

# Social protection for everyone

Basic information on the 2015-2016 campaign

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SOCIALE BESCHERMING.BE

Photo: Piet den Blanken

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# FOREWORD

Imagine this would just happen to you. You get sick and are unable to pay for your treatment. You lose your job or see your crops destroyed, and no longer have an income. You work a lifetime and do not get a pension in your old age. Unfortunately, this is no fiction for three quarters of the world population. More than 5 billion people enter in big trouble when faced with even the slightest setback. No matter where you live, without social protection life is nothing but a lottery.

But the risk of having to cope without social protection in your life depends equally well on the country you live in, on whether you live in the city or in the countryside, on whether your parents are rich or poor, on whether you are a boy or a girl. This is fundamentally unfair and unequal.

Everyone should be entitled to social protection. This has been set out in many international treaties, conventions and recommendations. All people are entitled to a guaranteed income in situations where they can not (or no longer) work, and to healthcare. Those two elements are the basis of social protection. Only by fulfilling these rights we can make sure that everyone, worldwide, can live a dignified life.

Unfortunately, the international agreements are all too often empty phrases. Even in the world of development cooperation social protection is an underexposed topic, though we believe that it is one of the key elements on the 21st century development agenda.

Twenty organisations in Belgium want to change this situation and help putting these wonderful principles into practice by campaigning together for two years. Trade unions, health mutuals and NGOs from several ideological families: a large coalition in every way. Everything will be coordinated by 11.11.11 as the representative of the Flemish North-South movement and CNCD-11.11.11 as the representative of the French-speaking organisations.

This file contains our shared vision on social protection. We demonstrate that it is a major leverage for development and social change. We outline the possible paths towards universal social protection and the responsibilities of governments and social actors in the process. Several examples prove that many countries are working hard to establish social protection. Finally, we formulate political demands and recommendations for our Belgian and European politicians to get started.

Bogdan Vanden Berghe, General Director 11.11.11  
Arnaud Zacharie, General Secretary CNCD-11.11.11

# INTRODUCTION: NEED FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION AND DECENT WORK<sup>1</sup>

Despite the economic crisis the contradictions between rich and poor are increasing everywhere in the world. The rich are getting richer, the poor poorer. This is also the case in most richer countries. People who belong to the latter group in Belgium are fortunate enough to be able to rely on a system of social security. If you get sick, there is healthcare insurance. If you are too old to work, you receive a pension. If you are unemployed, you get an allowance. Et cetera.

The situation is less promising in many other countries. 73% of all people do not enjoy comprehensive social protection.<sup>2</sup> More than half of the world population cannot rely on any form of social protection whatsoever.<sup>3</sup> Access to it is mainly problematic in countries where a large part of the population relies on the informal economic circuit (see p. 8) to make a living. Clear differences can also be seen between rural areas, where the population is largely dependent on small-scale agriculture at family level, and urbanised areas.

Due to the increasing competition between companies and to economic globalisation, large groups of people are excluded and often also exploited. In order to remain competitive at a global level, companies and countries are lowering wages and reducing social security provisions (race to the bottom). Many countries are conducting a strong austerity policy, which also causes downward pressure on social protection. This tendency can be seen in several European countries and in many developing countries. Even though politicians are promoting social protection in their official discourse, the policy conducted and the underlying vision on people and society is actually undermining the foundations of social protection. Greece would be a good example. Indexes such as the World Bank's 'Doing Business Ranking'<sup>4</sup> are still not sufficiently considering the social added value of, for example, social security contributions.

This downward pressure on social protection must absolutely be stopped. A number of positive examples of countries who are building social protection for their citizens, like the gradual implementation of a universal healthcare insurance in Indonesia, prove that things can be done differently. That is why we advocate a more inclusive sustainable development with decent work and social protection for everyone, worldwide, as well as an economy at the service of everyone's well-being. Everyone must be able to benefit and no one should be excluded. All people are entitled to a dignified life, from birth to death.

We want societies that can provide universal and comprehensive social protection. Every country will do this differently, because the implementation is related to the underlying social vision and the development model it intends to achieve. This requires fundamental choices with regard to priorities and values. We notice this both in our own country and among our partners who are advocating more social protection.

Governments should align their policies for economy, employment, taxation, etc. with their social protection policies. In addition, measures to promote social protection must be supported by well-balanced economic policies and the creation of decent jobs. For if large parts of the population do not have decent employment, they will continue to depend on welfare programmes and, in that case, social protection alone will not be enough. Productive and qualitative work does not only increase families incomes, it also contributes to stable and sustainable financing for social protection. This, in turn, will generate higher productivity and larger employability of labour market population.

# 1. OUR DEFINITION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

There is no universal definition of social protection. The concept evolves in time and varies depending on the country, the continent and the organisation and according to historic, economic, social, political and cultural factors. But in our view, social protection must at least meet the following conditions:

- Social protection aims to ensure for every person, during their entire life cycle, a sufficiently large income (also in case of unemployment, sickness, etc.) and access to quality basic services, to make sure they are able to cope with the risks and events of life.
- Social protection consists of a coherent set of solidarity based, structural and collective initiatives and measures.

Therefore, our own definition of social protection is as follows:

**Social protection comprises a coherent set of structural initiatives and measures based on solidarity, aimed at ensuring income guarantee and access to basic services for all people, during their entire life cycle.**

Convention 102 (1952) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) concerning social security sets out the minimum standards for the nine branches of social security: medical care, sickness, unemployment, old-age, employment injury, family, maternity, invalidity and survivor's benefits.<sup>5</sup> In addition, it contains the conditions for granting the benefits: in which cases does a person become entitled?

In the logic of this convention social protection is based on insurance mechanisms (the right holders pay contributions and in exchange they receive services in the form of allowances or in kind) and on assistance mechanisms (the allowances or services in kind are not directly related to financial contributions of the right holders). The interactions between the insurance and assistance aspect make sure that the social insurance principle is inseparable from the principle of solidarity between old and young, sick and healthy, employed and unemployed people. That is how it is distinguished from a commercial insurance principle.

Social protection is a strong leverage for development, solidarity and the fight against inequality, both by the way it is financed and by the support it offers to vulnerable people. It gives men and women a minimum income security and access to essential services during the different stages of their life. It protects them against poverty and insecurity brought on by life itself and the economy.

When elaborating the Decent Work Agenda the ILO included social protection as one of its four pillars. This strong commitment towards decent work worldwide has helped increase the focus on social protection again.

 **CASE**

## **INDONESIA: SOCIAL PROTECTION THANKS TO UNIONS**

The economic boom in Indonesia is not solving everyone's problems. More than half the population has to manage with less than 1.50 euro a day and the inequality is enormous. Even though the Indonesian government is turning social protection for everyone into a key issue, with increasing expenses for general healthcare insurance and social protection and a national regulation for mandatory affiliation, there is still a lot of room for improvement. In 2010, for example, employers paid social contributions for just one in three employees. Social movements are therefore advocating more social justice. The employees in the informal economy (65% of the active population) are one of the specific target groups.

### **A NATIONAL SYSTEM**

In 2004 Indonesia adopted the National Security Law. With it the government acknowledged the people's right to social protection and took its responsibility to develop a relevant policy. The ambition was to roll out a system which would make all Indonesians affiliate to the social protection system in a 10-year period. To this end they developed a system of scaled contributions: free for the poor, a gradual contribution for the self-employed and employees from the informal economic circuit and a mandatory system for employees in the formal economy. But the implementation turned out to be quite a challenge, especially because the administration is fragmented.

In 2011 a law was adopted for the coordination of social protection. By 2019 all existing systems have to be brought under the authority of two administrations. Another important element of the law is that the government takes the administration completely in its own hands, through public institutions.

### **MANY HANDS AND STRONG PRESSURE**

The role of the trade unions was crucial to get the law adopted, but it is even more so in the implementation process. The Action Committee for Social Security, an association of 66 trade unions, NGOs and student organisations, has strongly weighed upon the recent achievements. Their continuing dedication to social protection has even further enhanced the role of the trade unions as a social partner.

At this time the unions have a seat in the supervisory body that monitors the institutions for social protection. The trade union KSBSI, a partner of Belgian trade union ACV and ngo Wereldsolidariteit (world solidarity), sees two major challenges: the accession of people working in the informal economy and the transfer of employer contributions in the formal sector. KSBSI wants to make sure that the social security law and the reforms effectively lead to a change for employees and their income situations. It also makes its members aware of their right to social security, which allows them to defend this right and claim it from their company management.

*Source: ACV-CSC (Christian Trade Union)*



Photo: ACV



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

# **SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

### **WHAT IS INFORMAL ECONOMY?**

A fruit juice seller on a street corner in Peru, a small Rwandan farmer, a Salvadoran sugar cane cutter with no contract who is paid cash for the amount of cane harvested, an Indonesian security guard who works off-the-record as a taxi driver or a Flemish man cutting his neighbour's grass in exchange for some help to paint his house ... they all work in the informal economy.

