

Charter of Recommendations; a Report by the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors calls for Universal Social Protection Floors– Perspectives, Demands, Aspirations of the South

27th-29th 2016, New Delhi, India





The Programme on Women's Economic Social Cultural Rights (PWESCR), which is a founding member of the Global Coalition of Social Protection Floors is also a member of the Coalition's Core Group. PWESCR convened a three-day meeting of the Core Group members of the Coalition, especially from the global South in New Delhi, India. Representatives of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), networks and individual activists working on social security and social protection issues attended the meeting. This meeting was meant to share the concept of social protection floor and how organisations and groups from the South can effectively engage with the global advocacy and campaign for SPF. The meeting was conceived as an initiator for reaching out to more organisations, groups and networks in the South, for expanding the Coalition and also for initiating a process of building country-level advocacy and action plans.

Social protection is one of the foundations for inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. With focused advocacy efforts in collaboration with several stakeholders and partners, the Coalition did succeed in getting social protection included as a key component of Sustainable Development Goals. The Coalition has been effective in its collective international advocacy efforts to demand social security. In the last three years, it has worked around SDGs, Human Rights Council, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and with the EU and has resulted in some promising outcomes. The critical need now for the Coalition is to shift its focus to regional, national and local-level initiatives.

The role of the Global Coalition for SPF was to build coalitions at regional and national levels. Apart from building and strengthening the advocacy and campaign for SPF, this meeting hoped to help know the specific work on SPF undertaken by various organizations, networks and individuals. Developing further ideas for activities, steps to be taken at country, regional and global levels, exploring clear pathways to be taken to achieve the SPF goals were all some of the central concerns of the meeting. Delineating further projects/activities in order to strengthen support for the ILO's recommendation on SPF and expanding the scope of work on the issue with special reference to the SDGs was a task that continued throughout the three days' meeting.

Twenty –five representatives from five different regions, namely South Asia, Africa, East Asia, Middle East, Latin America, came together to talk with each other, to exchange best practices, to converse on the dilemmas and the difficulties faced in their respective countries and regions, in terms of human development, in terms of social protection floors' availabilities, government performance on the same and the issue of democracies, gender justice, rights, and survival when in conflict. A full report will be available. Produced below is the charter of Recommendations that emerged from the momentous meeting at New Delhi, India. (27-29th January, 2016)

Charter of Recommendations

1. Social Protection Floors are a non-negotiable in poverty eradication efforts. Inequality of wealth, income, standards of living, minimal and unequal access to health care, education, poor equity status for women in livelihood efforts call for urgent affirmative reforms in national governments' provisions for social security. Social Protection Floors are an intrinsic aspect of Human Rights. The dignity of people in securing minimum livelihoods is often affected due to the absence of social protection floors in so-called democratic societies.

2. All members of the Coalition strongly advocate universal social protection floors. SPF is the first step towards comprehensive universal social security systems, a core obligation of States to realise the right to social security. (See Article 9 of the ESCR Covenant which is instrumental for the realisation of other right; See General Comment 19 on the right to social security (2007), and the Statement on Social Protection Floors (2015) and Recommendation no. 202 concerning national floors for social protection adopted in 2012 by the ILO.)

3. South countries in their asymmetrical integration with north economies have focussed on economic growth at the cost of social development efforts and inclusive development. The structural adjustment policies of the Bretton Woods institutions adopted by almost all south national governments in the eighties and nineties unleashed major changes in the economic development of the countries, namely higher privatisation, and the lowering of social protection for the poor. Transnational companies' wealth often outstrips the GDP of many countries. Gaps have grown between the vulnerable populations and those with the skills and the class support to increase their opportunities. Employment opportunities have shrunk and the casualisation of labour has increased in an exponential manner. Formal sector labour has been gradually shrinking to around 5% in many of the south countries. Increasing rural immiserisation has caused massive rural outmigration adding to the growing casualisation of urban labour, contracted in uniformly distress conditions.
 - a. It is strongly recommended that the State assumes a renewed role in implementation of social protection floors.
 - b. That the well-being of citizens of the south are not sacrificed by national governments and international systems at the altar of economic growth- led development.

