as defined at the national level:

- access to essential health care, including maternity care;
- basic income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services;
- basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and
- basic income security for older persons.

Such guarantees should be provided to all residents and all chil-



dren, as defined in national laws and regulations, and subject to existing international obligations.

They should be provided through the most effective and efficient combination of benefits and schemes in the national context.

Benefits may include child and family benefits, sickness and health-care benefits, maternity benefits, disability benefits, old-age benefits, survivors' benefits, unemployment benefits and employment guarantees, and employment injury benefits as well as any other social benefits in cash or in kind.

Schemes providing such benefits may include universal benefit schemes, social insurance schemes, social assistance schemes, negative income tax schemes, public employment schemes and employment support schemes.

Social security extension strategies

The Recommendation also sets out that countries should formulate and implement national social security extension strategies, based on national consultations through effective social dialogue and social participation. These should prioritize the establishment and maintenance of social protection floors, and seek to provide higher levels of protection to as many people as possible, reflecting economic and fiscal capacities of Members, and as soon as possible.

For this purpose, Members should progressively build and maintain comprehensive and adequate social security systems coherent with national policy objectives and seek to coordinate social security policies with other public policies.

When building comprehensive social security systems, countries should aim to achieve the range and levels of benefits set out in the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), or in other ILO social security Conventions and Recommendations setting out more advanced standards.

"We have a common and noble purpose to help make life better for those most in need ... social security is an investment in people that empowers them to adjust to changes in the economy and in the labour market". Kris De Meester, Employer delegate and Vice-Chair of the Conference Committee

National monitoring

According to the Recommendation, countries should monitor progress in implementing social protection floors and achieving other objectives of national social security extension strategies. This should include tripartite participation with representative organizations of employers and workers, as well as consultation with other relevant and representative organizations of persons concerned. Countries should also regularly convene national consultations to assess progress and discuss policies for the further horizontal and vertical extension of social security.

The Recommendation encourages countries to share exchange information, experiences and expertise among themselves and with the ILO. In implementing this Recommendation, countries may

seek technical assistance from the ILO and other relevant international organizations in accordance with their respective mandates.

The way ahead

The guidance provided by this Recommendation represents a major step forward in ensuring universal access to basic income security, food security, adequate nutrition, health care and other essential services (such as education, housing, water and sanitation and other services, as nationally defined).

It contributes to the global Social Protection Floor Initiative, which is supported by a large coalition of international organizations and development partners.

National social protection floors, as fundamental element of national social security systems, constitute an essential element of national and international policies aiming at building more inclusive societies and economies.

"The ... Recommendation will help member States ... to promote the rights and dignity of our peoples and the opportunities which are presented to them. In order to do that, it needs to be transformed from a piece of paper into policies, legislation, institutions, resources and programmes, leading to real change."
Jean Feyder, government delegate of Luxembourg and Chair of the of the Conference Committee

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