The term refers to all legal and illegal economic activities which cannot be projected in official figures and which can therefore not be included in the GNP or in the statistics of a country. Because these activities cannot be measured in economic terms, the legal regulations do not or not sufficiently apply in these cases.

The informal economy - not including the agricultural sector - represents today about 51% of total employment in Latin America, about 82% in South Asia, about 65% in East and South-east Asia, about 66% in Africa and at least 10% in Eastern and Central Europe.<sup>6</sup>

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### **INFORMAL VS. SOCIAL**

Work in the informal sector is by definition work without social protection.<sup>7</sup> And this is extremely problematic. Not in the least because the majority of the active population in Asia, Latin America and Africa works in the informal econ-

omy.<sup>8</sup> All these people work without a contract, without a fixed salary or income. There is also an over-representation of women. In Sub-Saharan Africa 74% of women outside agriculture work in an informal way, as opposed to 61% of men. This is 54% versus 48% in Latin America. Women often have the lowest incomes. And informal work, as a labourer or self-employed person, also involves a number of major risks: lower incomes and a greater risk of work accidents or occupational diseases.

A large part of the worldwide active population has an increased risk of loss of income and health problems, while having hardly any or no access at all to social protection. No social contributions are paid and they can usually not afford private insurance. And only rarely are they eligible for social assistance measures. If such measures exist in their country, they are often aimed at specific target groups like children and older people.

People who work in the informal economy are not building up a pension, do not get an unemployment allowance, no maternity leave or allowance, no replacement income when sick, no refund of medical expenses, etc. In most countries social security systems are linked to formal employment.<sup>9</sup>

### **TWO SOLUTIONS**

With this campaign we underline the importance of social protection for everyone, also for informal workers. Countries cannot achieve this with economic growth alone. The old idea that economic growth automatically leads to a higher level of formal labour does not seem to stand the test of time.<sup>10</sup> In many countries growth, and the additional employment it created, has

not been capable of absorbing the share of the informal economy. The mobility from informal to formal labour is limited.

That is why the ILO advocates a dual-track policy: on the one hand, informal work must be formalised to the greatest possible extent. A variety of measures can be taken by governments. They could increase labour inspections to make employers comply with the law, offer employees a contract or affiliate them to the social security system. Or they could create a supporting framework to establish formal businesses. On the other hand, governments have to take into account that a group of people can always be left behind in the informal economy. That is why they have to expand the basic public services, such as healthcare, and develop programmes for income security, such as basic pensions or child allowance.

Not only governments have the major task to give this vulnerable part of the active population access to social protection. Social organisations also play a crucial role. They can help people to organise themselves, defend their interests and take their own initiatives..

## **CASE**

### **SENEGAL: ORGANISATION OF WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY**

Since about ten years the Belgian trade union ACLVB is working with the Senegalese trade union CNTS (Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal) to improve the situation of women working in the informal economy. In the first phase of this cooperation women were integrated, whenever possible, in the democratically organised trade union structure of CNTS. The so-called “employment markets”, which act as a regional representation of the trade union, are a key component in the process. This working method allows women to better defend their individual and collective rights.

Based on the experience of CNTS and together with three other trade union confederations, an inter-union platform was established to defend the rights of people active in the informal economy. It operates both on national, regional and sector-specific levels. It invests in strengthening the capacities of the persons in charge of the participating unions. This is done by means of specific training about communication and negotiation techniques, about the role of women in the informal economy and about the administration of trade union services (micro loans and solidarity funds, cooperation with health mutuals).

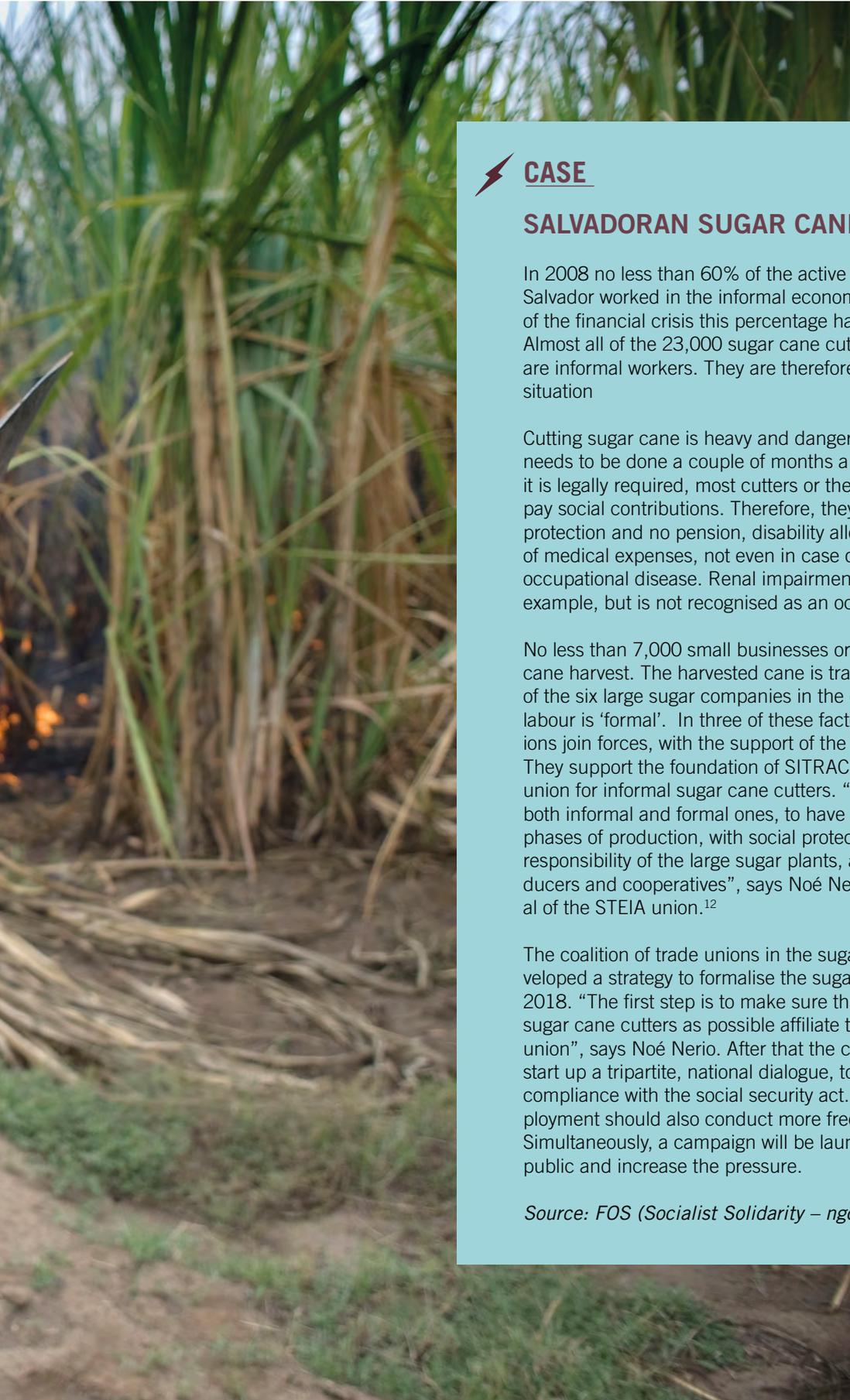
The inter-union platform strengthens the structural possibilities of the participating unions for the support of employees in the informal economy and aims at creating sixty new organisations and trade union services. By strengthening these trade union functions the labour conditions in the informal economy can be improved

Babacar Ndao, member of the regional coordination, believes that social security for all these employees must be guaranteed through affiliation to the trade union: “A female civil servant is entitled to maternity leave, before and after birth, while other women do not have the same right. This project was established to better organise ourselves, to put the interest of informal economy employees on the agenda and to solve such inequality and injustice through social dialogue.”

*Source: ACLVB (Liberal trade Union)*



Photo: Piet den Blanken



## **CASE**

### **SALVADORAN SUGAR CANE CUTTERS**

In 2008 no less than 60% of the active population in El Salvador worked in the informal economy. Since the start of the financial crisis this percentage has even increased.<sup>10</sup> Almost all of the 23,000 sugar cane cutters in the country are informal workers. They are therefore in a very vulnerable situation

Cutting sugar cane is heavy and dangerous work and it only needs to be done a couple of months a year. Even though it is legally required, most cutters or their employers do not pay social contributions. Therefore, they have no social protection and no pension, disability allowances or refund of medical expenses, not even in case of a work accident or occupational disease. Renal impairment occurs often, for example, but is not recognised as an occupational disease.

No less than 7,000 small businesses organise the sugar cane harvest. The harvested cane is transported to one of the six large sugar companies in the country, where all labour is 'formal'. In three of these factories the trade unions join forces, with the support of the Flemish NGO FOS. They support the foundation of SITRACAÑA, a new trade union for informal sugar cane cutters. "We want all workers, both informal and formal ones, to have decent work in all phases of production, with social protection. This is both the responsibility of the large sugar plants, and of the small producers and cooperatives", says Noé Nerio, secretary-general of the STEIA union.<sup>12</sup>

The coalition of trade unions in the sugar sector has developed a strategy to formalise the sugar cane harvest by 2018. "The first step is to make sure that as many informal sugar cane cutters as possible affiliate to the new trade union", says Noé Nerio. After that the coalition intends to start up a tripartite, national dialogue, to finally achieve full compliance with the social security act. The Ministry of Employment should also conduct more frequent inspections. Simultaneously, a campaign will be launched to inform the public and increase the pressure.