4. Increasing destitution and rising public deficits mark a number of African, South Asian countries adding to the burden of unavailable social protection. Often its unavailability has been blamed on the economic austerity measures that Governments have to adopt to balance the fiscal deficits.
 - a. It is highly recommended that the Letter of the CESCR about times of austerity and the commitment to maintain fair and decent levels of SPF during austerity times be borne in mind as a UN affirmative support for demanding the fulfilment of the obligations of governments towards meeting the ends of basic social securities. (Letter dated 16 May 2012 addressed by the Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights).

5. Social Protection Floors are an intrinsic aspect of Human Rights. The dignity of people in securing minimum livelihoods is often affected due to the absence of social protection floors in so-called democratic societies. Diversion of much needed financial investments towards infrastructure by national south governments instead of support for their citizens and refugees in a uniform manner was upheld as a major source of growing poverty, deep disillusionment among the neglected and the

labouring poor and among women who perform the most menial tasks for the sake of bare survival.

- a. Its restoration in the lives of millions of people living in poverty, exiled from their homes due to wars they did not cause needs to be high priority. It is demanded that this is closely linked to an immediate restoration and creation of social protection floors, irrespective of nationalities, gender and social status. The level of social protection must be high enough and engendered enough to secure livelihoods, especially for poor women and refugees.
6. In those societies where aging is a widespread factor aspects of SPF which afford dignified existence to those who are elderly, incapacitated, vulnerable to sickness and without familial support it is critical that the variables of SP Floors be fashioned to meet new emerging demands of changing demographics. E.g., unpaid care work by women already forms a constituency particularly in East Asia and Latin America.
 7. The question of access is crucial once availability is granted. It is recommended that
 - a. One window registration for a host of schemes- including maternity benefits, child crèche services, unemployment coverage, old age pension, education, support for people with differing mental abilities and disabilities in all spheres etc. are made a priority and the most acceptable access option be adopted. (The delegates identified access to SPFs hampered by formalities like possession of identity proofs, detailed forms and tedious paperwork-all of which form a prerequisite for workers who suffer from different vulnerabilities including illiteracy, barriers to movement as in case of PWD, not possessing any legal documentation...Making such formalities a prerequisite for essentials of a dignified life defeats the purpose of SPFs.)
 8. Litigation has been the route for many SPF measures that have now become a part of global south countries. Additionally courts in India, South Africa, and Latin American region have shown strong belief in SPFs as a matter of right and in ensuring that the executive does its duty – flowing from that strategic intervention in litigation in such countries. E.g. submission of briefs in ongoing cases many countries have been able to advance on issues of pensions, food security and old age support systems. Such constructive litigation has also indicated increased faith in judiciary and diminished confidence in the executive. Similarly, the conviction in a demand for legislating on SPs instead of reliance on schemes which alter with different governments also highlights the need for strategic intervention in litigation and policy making.
 9. All regions and participants expressed the need for joint exercises in planning, decision making, monitoring and reviewing the social protection schemes. Need to develop a social protection monitoring mechanism or a task force in each country, from the CSOs. Need to develop Global SPF national monitoring bodies- which can review the status of not just SPFs but Human Rights as a whole. Country reports of Global South countries must be compiled by the Global coalition, annually. Monitoring of finances that come from the North requires partnership with northern civil society organizations that provide information on aid flows and aid priorities which have SPF components. The building of a strong monitoring mechanism goes side by side with the role of ensuring not only that implementation is being carried out

but that CSOs are involved in multi stake holder bodies which also dictate the manner in which SPF funds are being decided and allocated. Representative bodies which are interstate in particular can track the work between the host state and the destination state. SPF extension for unemployment security net must be demanded as a priority component of SPF. Skills and capacity building for such work needs international and national support.

