



Report

# **The Social Protection Floors – Achieving Social Security for All**

## **Implementing an International Concept on the national Level**

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The concept of the Social Protection Floors (SPF) was adopted by the International Labor Conference in June 2012 and since then has gained tremendous support on the international level. The potential of SPF to eradicate poverty and to balance economic and social uncertainties has been reaffirmed by its prominent role in the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) has decided to put the concept of SPF at the center of its activities in the area of social justice. Thus, some country offices wish to intensify their work around SPF. This seminar aims at providing in-depth conceptual knowledge of SPF, a better understanding of possible stumbling blocks for achieving SPF and assisting to develop projects in the respecting countries. To that end, FES Geneva invited SPF representatives from FES offices all around the world for a three-day training seminar. Each of them was accompanied by a representative from relevant partner organization including trade unions and academia. The group benefited from participants' diverse experience with social protection floors; some of them already have in place rather progressed activities and other are yet to start their projects.

The training seminar got underway with meeting the Core Team of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors who gave a presentation of their joint strategy for the near future. Isabel Ortiz, Director of the Social Protection Department at the International Labor Organization (ILO), attended the discussion and underscored the importance of civil society engagement in supporting, implementing and monitoring effective social protection systems. That way, possibilities for

potential partnerships with ILO, the Global Coalition and FES were explored.

The next day, Ortiz welcomed the participants at the ILO for a full day of presentations on SPFs. She gave an overview of the emergence and evolution of the SPF concept and the ILO Recommendation 202 which provides guidance to states on how to build respective social protection systems. Christoph Ernst, Senior Public Finance Economist, turned to the issue of financing SPFs in developing countries and highlighted the importance of generating

fiscal space. He underscored that fiscal space is closely related to policy space which in turn renders a need for social budgeting. Christina Behrendt, Social Protection Policy Specialist, gave input on SPFs in the context of the informal economy. She pointed to the lack of social protection mechanisms for those in informal employment, which accounts for the majority of employment in most developing countries. If at all social protection is limited to those in formal employment which results in large protection gaps obstructing people's economic, social and cultural development. Karin Pape, European Regional Advisor for Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), continued the discussion by highlighting that women are disproportionately over-presented in the lowest earning segments of an informal economy. In consequence, SPFs should cover their special needs and at the same time reach as many workers as possible.<sup>1</sup>

### Day II

It is widely recognized that civil society organizations including trade unions play a key role in raising awareness and building capacities in the design and implementation of SPFs. Therefore, one major component of this training seminar was to forge links between and to draw strengths from different SPF projects from within the group of participants. Hence, the second day of the seminar was entirely dedicated to reflect on all the input provided and to refer back to the country level. Starting from a more general perspective, participants developed a SPF project check list taking account of their countries' specifics. They identified best practices, stumbling blocks and improvement actions. In so doing, everyone benefited greatly from the group's diverse backgrounds which opened up new

insights and opportunities. Together, next steps were defined and priorities set in order to jointly move towards social protection floors for everyone.

### Day III

On the last day, participants convened at the Palais Wilson, headquarter of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Christian Courtis, Human Rights Officer at the Human Rights and Economic and Social Issues Section, gave input on the right to social security. Enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to social security determines that social protection schemes ought to ensure universal coverage, benefiting the entire population including informal workers. Catalina Devandas Aguilar, UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, took up the issue of universality and brought in the perspective of persons with disabilities. She illustrated cases in which the mere access to provisions of social protection is severely impaired. In consequence, she called for more inclusive SPFs.

The training seminar was rounded off with a presentation given by Doreen Akiyo Yomoah, Development Communications Consultant at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), who introduced the participants to the online platform [Social Protection and Human Rights](#) which is designed to provide expert legal and development resources and aims at strengthening a growing social protection community that cuts across disciplines.

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<sup>1</sup> This report will only point very briefly on the different presentations and will not provide full summaries. The participants received the individual presentations for detailed information.

On the author

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The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily the ones of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

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