*Source: FOS (Socialist Solidarity – ngo)*

## 2. WHY SOCIAL PROTECTION?

### 2.1 SOCIAL PROTECTION IS A UNIVERSAL RIGHT

#### SOCIAL PROTECTION IS A HUMAN RIGHT

Social protection is a human right that is recognised as such by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 22 and 25)<sup>13</sup>, in the International Treaty on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (art. 9 and 10)<sup>14</sup>, in ILO Convention 102, in regional human rights treaties and in different national constitutions.

This implies that we are all ‘right holders’ (and can make a claim to that right), instead of just beneficiaries. In other words, social protection must not depend on coincidence or someone’s personal income. The government should guarantee, respect and protect this right and make sure it can be implemented.

#### THIS RIGHT IS UNIVERSAL

Measures for social protection can only lead to sustainable results when they cover the entire population, in other words, when everyone has access. No one must be excluded. Social protection should guarantee everyone a dignified standard of life.

That is what we defend: comprehensive social protection for everyone. We will not be satisfied with programmes restricted to a minimum base of social protection, such as the ‘social protection floor’ of the ILO (see chapter 3). These initiatives are important, but only sustainable when they are a first step in an overall strategy for comprehensive social protection.

#### DIVERSIFICATION PER TARGET GROUP

The right to social protection is universal. But strict universalism can go beyond structural inequality (sex, age, disability, ethnicity, formal-informal economy, wage-earner vs. self-employed family businesses, etc.). That is why it is necessary, in addition to the principle of universality, to diversify the right to social protection per target group. In order to ensure access to healthcare, for example, account must be taken of the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work and get older (the so-called social determinants of health) and of the healthcare systems available. Or, when pensions are granted, the fact that



#### INDIVIDUAL FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OR FREEDOMS VERSUS SOCIAL FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

A distinction is often made between individual fundamental rights or freedoms on the one hand and social fundamental rights on the other hand. Individual fundamental rights are characterised by the fact that they guarantee a ‘refraining’ from the government, being free from state intervention. This includes the right to life, freedom of expression and freedom of religion. For social fundamental rights, such as the right to work or to social protection, government intervention is actually expected. While individual fundamental rights are enforceable, for social rights governments are assumed to have an obligation of progressive implementation.

women are overrepresented in vulnerable and informal labour must be considered. Otherwise inequality between men and women will only tend to increase.

Adjusting social protection to target groups also means that the reality and needs of the informal economy cannot be overlooked, especially in rural areas. A majority of the population in developing countries works in this informal sector. Social protection is a strong tool to defend the social rights of actors and employees in the informal economy, on the condition that their specific situation is taken into account

### 2.2 SOCIAL PROTECTION IS A LEVERAGE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Social protection can structurally change mechanisms that create and maintain social vulnerability, exclusion, poverty and inequality. In addition it can restore disturbed power relations in society. If women get direct access to certain sources of income and to certain properties, gender balances may shift. The security

 **CASE****THE PHILIPPINES:  
COMMERCIALISATION FOR THE BETTER?**

The Philippines have a dire lack of access to healthcare today. For example, every day eight women die while pregnant or giving birth.

**PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**

The Filipino government proposes public-private partnerships to meet the healthcare needs of the population. The European development cooperation supports this approach. In its strategy to promote the private sector it stimulates partnerships with companies in basic services such as electricity, water, healthcare and education. According to local organisations - IBON, Gabriela, Council for Health and Development (CDH) and Advocates for Community Health - the commercialisation policy will not provide an answer to the enormous healthcare needs. On the contrary, it will make healthcare more expensive and will therefore exclude certain groups of the population.

**LIMITED ACCESS**

Besides, access to healthcare is more restricted in rural areas than in cities, because less healthcare services and less medical staff are available there. Even if you organise a heavily subsidised social healthcare insurance, universal access to healthcare cannot be ensured when the medical services are too expensive, non-existent or of too low quality.

**SUCCESS**

Based on the provisions for the right to health in the Filipino constitution the social organisations in the Philippines have successfully been able to postpone the commercialisation of the first public hospital on the list through court action. They emphasise that providing healthcare is one of the fundamental functions of the government. They therefore demand more public responsibility and investments in a quality primary healthcare system that is accessible to everyone.

*Source: G3W (Third World Health Aid - ngo)*

offered to people by social protection helps them to escape dependency and exploitation.

Vulnerable population groups can better claim their rights when they are organised. Social movements and governments can stimulate this, each departing from their own role. Further in this document we will explain the tasks and responsibilities of governments and social movements in this respect.

### **SOCIAL PROTECTION, BUILT ON SOLIDARITY, REDISTRIBUTES WEALTH**

Increasing competition and globalisation aggravate inequality in most countries. Large groups of people do not benefit from the (averagely) increased wealth and continue to live in poverty. They do not have equal chances and only little prospects of a better and decent life.

Inequality is also manifested on an international level. Due to increasing competition and globalisation, a race to the bottom looms around the corner. Governments are attenuating social rules and reducing social contributions to keep their economies competitive. This is unacceptable. .

But income inequality negatively affects the social cohesion and the health of both the rich and the poor. As soon as a country has reached a certain level of general development, its society can achieve social wellbeing more efficiently by fighting inequality than by creating economic growth.<sup>15</sup>

A solid policy of social protection can structurally prevent and reduce social exclusion and inequality, poverty and vulnerability in society. Social protection for everyone in the North as well as in the South is therefore our future. Social protection also strengthens solidarity between young and old, sick and healthy people, between the rich and the poor, in the formal and the informal economy and between people in rural areas and city people. And, likewise, it can only be accessible for everyone when it is built on solidarity. The strongest shoulders must carry the heaviest loads.

That is why a policy of social protection should aim at sharing risks and social redistribution between all layers of population. Social protection should be based on the widest possible basis, thus guaranteeing the widest possible solidarity.

### **SOCIAL PROTECTION REDUCES INEQUALITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN**

Social protection is a strong tool to create more equality between men and women. It gives everyone access to an income during his/her full life cycle, also during maternity leave, for example. Besides giving birth, several other tasks are more often done by women than men, like the care of children or family members and other unpaid work. Women are also overrepresented in vulnerable labour situations: informal, temporary and/or unprotected work. This makes contributing to systems of social protection more difficult for them. In order to reduce inequality between men and women, measures of social protection must take these differences into account

### **SOCIAL PROTECTION PROMOTES RESILIENCE, PEACE AND STABILITY**

A social policy strengthens confidence between governments and their population and forms the basis for further sustainable development and social change. In several countries, both in post-war Europe and more recently elsewhere in the world, has been demonstrated that investing in social protection results in social cohesion and peace. Brazil, for example, ratified ILO Convention 102 in 2009 and many families have risen above the poverty line through the Bolsa Família. Also in fragile states social protection can bring social peace and stability. Unfortunately countries recovering from conflicts or other crises are not making social protection their top priority straight away, although it significantly increases the resilience of people and societies affected by disasters and crises.

## CASE

### SOUTHEAST ASIA: SOCIAL PROTECTION ACROSS BORDERS

The situation in terms of social protection in Southeast Asia is far from ideal. The social protection systems in most countries in that region are labelled 'limited or very limited scope' in the ILO World Social Protection Report of 2014.

In October 2009 progressive organisations from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam formed, together with regional human rights organisations, the Network for Transformative Social Protection (NTSP). They work across national borders on a universal and comprehensive social protection for everyone. A necessary prior condition for social change (transformation). The network has grown strongly since 2009. Organisations of poor people in cities, trade unions, women, disabled persons, older persons and progressive intellectuals and politicians have affiliated. The number of countries was expanded with Myanmar and Cambodia and links have been established with Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese and Bengali organisations.

Fully developed systems of social protection must become a part of the development strategies in Southeast Asia, both at a regional level and in the different countries. That is what NTSP aims for. Its main demands include job security and a living wage, universal access to essential services such as healthcare, water, education, housing and electricity, enough food, a living pension and income support for senior citizens, children, disabled persons and the unemployed.

The long-term objective is an alternative implementation of the current regional integration in the Association of Southeast-Asian Nations (ASEAN), which now almost exclusively aims at economic integration and liberalisation. NTSP wants an alternative strategy: essential public services accessible to everyone, giving people and the planet priority, eliminating social inequality and giving countries and their people the possibility to implement a policy of social redistribution. Away from neoliberal logics, and towards more humane and inclusive societies.

Important organisations in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia have formulated proposals for 'transformative social protection' to be presented to national governments and ASEAN. They conduct research and lobby work in order for these proposals to be accepted and applied. They are recently working on raising the awareness of the public in general. NTSP is planning to conduct campaigns in this respect in the years ahead. It will allow the population to effectively claim its rights and be involved in the planning, formulation, implementation and evaluation of the policy.