10. The demands charted by the South must be addressed to agencies on the basis of duty bearers who are responsible for that particular demand. Demands to international agencies, national governments, multilaterals, bilaterals etc are that all MOUs be agreed on in a transparent fashion and made available for public scrutiny. It is critical that international aid does not ignore or weaken the local CSO efforts. It must also avoid project style funding and instead develop long term handholding patterns of development cooperation.
11. National Coalitions need to be formed and actively strengthened in developing a mass base movement for all those who seek assistance. These coalitions should include all trade unions involved in bargaining for fair and decent employment, civil society organisations devoted to poverty alleviation, informal associations of citizens at community levels, committed activists and members of social movements struggling for human rights, women's rights, social justice and accountability in public life, health and education organisations monitoring public services for the poor and organisations committed to alternative development efforts. These coalitions must establish relations with sister organisations in the North and with multilateral bodies such as ILO, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, DESA, UN-NGLS etc. The Coalition must develop multiple roles. It must be a think tank, a resource base, a site for networking and liaising with UN bodies, an advocacy and lobby group, a forward-looking body for ensuring implementation of already ratified conventions, a watchdog for human rights violations in South countries and a "spokes body" for the aspirations, demands and hopes of the Global Coalition for SP Floors.
12. At present regional and international bodies like ASEAN, SAARC, BRICS are limited to economic concerns. These bodies require the development of serious social development perspectives. In this context the Global Coalition with South partners can play a major role in promoting and developing a strong united social protection floor for all its member countries. So far the Coalition has predominantly done international work with north members leading the process. It is recommended that joint platforms will help to create more productive joint advocacy efforts and thus shape mutually a global, shared and bottom-up devolved policy efforts.
13. The Social membership of the coalition has to be multiple for it to develop into a mass base political force, leading to much more united global action that does not fragment the south presence but instead ensures that the south is equally in the driver's seat.

14. Universal Social Protection Floors are universal but their application and implementation need not be uniform. It depends on the country contexts. In Latin America it has remained unchallenged. SPFs are under immense burden in countries in Middle East. In South Asia people in poverty are fighting hard to ensure SPFs become a part and parcel of their lives.
- a. Countries in extreme poverty and conflict need a higher level of protection. Refugees, displaced by war require the same levels of support as national citizens in their home countries.
 - b. On the other hand, countries in East Asia and Latin America boast of a demography that is rapidly changing with a rapidly ageing population. Income security in old age, mobile health care services, life course approaches to all care issues, and advocacy efforts for the universal social (non-contributory) pensions
 - c. To provide another contrastive example, India's demographic profile on the contrary is young and their access to employment, education becomes critical. Social problems for the excluded communities are extreme in nature. There is no democracy if Social Protection Floors are not respected. These tantamount to extreme violations of human rights. Hence the State needs to focus on employment, on removing differences between formal and non formal employment benefits, restore public health care and education and ensure fair conditions for just livelihoods. The rights of women need to be assured in the most vulnerable part of their existence ie.. their unpaid and invisibilised work in not only the care economy but in the domestic and public spheres—maternity benefits continue to elude large numbers of women living in poverty, a severe lack of crèche services and other child care benefits, lack of facilities for young nursing mothers in industrial and informal work settings ensure that neither is their work in the care economy supported or paid for nor are they eligible to receive care support of any kind as they return to the work force after maternity. SPF must consider these issues of women's lives as non-negotiables when formulating the tangibles of SPF at the country and regional levels.
15. All Universal Social Protection Floors are a right and every citizen is a rights holder. Participation in a democracy is the guarantee of a minimum quality of life, one with basic rights and a full dignified existence. The SDGs have declared that “we leave no one behind, ensuring equality, non- discrimination, equity and inclusion at all levels.”
- a. It is highly recommended that a follow-up meeting be convened where the Coalition Members can focus entirely on the SDGs and those goals with their targets which can be linked to issues of vulnerability, rights for the constituencies needing social protection floors. The agenda for post 2015 is a development agenda which needs to be redefined and the SDGs and SPFs when worked with together can prove effective for all SPF national coalitions to use when making policy with governments.

Conclusion: Finally, we need to have an “integrator approach”. We need to set right the perpetuation of exclusionary politics, dominant neo- liberal regimes and change the extractive social conditions in which our labour works today. The Social Protection



Floors when implemented will enable citizens in all countries to play a role of **agency** rather than being receptors of harsh work conditions and adapting to survival modes of existence. The minimalisation approach of the state in many south countries towards the realization of Social Protection Floors will be strongly resisted by all members of the Global Coalition for SPF. At the same time good practices which are available across the region will be promoted and adapted to ensure that the future is more equal than the past for large masses of people living in risk, fear, vulnerabilities and scarcity of resources for maintaining their livelihoods. “Let us leave no one behind!”