*Source: NTSP & 11.11.11 (coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement)*



Photo: 11.11.11

 **CASE**

## **BURUNDI: HEALTHCARE THROUGH MUTUAL HEALTH INSURANCE**

From 1993 to 2005 Burundi lived under the iron grip of civil war. That is why many institutions, including healthcare, are still in the recovery phase. After the war the budget for social security had been looted, medical centres had to be rebuilt and reorganised, staff trained and medication bought. The current system of social protection is characterised by a small number of domains, pension and work related risks, and is limited to the small formal and government sector of the country (all in all only 1% of the active population).

In a country where the large majority of the population lives below the poverty threshold and 91% work in agriculture (while there is not enough agricultural land for everyone), the government has turned social protection and access to healthcare into one of the crucial pillars of its strategy for sustainable development.

### **TECHNICAL EXPERTS**

In 2011 the government developed a national strategy for social protection and in 2014 it established a national committee for social protection (chaired by the president). This ambitious process had to provide access to healthcare and medical insurance for everyone. The government counts on the further development of health mutuals and considers them to be technical experts in the field of healthcare. It also has the ambition to affiliate 80 % of the families in rural areas to such a health mutual on the basis of a gradual contribution system.

### **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

The Burundian government realises that this ambitious plan can only be implemented by working together with all social actors in the country. The strategy paper of the national committee explicitly refers to the input of the Plateforme des acteurs des mutuelles de santé au Burundi (PAMUSAB), which is recognised as a partner of the government to make universal access to healthcare happen. This platform represents a total of 145 local health mutuals. They work together on access to healthcare for everyone in Burundi, on the one hand by sharing their expertise with each other and on the other hand through their role in the national committee for social protection.

Since the nineties Christelijke Mutualiteiten (CM) and Wereldsolidariteit (World Solidarity) have supported the creation of health mutuals. MUNASA (Mutuelle Nationale de Santé) now encompasses 35 local health mutuals. Affiliation to a health mutual is voluntary. Therefore, it is quite something to be able to present a 81.62% loyalty figure. The health mutuals do not only offer healthcare insurance, they also strengthen the services of medical centres and develop initiatives that help people acquire an income. MUNASA is also a founding member of PAMUSAB.

*Source: CM (Christian health mutual)*

## 2.3 SOCIAL PROTECTION IS A LEVERAGE FOR DEVELOPMENT

### SOCIAL PROTECTION IS A NECESSARY CONDITION FOR DEVELOPMENT

It is clear that developing countries can tackle poverty and vulnerability by establishing an adequate social protection policy. In contexts where chronic poverty and sustained deprivation affect large parts of the population, countries more and more often try to not only tackle sharp declines in income, but also the persistent low incomes and their structural causes with programmes for social protection. Social protection is therefore an important aspect of development. It allows poverty to be banned from the life of people and ensures a more dignified and productive life. The analysis that is made for poorer countries also applies to richer countries. Lots of theorists share the statement that it has been possible to achieve wealth in our regions thanks to the extensive redistribution systems based on rights, universalism and solidarity. It is therefore not correct that economic growth is a prior condition for giving social protection measures and initiatives a chance. Social protection and economic development go hand in hand and both are part of a wider socio-economic policy

Figures of the UN Research Institution for Social Development demonstrate that countries that succeeded in reducing poverty in the last couple of years, have extensively invested in a well-considered social policy with programmes for social protection. Countries that rather opted for economic, market-oriented instruments, were much less successful at reducing poverty.<sup>16</sup>

### SOCIAL PROTECTION IS A SMART AND PRODUCTIVE ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

Social protection is not only a right but also a very smart and productive economic investment, provided that it is more than just granting temporary handouts. Social protection generates wealth because it keeps purchasing power at an adequate level. In difficult economic times this avoids that a crisis becomes a self-reinforcing phenomenon. Lots of economists consider social protection one of the main measures to stop a downward spiral of inflation, unemployment and less investments<sup>17</sup>. The current pressure on social protection in many countries and the savings on social expenses are actually counterproductive.

### SOCIAL PROTECTION IS FEASIBLE AND AFFORDABLE

In 2008 the ILO calculated the relative cost of social protection measures in a number of simulations. Conclusion: primary healthcare for elderly people, disabled people and children would even be feasible in low-income countries.

The cost is really interesting because the country studies clearly show that countries with low incomes can also pay the social protection floor (see chapter 4). Depending from country to country between 3.6% and 10% of the national GNP is required for the funding<sup>18</sup> thereof. But the ILO also calculated that at world level 2% of the global GNP is enough to provide access to the full 'social protection floor' for the poorest people on earth. With 6% of the global GNP we could reach everyone who has no (or limited) access to social protection<sup>19</sup>. So, the question whether or not social protection policies are being implemented depends much more on a political choice than on budgets.



## CASE

### PERU: SOCIAL SECURITY INCREASINGLY UNDERMINED

The economy in Peru is strongly growing thanks to the export of raw materials. But the country is also falling victim to a large and growing inequality. In the sixties and seventies Peru made some great steps forward in terms of social protection. However, in the nineties the government changed course. They increasingly focused on economic liberalisation and flexibilisation of the labour laws and even dismantled the existing social protection system. This tendency is still going in. Most employees have no or only very limited access to social protection. Social protests, including trade union work, are often considered as criminal acts.

#### **FTCCP: STRONG TRADE UNION FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS**

In recent years, 400 fatal work accidents took place in the Peruvian construction sector. There are only very few regulations in this industry. Social protection also means ensuring decent working conditions in terms of wages, working hours, health and safety at work.

#### **RIGHTS**

In order to achieve all this FTCCP made efforts, together with the largest national federation of trade unions (CGTP) and with the support of the Belgian trade union FGTB-ABVV, to achieve better legislation for health and safety at work. It had to include both prevention of accidents and professional diseases and protection of victims. Thanks to this work in 2011 the Peruvian government adopted the first law in this respect. However, the fight is not over, because the current government is trying to undermine the law in force. Moreover, the law can only be enforced, if labour inspection is well-organised, which it is not at this time.

Simultaneously FTCCP and CGTP also aim for for stronger collective negotiations and social dialogue, which are essential to get guarantees for higher wages, maternity leave, protection of trade union representatives, security about minimum income in case of incapacity for work, etc. In the Peruvian construction sector no social dialogue has taken place in the last couple of years.

#### **DISMISSALS**

But even after agreements are reached, the fight continues. Luis Villanueva of FTCCP: "Only 30 % of the workers enjoy all social rights they are entitled to in theory. Almost 70 % of them do not receive the allowances described in the agreement because in companies with less than twenty employees they can not affiliate to a trade union." In the past years



Photo: FGTB-ABVV

3,000 people were dismissed in different industries because workers affiliated to a trade union. Trade unions in Peru, and everywhere in the world, have an important role to play in the protection of employees and for social protection.

*Source: FGTB-ABVV (Socialist Trade Union)*

## **CEDAL: CENTRE FOR RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT**

CEDAL was founded in 1977 to support the trade unions in the collective negotiations for better labour conditions and social protection. In the course of the years the centre extended its expertise about labour issues to other domains. It always emphasised the enforcement of social, economic and cultural rights and, to this end, worked together with different social organisations. CEDAL has different instruments to achieve its goals: legal actions, preparing bills and lobbying for those bills, strengthening trade unions and trade union leaders, public actions, research, publications and participation in consultative bodies.

### **PENSION RIGHT ENFORCED**

CEDAL was the first to submit a case against the violation of social, economic and cultural rights at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In the nineties the government of president Fujimori dismissed many (older) public servants without recognising their right to a full pension. CEDAL challenged the government and was proven right. A pension had to be granted to a significant group of ex-employees. Since this conviction the government is much more careful.

### **JOINT OPPOSITION AGAINST SPECIAL WORK STATUSES**

Also in the nineties the government came up with special work statuses. The idea was to provide a temporary solution for the textile and agro-export companies to keep up their competitive position. Employees saw their rights reduced by about 50 % in terms of pension, social security, the right to paid leave. CEDAL has been campaigning against these special work statuses for years. It wants to replace them by one general labour law for all industries. .

### **RIGHTS OF DOMESTIC WORKERS**

Until recently domestic servants had little or no rights in Peru. CEDAL supported the development of the trade union of domestic workers, together with FOS, and helped them to develop policy proposals. As a result a new law was adopted. It guarantees a number of rights (minimum wage, working hours, right to paid leave, healthcare insurance and pension), although they are still far below the rights of other workers. CEDAL continues to promote the full recognition of their rights.

*Source: 11.11.11 (coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement)*



## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

# **SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE RIGHT TO HEALTH**

Good healthcare is a fundamental part of social protection. People who are sick should be able to rely on it to recover more quickly and suffer only a limited loss of income. When the costs for the physician, the hospital, medication or transport are too high to go to the medical centre, people have to sell their property or take their children out of school so that they can contribute to the family income. Insufficient access to healthcare is therefore a major cause of poverty in the world.

With this campaign we invite Belgian politicians to advocate access to healthcare for everyone at all relevant levels (EU, UN, etc.), and, in doing this, to pay attention to all aspects of an efficient healthcare policy.

## **UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

The constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO, 1946) states that health is a fundamental right of every person<sup>20</sup>. In order to implement this right in practice, the WHO formulated the concept of 'universal health coverage'. It supposes that all inhabitants of a country have access to a range of good-quality services, according to their needs and preferences, independent of their level of income, their social situation or the place they live, and that they have the possibility to use these services.

This interpretation of the concept was confirmed in the UN resolution 'Global health and foreign policy' (6/12/2012), which was also signed by Belgium. Unfortunately, some international actors reduce this concept to the mere financing of healthcare, or even more limited, to a healthcare insurance for everyone, without making a distinction between commercial and solidarity-based insurance schemes. Even though funding is extremely important, it is not

enough to achieve the goal, which is universal access to health and healthcare.

According to the WHO, for everyone to achieve access to full health coverage, four essential aspects must be in place:

- a strong, efficient, well-run health system;
- a system for financing health services;
- access to essential medication and technologies;
- a sufficient capacity of well-trained, motivated health workers.

## **HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Even though healthcare for everyone is very important in the fight against poverty, there is a global trend of commercialising healthcare services. We oppose this, because this tendency is an obstacle to universal access to quality healthcare.

Unfortunately, commercialisation of healthcare is embedded in the policy of many (developing) countries and in the European Union policy for development cooperation. It is worrying that the EU, in its recommendation on the private sector and development, explicitly chooses public-private partnerships in essential public services like healthcare and education<sup>21</sup>.

That is why we ask our governments on a regional, national and international level to make efforts to strengthen the healthcare systems by developing universal primary healthcare and establishing solidarity-based funding sources in their policies for development cooperation. In the past decades the world has focused too much on the fight against specific health problems or diseases. The recent Ebola epidemic in West Africa is a good example. The healthcare systems in the affected countries are weak, which made it impossible to control the virus

quickly and let it spread rapidly. In that respect the ensuing epidemic can be seen as a symptom of bad health policy..

In the 2008 policy note 'The right to health and healthcare' Belgium decided to strengthen healthcare systems in a structural way. This choice should consequently be maintained and supported at European level and Belgium should oppose the tendency of commercialisation.

Social organisations also have a major function in healthcare. Governments must strengthen these organisations and support their initiatives for vulnerable population groups as much as they can. These organisations can demand, monitor and help to implement social protection and healthcare for everyone, for example by establishing solidarity based health mutuals. The WHO confirms this in its report 'Primary Healthcare, now more than ever' (2008): it focuses not only on primary healthcare, but also formulates specific recommendations with regard to its financing. For the WHO the expansion of healthcare services must go hand in hand with a social security system based on prior contributions and the distribution of risks instead of charging costs to patients.

## **CASE**

### **CUBA: AMAZING RESULTS**

Cuba has anchored the right to health in its constitution and put it into practice. This choice has had amazing results: average life expectancy is 78 years and mortality among children is very low (4.7 in 1000 live births). This brings the country to the same level as many Western European countries, despite its precarious economic situation.

The principles of universalism and prevention are the basis of the Cuban healthcare system. A good example is maternity protection. Since 1991 every woman can stay at home for up to six months after giving birth, while maintaining 60% of her salary. It is also ensured that mothers can effectively return to their job after having their child and that both mother and child have access to healthcare..

Many pregnant women go to the hogar materno, literally the maternity house, which is a bit different from a maternity hospital. The hogares maternos were founded in the sixties to deal with the high number of child deaths on the island. With success. Women who live far away from a hospital or who are at risk of a difficult childbirth can stay there until just before giving birth, but all other pregnant women are welcome as well. Staying at the hogar materno is free.

Cuba shows that a focus on prevention and strong public healthcare can do wonders for a country's overall health results. With its excellent performance it proves that quality healthcare for everyone is achievable. The Cuban healthcare system is fully public and free, and the majority of the population has access to it. In other words, applying the right to health is a choice and requires political courage.

*Source: G3W and FOS*



Photo: SolSoc



## **CASE**

### **BURKINA FASO: FARMERS NO LONGER HAVE TO SELL GOATS WHEN SICK**

In Burkina Faso the government is increasingly withdrawing from healthcare and investing less and less in it. About fifteen years ago health mutuals were established in local communities. Asmade, a partner of Solidarité Socialiste and the socialist health mutual, supports the establishment and counseling of health mutuals in local communities that work on the basis of solidarity among all members.

Pauline Rouamba, a farmer in the Saaba department, says: “When we had medical problems in the past, we had to sell our goats to pay our medical expenses. If we had no goats, we tried to get a loan from the neighbours. The health mutual has made us realise it is much better to contribute in advance. Now we can help each other in difficult times.”

The health mutuals are based on participation of the population during each phase: feasibility study, calculation of the costs to be covered, the amount of the contribution, the establishment of administrative bodies, etc. After establishment, the members pay an annual contribution that entitles them to a refund of certain care services.

Even though the health mutuals provide increased access to care, they do not intend to take over the role of the government. At the end of the years 2000, the countries of the West African economic and monetary union started negotiations about the implementation of a universal healthcare insurance. This system should allow all strata of the population, whether active in formal or informal economy or agriculture, to enjoy high-quality healthcare services.

Just like in some other countries the health mutuals of the local communities in Burkina Faso take part in the government’s reflections about the policy to be implemented. According to the new law on universal healthcare insurance they would even be given the responsibility to administer the universal healthcare insurance for the rural population and informal workers. This law should have been voted on 30 November 2014, but due to massive protests at the end of last year, the transitional government has suspended the legislative process for now. Lamine Mariko, micro financing and healthcare insurance expert: “The state must guarantee public health and health mutuals. The trade unions and other social actors must make sure that the government fully accepts this responsibility.”

*Source: Solidarité Socialiste (socialist solidarity – ngo & Mutualité Socialiste (socialist health mutual)*

## 3. HOW CAN SOCIAL PROTECTION BE IMPLEMENTED?

An efficient social protection policy consists of a wide range of measures, provides a clear role and responsibility for the government and other social actors and is paid for by an adequate mixture of financing sources.

### 3.1. A WIDE RANGE OF MEASURES AND INITIATIVES

We distinguish four types of measures and initiatives:

- **Preventive measures:** allow us to cope with risks or events occurring in the course of our life, by preventing them to take place or by being prepared for them. This can be achieved by social insurance (based on the solidarity principle), but also by providing universally accessible basic services, including healthcare.
- **Protective measures:** allow the population to see their rights fully implemented. They consist of an investment in human capital (training and education) and access to production means (e.g. credits).
- **Promotional measures:** allow the population to see their rights fully implemented. They consist of an investment in human capital (training and education) and access to production means (e.g. credits)
- **Transformative initiatives:** are aimed at social change. A policy of social protection is never finished, it must evolve constantly in order to be efficient. This is possible when people unite in civil society organisations. It allows to defend their rights and interests together, expose mechanisms of exclusion and inequality, poverty and vulnerability, develop their own initiatives for social protection, raise awareness, etc.

On the basis of these measures and initiatives we, right holders, can claim allowances and/or specific services.

In order to achieve comprehensive social protection for everyone, all these measures must be connected in a well-considered and coherent manner. This is particularly important to meet the needs of all groups in society and because, at some point in our life, we all need social protection.

Social protection should be supported by a broad social basis. This means it can only be really efficient when politicians prepare, implement and evaluate their social protection policy with the participation of relevant and representative social organisations. This participation must be organised in a structural way. Moreover efficient social protection presupposes that the government acknowledges these organisations' initiatives for social protection and integrates them in the policy.

Furthermore, the government must anchor the set of measures forming the social protection system in a legislative framework. In it, the structural dialogue with social organisations must also be acknowledged and captured.

### 3.2. A CENTRAL ROLE FOR GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

Social protection is an individual right, but the responsibility for it is collective. This guarantees that the system is sustainable and just. In several human rights treaties governments commit themselves to developing this right. They are responsible for establishing mechanisms of social protection, together with civil society. Social organisations and movements unite vulnerable population groups and build a better social protection from the bottom up. The government should involve these social actors in the development and administration of social protection, because they are co-initiators, and in order to guarantee sustainable and good-quality social protection.

Social protection as defined above should not aim for profit or be commercialised. Profit-driven insurance products inherently imply the risk that a population part with less financial means and a higher vulnerability level will be excluded. The commercialisation of a number of fields (like healthcare) also entails more costs for society. That is why we believe social protection is mainly the task of governments and social movements.<sup>22</sup>

Even though social protection is a universal human right, one cannot avoid that it is organised differently in different places. Countries have to take into account the local context when organising and developing social protection.

Governments have multiple roles to play in the achievement of social protection:

- develop efficient measures and guarantee quality public services;
- acknowledge, regulate and support initiatives of social actors;
- give social movements the necessary space and support to fulfil their social role to the best of their ability and provide a structural and legal framework for the dialogue with the relevant and representative social organisations (cf. above);
- offer a trustworthy legal framework by developing a national policy for social protection, ratifying international conventions and treaties and preparing laws on the basis thereof;
- conduct a stimulating economic policy that guarantees income for the population.

The role of social movements (trade unions, health mutuels, farmers' movements, cooperatives, grass-roots movements, professional federations, NGOs, etc.) is:

- organise and empower people, especially those who are excluded and have no voice;
- help develop initiatives of social protection for vulnerable groups within society from the bottom up;
- lobby the government for the maintenance, expansion and institutionalisation of existing social protection initiatives and for possible new collective measures, making sure no one is left out;
- safeguard the sustainable and fair character of social protection;
- participate in the structural dialogue about the development and follow-up of the social protection policy.

The exact relation between the government's and social movements' roles depends on the context and is different in each country.

## CASE

### DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: TRADE UNION ESTABLISHES UNIQUE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

The Dominican Republic is a paradise for tourists. For residents, however, it is less divine. 56% of the population works in the informal economy, for example as a taxi driver, small businessman, street vendor or farmer. Due to the vulnerable labour situation and lack of social protection, 42% of people live below the national poverty threshold. Moreover, there is a strong anti-union atmosphere and an increasing use of temporary contracts.

In 2001 the Dominican government launched a new social security law. It had to ensure better protection of the population by means of healthcare insurance and a pension scheme. But the system was only put into practice for the formal sector. Consequently, a large part of the population still does not benefit any form of social security

#### THE TRADE UNION ORGANISES ACCESS TO SOCIAL SECURITY

The trade union organises access to social security

The trade union CASC (Confederación Autónoma Sindical Clasista), a partner of the Belgian trade union ACV-CSC and the NGO Wereldsolidariteit, wants to improve the situation of employees in both the formal and informal economy. This goes beyond uniting employees and defending labour rights. The union has developed its own unique system to give informal workers access to social protection: Amussol. This association acts as an intermediary between individual workers and the government. It also assumes the tasks of an employer: takes care of the paperwork, collects contributions and transfers the funds to the national social security fund. Today Amussol is the eighth largest employer at the national social security fund.

Amussol succeeded, among other things, in having the public transport sector included in the social security law. About 250,000 people are employed in this sector, either as individuals or in small businesses. Affiliation takes place by means of a gradual contribution system. Meanwhile 15,000 people have affiliated and are insured for healthcare services, pension, labour accidents and disability.

The organisation also increasingly looks at the agricultural sector, which employs about 20% of the active Dominican population. Most farmers were suspicious of the initiative at first, but CASC and Amussol invested a lot in raising awareness about and promotion of the social security law. More and more farmers are now affiliating to Amussol.

Amussol has an excellent international reputation. It regularly takes part in international seminars about social protection and is a member of the ILO experts' committee for the transition from informal to formal economy. It also regularly welcomes foreign trade union leaders who call on their expertise.

*Source: Wereldsolidariteit (World Solidarity, Christian labour movement ngo)*





Photo: Wereldsolidariteit



Photo: Trias



## CASE

### UGANDA: SOLIDARITY FUNDS FOR FARMERS

The farmers in the Ugandan village of Kiruli have three hectares of land on average. In 2002 they joined forces in the context of a government programme that promoted agricultural production and access to financial and other services. For a long time they were not successful.

Everything changed though, when the group affiliated to a MAFDA programme for rural development in 2012. MAFDA (Masindi District Farmers Association), a Trias partner organisation, trained farmers on vision development, management, leadership, monitoring and evaluation. It also taught farmers how to improve and share their knowledge of production and sales techniques. Because the members stand surety for each other, every member was given access to loans.

Since then the farmers of Kiruli sell their maize harvest together. This allows them to earn 4 cents per kilo above the prevailing market price, leading to a difference of 1,120 Euros on a total harvest. A gigantic sum for them.

The MAFDA educators also told the farmers about micro financing. At the weekly session each member saves between 0.3 and 1.5 Euros, and pays on top a mandatory social security contribution of fifteen eurocents. Besides its contribution to the savings and credit cooperative, the group has now saved several hundred Euros for families faced with work accidents, sickness or death.

MAFDA does not only strengthen the entrepreneurial qualities of its members, it also stimulates the indispensable mutual solidarity, first of all at group level, but in the near future it intends to connect the various solidarity funds. Thus they will be able to cover larger risks in a structured and self-reliant way on the one hand, and on the other hand to lobby the government for intervention of disaster funds and access to occupational accident insurance, for prenatal allowance, for pensions, etc.

*Source: Trias (Belgian NGO, supporting small-holder agriculture and small entrepreneurs)*

### 3.3. AFFORDABLE THANKS TO A MIXTURE OF FINANCING SOURCES

Social protection should be financed with as much as possible national resources. To realise this, each country must decide which sources are for them the most appropriate for funding social protection, by means of structural dialogues with relevant social organisations and within its own context.<sup>23</sup>

We distinguish 5 large groups of possible financing sources:

- **Social contributions:** different measures of social protection, social insurance in particular, are entirely or partly funded with social contributions (e.g. medical insurance contributions).
- **Income:** as such, income is an important mechanism of redistribution, provided it is a living wage. Our income determines our capacity to contribute to the system.
- **Taxes:** a correct and fair taxation, where the strongest shoulders carry the heaviest loads, is at the basis of the government budget. In order to guarantee that governments do not miss out on tax income, it is important to work on international tax justice (deal with tax evasion and fraud).
- **Alternative financing:** income from taxes on private insurance, VAT or excise duties on hazardous products like cigarettes or unhealthy food.
- **Other government income:** in some countries the government manages national companies or properties and partly invests the income in its social security policy.

If national resources are insufficient, international redistribution mechanisms are needed. These can be resources from development cooperation or innovative financing sources. But also the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion can lead to redistribution. These problems indeed cause a serious loss for both developing and developed countries and inhibit the efforts to strengthen systems of social protection. Countries are estimated to lose up to 1,000 billion dollars each year. This is about eight times the total amount spent on official development cooperation.

International cooperation can stimulate the strengthening of social protection, e.g. by contributing to the financing of the ILO Decent Work Country Programmes, by joining forces in international financing mechanisms or by establishing specific support and cooperation initiatives within the country to country (bilateral) cooperation to strengthen the social protection systems in partner countries. In the list of demands 2 and 3, at the end of this report, we have listed more concrete measures necessary to generate sufficient means for comprehensive social protection for every man and woman.

 **CASE****SOLIDARITY-BASED MEDICAL INSURANCE IN POLAND**

Over the past fifteen years the quality of healthcare in Poland has strongly increased. However, access to care for all is a big problem. For example, a significant part of the reimbursements by insurance to patients is not made. And there is also an increasing pressure to privatise healthcare insurance. A total liberalisation of healthcare in Central Europe would not only have a major impact on Poland, but also on the solidarity-based health mutuals in other parts of the EU. Health mutuals and other social organisations are facing the challenge to preserve the solidarity-based nature of national health mutuals.

**A SOLIDARITY-BASED ALTERNATIVE**

After the fall of communism in Central Europe (1989) the cost of healthcare has risen, and the system has failed to meet the increasing demands and expectations concerning healthcare. Poland established a national healthcare insurance with public insurance funds. But the financial means were limited and hardly independent. In 1995 several people involved in the democratic transition in Poland founded a patient association. They wanted to achieve a broader access to quality and affordable healthcare for all social groups in society.

Since 1996 there is a pilot project with a health mutual that meets the European rules of the free market, but also safeguards and defends the social interests of all patients. This health mutual, SWP Flandria (<http://www.flandria.pl/en/>), was supported from the start by the Christelijke Mutualiteit (CM) and has become an example in terms of social healthcare. It has a strong patient movement that continuously addresses the government and care providers to make sure they respect their social mission. This approach has resulted in a dialogue with patients and a growing patient participation in the mandatory healthcare insurance.

SWP Flandria is based on three pillars: a national structure, regional departments and a network of healthcare shops and social pharmacists. This is all embedded in a European cooperative. SWP Flandria also has a strong movement dimension and can count on an extensive network of volunteers who organise activities and provide services to socially deprived groups in society (sick, disabled, older and younger people). All this is possible thanks to partnerships with five regional CM branches, Escapo and Zorg&Farma.

*Source: CM (Christian health mutual in Belgium)*

## 4. A FLOOR AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

The ILO has been advocating social security for everyone since 1952. But because today 73% of the world population is still not or not adequately socially protected, it adopted Recommendation 202 on a national social protection floor in 2012. This floor is a kind of minimum social protection package. It consists of four basic guarantees that are defined at national level (per country).

The idea is to offer all people, over their entire life cycle, from birth to death, minimum access to essential health care and basic income security. Both of them together secure effective access to essential goods and services defined at the national level. This minimum for everyone is called the horizontal dimension of social protection.

This way the floor guarantees a number of legally recognised rights (the four basic guarantees):

- access to a nationally defined set of goods and services, constituting essential health care, including maternity care, that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality;
- basic income security for children, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services;
- basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability;
- basic income security, at least at a nationally defined minimum level, for older persons.

However, a one-sided focus on this social protection floor does entail certain risks. Some international organisations see this floor as a temporary programme that absorbs the heaviest blows for the weakest groups in times of economic or other crises. Sometimes the floor is also reduced to minimum transfers to lift the poorest members of society just above the poverty threshold. These visions threaten not to touch upon structural causes of social exclusion, such as the

increasing worldwide deterioration of labour conditions (precarisation).

The implementation of this horizontal dimension of social protection is therefore, although necessary, highly insufficient. In Recommendation 202 the ILO calls on its members to develop, together with the floor, national strategies to further expand social protection, in accordance with ILO Convention 102 (see the first chapter of this file). This is called the vertical dimension of social protection.



These strategies must be:

- based on national consultations by means of effective social dialogue and social participation;
- determined on the basis of national priorities, after identification of gaps and thresholds with regard to social protection;
- based on social contributions, public resources or both, always based on the principle that the strongest shoulders must carry the heaviest loads;
- related to an active labour market policy, including professional training;
- valid for individuals in both the formal and informal economy, while promoting the growth of formal employment and reducing informality;

- coherent with the social, economic and environmental development plans of countries;
- offer support to deprived groups and people with special needs.

The approach proposed by the ILO is two-sided. First, a foundation must be provided with the social protection floor, and then a more extensive social protection should progressively be developed. Thus, social protection should not be seen as a collection of temporary measures or a way to fight only the most extreme poverty.



Photo: Tineke D'haese/Oxfam

## CASE

### VIETNAM: MAJOR STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Since the end of the war (1973) and the implementation of the market economy (1986), the Vietnamese government is facing new challenges. The rapid economic growth, industrialisation and urbanisation go hand in hand with migration to industrial regions and growing inequality. By now one fourth of the active population is performing informal work. Even though migrants and informal workers keep one fifth of the Vietnamese economy up and running, they are denied the most elementary rights and excluded from any social protection.

In the early 2000s the Vietnamese government adopted a law about social security for employees in the formal sector (18% of the active population). It covers healthcare needs and provides allowances for pensions and unemployment. In 2009 the government established a health insurance, as well as several social welfare programmes for vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, inequality has not diminished. Moreover, the social transfers ended up with the well-off part of the population.

In 2012 the government launched an ambitious reform, aiming at universal social protection for all citizens by 2020. It intends to provide work and a minimum income for everyone in order to reduce poverty, to provide quality basic services (e.g. healthcare), to provide social assistance to vulnerable groups (children with special needs, elderly people) and to create a social insurance. Since 2013 the right to social security has even been included in the constitution. But the implementation will not be easy, especially not for vulnerable groups like migrants.

The government recently showed signs of increased openness to consultation and dialogue with civil society organisations. They want to develop a joint policy that is better adapted to these target groups. Several partners of Oxfam Solidarity Belgium, like CDI (Centre for Development and Integration), together with local trade unions try to strengthen the capacity of migrants and informal workers, so that they can assert their rights to social protection vis-a-vis policy makers.

The Vietnamese government is facing huge challenges, like improving tax collection, but has made important steps towards achieving social protection for everyone.

*Source: Oxfam Solidarity Belgium*





Photo: Tineke D'haese/Oxfam

## 5. POLITICAL DEMANDS OF THE CAMPAIGN

In the previous chapters we explained our vision on universal and comprehensive social protection. Further in this document we will present our concrete demands and recommendations. We want our Belgian and European policy makers to use them as a basis to work on social protection for everyone.

First you will find a summary of all demands. Then we will provide further details about the them.

The full list of technical demands for politicians is available on [www.socialebescherming.be](http://www.socialebescherming.be).



### 1. **EMBED THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION IN LAWS AND TREATIES**

Many countries have approved UN treaties, but not all countries apply their principles in a consistent way. Where appropriate, Belgium must advocate for this to happen. Social protection must also be explicitly included in the worldwide goals for development and development cooperation.

### 2. **GUARANTEE SUSTAINABLE AND SOLIDARITY-BASED FINANCING FOR UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION**

Our government should help to ensure that all governments worldwide are able to release sufficient means to implement a well-developed social protection system. This can be achieved by helping developing countries to collect taxes efficiently, by helping them to develop fair social contribution systems, but also by advocating fairer international tax systems. On top of that, our government should cooperate in a system of international financing for social protection.

### 3. **SUPPORT THE PARTICIPATION OF SOCIAL ACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION WORLDWIDE**

Trade unions, health mutuels, organisations of farmers and small businesses and other social movements are in the best position to understand the problems that people are confronted with when no social protection is available. They also take initiatives where governments fail. That is why governments have an interest in involving them in the social protection policy of their country. Belgium should support these organisations by requesting their input in the preparation of collaboration programmes with developing countries.

### 4. **CONDUCT A CONSISTENT POLICY TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL PROTECTION AT BELGIAN, EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**

Belgian politicians should strengthen social protection in all decisions they take. In addition, they should advocate a European pact that harmonises the different systems for social protection in Europe in an upward direction. They should also prevent that international trade and investment or tax agreements can harm social protection.

## 5.1 EMBED THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION IN LAWS AND TREATIES

### **SOCIAL PROTECTION IS FIRST AND FOREMOST A HUMAN RIGHT**

It is recognised as such in international and regional legislation as well as in national constitutions. This means we are all 'right holders' and not just beneficiaries. States are indeed required to respect, protect and guarantee this universal right. Therefore, we request that the universal right to social protection is guaranteed through recognition and anchoring in normative frameworks of multilateral organisations and in the laws and policies of all countries. Belgium and the European Union should apply this rights-based approach to social protection and actively promote it in all relevant bilateral and multilateral contexts, with respect for the opinions of the local civil society.

### **CONCRETELY, WE REQUEST OUR BELGIAN AND EUROPEAN POLICY MAKERS TO:**

- 1. Promote the ratification and application of ILO Convention 102 and Recommendation 202 on social protection and of ILO Convention 183 and Recommendation 191 about maternity protection.**

73% of the world population is still completely or partially excluded from social protection. That is why ILO Recommendation 202 provides the ILO member states with guidelines to implement social protection floors (the horizontal dimension). This must be done in the context of strategies for the expansion of social security, which will gradually guarantee a higher level of social security for as many people as possible in accordance with ILO Convention 102 (the vertical dimension). These two standards are the international references with regard to social protection. For that reason Belgium should defend their approval and implementation in the multilateral bodies and in the context of policy dialogues with partner countries.

- 2. Turn social protection into one of the central levers for an equitable transition towards sustainable societies. Therefore, make sure that social protection is included in the post-2015 sustainable development goals.**

Belgium has made social protection a priority in the process of determining the sustainable development goals that are to replace the Millennium Development Goals at the end of 2015. Our country should therefore demand specific targets on universal and comprehensive social protection and on universal healthcare.

In addition, Belgium should encourage the other EU members to demand these targets, because they have all ratified ILO Recommendation 202, and to inform its partner countries about this position.

- 3. Make universal social protection one of the central objectives of the Belgian and European development cooperation in the field.**

Belgium made the Decent Work Agenda a priority theme of its development cooperation and should put this ambition into practice. We therefore request our government to prepare a strategy note in consultation with the relevant social actors, indicating how the Belgian development cooperation will strengthen the universal right to social protection and healthcare.

The EU SOCIEUX project is currently the only concrete implementation of the Communication of the European Commission on Social Protection in Development Cooperation of the EU from August 2012. Our country must induce the EU to release more technical and financial means to materialise its commitment.

The European development cooperation must promote universal primary healthcare, instead of choosing to commercialise essential social services such as healthcare in developing countries.

## 5.2 GUARANTEE SUSTAINABLE AND SOLIDARITY-BASED FINANCING FOR UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection is a human right. Therefore, the government has the responsibility to realise this right. In 2008 the ILO demonstrated that basic social protection can be afforded even in the poorest countries, provided there is enough political will and there are sustainable financing mechanisms, first of all on a national level.

### CONCRETELY, WE REQUEST OUR BELGIAN AND EUROPEAN POLICY MAKERS TO:

#### 1. **Actively participate in the elaboration of equitable national and international taxation, allowing governments in all countries to fully exercise their right to collect taxes and contributions**

An efficient fight against aggressive fiscal optimisation, tax evasion and tax havens requires action at the international, European and Belgian level. The government should work on automatic data exchange between countries on transparency about the real beneficiaries of trusts and foundations, on country-by-country publication of financial information, on a strengthening of the OECD action plan against tax evasion and on the establishment of a global tax authority.

#### 2. **Help partner countries to conduct an active and efficient employment and income policy**

Belgium has important expertise in the field of employment and income policy and social contributions. For that reason our country should more actively work on these challenges in its development cooperation, more specifically in the field of labour legislation, training and allowances, with a specific approach for the own income workers. Moreover priorities must always be determined on the basis of the local context in the partner countries.

#### 3. **Provide the necessary means for social protection in development cooperation**

Since there are not always sufficient local resources, the development cooperation budget should provide the necessary means to assist in the implementation of a fully fledged national policy for social protection in the partner countries. This can be done first of all through governmental cooperation by means of an exchange of expertise and capacity strengthening in the field of social protection and tax policy, secondly through non-governmental cooperation by means of support to partnerships between social actors, and thirdly through multilateral cooperation by means of support to ILO and WHO programmes. In addition, structural long-term support must be provided for social protection initiatives of the partner countries.

#### 4. **Participate in the creation of international financing mechanisms for social protection, such as a global social protection fund**

With this campaign we also want to encourage the debate about the development of a global financing mechanism for social protection, about which some ideas are circulating already. We have to evolve towards adequate international structures with mandatory public contributions according to one's financial capacity, with drawing rights for countries in need and with cross subsidization.

## 5.3 SUPPORT THE PARTICIPATION OF SOCIAL ACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION WORLDWIDE

### **SOCIAL PROTECTION REQUIRES A POLICY WITH SEVERAL ACTORS**

Preparing, implementing and monitoring a social protection policy requires the involvement of several actors: the government, economic and social players. They play different, but very complementary roles.

Trade unions, health mutuals, organisations of farmers and small businesses and other social movements are in the best position to understand the problems that people are confronted with when no social protection is available. They also monitor the transparency of the system and take action to ensure that right holders are effectively reached. They also take initiatives where governments fail. With this pioneering work they make sure that the national social protection policy is more widely accepted and, thus, becomes more inclusive. For that reason governments have an interest in involving them in the social protection policy of their country. Belgium should support these organisations by requesting their input in the preparation of collaboration programmes with developing countries.

### **CONCRETELY, WE REQUEST OUR BELGIAN AND EUROPEAN POLICY MAKERS TO:**

- 1. Recognise civil society actors in partner countries who are relevant and representative for the achievement of social protection. Involve them in the preparation of programmes for development, to ensure that these programmes indeed strengthen social protection**

In the partner countries of the Belgian development cooperation many social organisations operate in the field of social protection, but they are hardly ever involved in cooperation programmes. Our policy makers should draft a strategy note on social protection that must indicate how they will involve and strengthen the relevant social actors.

- 2. Make technical expertise on social protection and structural dialogue available to governments and social actors**

In order to develop fully fledged social protection, the different actors must conduct a structural dialogue. Thus they can constantly look for the right balance between measures for the different target groups and for the right mixture of financing sources to ensure a sustainable and fair system. Belgium has considerable expertise in this field. Our policy makers should make that expertise available to the South. This is possible through direct cooperation with partner countries, through the European SOCIEUX programme, by encouraging the Belgian members of the International Social Security Association (ISSA) to share their expertise with the South and by providing means to stimulate mutual exchange between actors in the South.

- 3. Support the integration of initiatives of social actors in the social protection policy.**

Belgium must strengthen the partnerships and programmes aimed at supporting social actors in the South. If a national government recognises these actors and their work, provides a legal framework for their initiatives and embeds them in the national social protection policy, a win-win situation will be created. The government expands its system of social protection to groups of people that were previously excluded. And the social organisations are assigned a more explicit role in the national social protection policy.

## 5.4 CONDUCT A CONSISTENT POLICY TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL PROTECTION AT BELGIAN, EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.

Belgium and Europe are still facing many challenges to improve their social protection. But also international policy, beyond EU level, often largely affects the options that countries have to develop universal and comprehensive social protection.

### CONCRETELY, WE REQUEST OUR BELGIAN AND EUROPEAN POLICY MAKERS TO:

1. **Ensure that Belgian and European positions and decisions on trade and investment treaties and within international institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organisation strengthen social protection.**

Every free trade and investment agreement between the EU and third countries must contain a enforceable chapter on sustainable development, with enforceable clauses. International free trade and investment agreements can only be signed if it can be demonstrated that they will not harm any social rights or the environment, and that no health problems will be caused.

All activities of the World Bank must meet the social and labour standards of the ILO and the WHO and effectively contribute to the development of a sustainable local economy. The IMF should help countries to develop a tax policy that counters inequality.

2. **Conclude a European social pact that harmonises the different social protection systems in the EU in an upward direction**

This social pact must contain concrete measures to strengthen social protection. The European target to drastically reduce poverty must be converted in a European right to minimum income and minimum pay in every member state.

The EU must also act strictly against member states that violate social rights, not only in case of economic or budgetary aberrations. A European social inspection, measures against social dumping and social clauses in government contracts would also be a step forward.

Furthermore, the priority of the social goal for health and other forms of care must be confirmed in a European directive with regard to the social services of general interest.

3. **Conduct a policy in Belgium that strengthens social protection**

Belgium must also respect and strengthen the structural dialogue with social actors. All allowances must be raised to at least the European poverty line, for all types of families. People in poverty often miss out on the support (e.g. allowances) they are entitled to. Therefore, it is important for our country to assign as many rights as possible automatically, to reduce thresholds (out-of-pocket payment, residence status ...) for medical care and other fundamental rights and to strengthen the provision and accessibility of public and social services.

Our government should also strengthen the income side of social security, with diverse financing derived from all sources of income. It should shift the taxation from income derived from work to income derived from wealth and taxes on pollution and ambitiously tackle tax fraud.

Besides, it should work on a pension reform that strengthens the public pension system and develop an adequate policy to accommodate the needs of an ageing population. Finally, high quality healthcare must be made affordable for everyone and health equity should be increased.



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# ENDNOTES

1. Social protection is a part of the wider agenda for sustainable human development of the UN (education and training, infrastructure, energy for all, climate, economics, healthcare, dignified work, etc.). In this vision statement we explain how we see and define the concept of 'social protection'. However, this does not mean in any way that we will lose sight of the broader agenda and challenges for sustainable development.
2. International Labour Organisation (ILO), World Social Protection Report 2014/15.
3. Gijs Justaert and Bart Verstraeten, Een keerpunt voor sociale bescherming wereldwijd?, MO\*paper 60, November 2011.
4. With this index the World Bank measures the ease or difficulty to do business in a country. To this end it considers existing regulations for companies and property rights.
5. Convention 102 is binding. To enable implementation in all national situations, it offers member states the possibility to select at least 3 branches. Once social protection has been arranged for these, the country involved must progressively start insuring the other risks. The minimum height of contributions can be determined on the basis of the wage levels in the country.
6. IAO, Transitioning from the informal to the formal economy, Report V(1), 103rd Session ILC, Geneva, 2014, p. 6.
7. OECD, Promoting Pro-Poor Growth. Social Protection, 2009.
8. WIEGO, Statistics on the Informal Economy: Definitions, Regional Estimates & Challenges, 2014.
9. ILO, The Informal Economy and Decent Work: a Policy Resource Guide, supporting transitions to formality, 2013.
10. ILO, World of Work Report 2014: Developing with jobs, 2014.
11. ECLAC, Social protection systems in Latin America and the Caribbean - El Salvador, 2013.
12. Interview with Noé Nerio by FOS, 2014
13. Art. 22: Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality. Art. 25: (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.
14. Art. 9: The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance. Art 10: The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize that: 1. The widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, which is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, particularly for its establishment and while it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children. Marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses. 2. Special protection should be accorded to mothers during a reasonable period before and after childbirth. During such period working mothers should be accorded paid leave or leave with adequate social security benefits. 3. Special measures of protection and assistance should be taken on behalf of all children and young persons without any discrimination for reasons of parentage or other conditions. Children and young persons should be protected from economic and social exploitation. Their employment in work harmful to their morals or health or dangerous to life or likely to hamper their normal development should be punishable by law. States should also set age limits below which the paid employment of child labour should be prohibited and punishable by law.
15. Jonathan D. Ostry, Andrew Berg and Charalambos G. Tsangarides, Redistribution, Inequality, and Growth, IMF Research Department, April 2014; OECD, All on board: making inclusive growth happen 2014; Wilkinson, The spirit level, why greater equality makes societies stronger, 2009.
16. <http://www.unrisd.org/research/poverty>
17. European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department A: Economic and scientific policy, employment and social affairs. The Role of the Social Protection as Economic Stabiliser: Lessons from the Current Crisis, 2010.
18. ILO, Can low-income countries afford basic social security?, Social Security Policy Briefings, Geneva, 2008, p. 10.
19. Ibid., p. 3.
20. "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition." The same text states further: "Governments have a responsibility for the health of their peoples which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures."
21. European Commission, COM(2014) 263 final: A Stronger Role of the Private Sector in Achieving Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Developing Countries, Brussels, 13/05/2014.
22. In this respect reference is often made to the inconsistent role of pension funds from richer countries. While they strengthen the social protection of their members, they sometimes undermine the social policy of other countries because they aim for a higher return. Their investments indeed do not always take social rights into account.
23. 'National' refers to 'from their own country'. We are not making any statement about the division of competences within countries.



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