



Report: Strategy Meeting of the Core Team Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors

24-25 November of 2019
Geneva, Switzerland

1. Introduction

The GCSPF held a two-day Annual Strategy Meeting 24-25 November 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland, which gathered 26 participants¹ to consult on the near-future and long-term strategies of the GCSPF. The meeting took place in the framework of the Global Social Protection Week organised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) 25 – 28 November 2019.

Participants of the Core Team represented a range of NGOs, think tanks and trade unions from the country, regional and international level. All organisations within the Core Team promote social protection, including floors, through their own respective organisational mandates. Their activities are all fundamental to promote the core areas of GCSPF-related work.

Cyndi Araujo, a Program Officer at Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Geneva Office (FES), began the Meeting with a brief introduction of the GCSPF and its ongoing efforts to secure Global Protection Floors, specifically, and poverty reduction and fairer socio-economic development, more broadly. Subsequently, Wouter van Ginneken, a Representative from the International Movement ATD Fourth World kicked off the Meeting by outlining targeted aims and objectives for the participants over the two days.

As a precursor to the new thematic discussions of the various Working Groups of the Strategy Meeting, the Core Team reviewed the 2018-2019 Work Plan to gauge the progression of activities in the past two years and to highlight the areas that needed further efforts. In particular, the Coalition members brought forth ongoing challenges that emerged from the 2018-2019 Nairobi Action Plan in order to further refine and improve the activities to be undertaken in 2020-2021.

Over the course of the two days, the Working Groups and their designated coordinators elaborated on the contents of the thematic foci, their associated activities, the responsible focal points and deadlines, and further advocacy material to cohere a 2020-2021 Work Plan.

Aside from the Strategy Meeting, all members of the Core Team and members of the GCSPF participated at the Global Social Protection Week organised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) from 25 – 28 November 2019. At the Commitment Session of the High-level Segment, the [GCSPF](#) and [Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung](#) delivered statements for achieving “Universal Human Rights-Based Social Protection Systems and Floors.” A second [Statement](#) was delivered at the Session Partnership for USP and SDG 1.3. More contributions were made in several Technical Sessions including, “Formulating National Policies and Strategies and National Dialogue,” and “Exploring the Feasibility of International Financing for Social

¹ Asia and Pacific Region, the Middle East and African Region, North and South America, and continental Europe. The list of participants is included in [Annex 2](#).

Protection Systems.” Additionally, GCSPF contributed to the High-Level Sessions including, the Third Annual Meeting of the Social Protection, Freedom and Justice for Workers Network and the Partnering for USP and SDG 1.3. More information on the background of the Technical Sessions and the High-Level Sessions can be found [here](#) and the participation of the GCSPF can be found [here](#).

2. Aims for the Two-Day Strategy Meeting

The overall direction and strategy to approach the two-day Strategy Meeting can be condensed into the 6 following points:

1. Review the action plan adopted in Nairobi, Kenya
2. Discuss and develop future strategies and GCSPF positions on all levels
3. Discuss and decide on action plans, including working groups, for 2020-21
4. Review and improve on strategies for communication, governance and membership
5. Share and discuss the GCSPF Statements for the commitment and USP partnering session of the Global Social Protection Week
6. Decide the individuals of the Coalition for the representation of the USP2030 Steering Group

3. Outline of the Substantive Discussions

In order to provide a clear synthesis of the two-day Strategy Meeting, the remainder of the report is organized as follows:

1. The Nairobi Action Plan: Progress and future areas of improvement
2. Methodology of the Working Groups
3. Rationale for Working Groups
4. Day 1: Brief summaries of the working groups’ discussions and action points
5. Day 2: Brief summaries of the various working groups and action points
6. Way forward: Communication Strategies, Governance and Conclusions
7. [Annex 1: 2020-2021 Work Plan](#)
8. [Annex 2: Participants to the 2019 Strategy Meeting](#)

1. The Nairobi Action Plan 2018-2019: Review of Progress and Future Areas of Improvement

To review the progress in implementing the Nairobi Action Plan, participants noted the many achievements made in the previous years. Specifically, this includes the online dissemination of several advocacy statements, which are available on the main GCSPF [website](#); members’ participation in international fora to discuss Social Protection Resolutions, Conventions and Declarations; “how-to” notes on how to contribute to Shadow Reports as civil society; a publication on lobbying activities on Financing Social Protection; consultations on the relations of Gender and Care Work and; contributions from GCSPF members regarding the new IMF Social Protection policy.

The recurring challenge pointed out by participants was the lack of human resources to consolidate national and regional coalitions. As suggested by some members, more national and regional focal points need to be selected for better communication flows. Aside these points, in the spirit of sustaining the value-added of the GCSPF and its work, some important areas of improvement were noted. While points are brief in the table below, a full integration of other improvement areas and/or future activities are elaborated in [Annex 1](#).

Table 1: Points raised for improvement from Nairobi Action Plan

Challenges	Areas of Improvement
Lack of resources to implement social mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase outreach by a group of Coalition members ● Decide on software/program that centralises communication between focal points
Challenges with working groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To establish a maximum of 5 priorities for each working group
Ambiguous responsibilities and miscommunication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creating a fixed template to delineate activity, objective, responsibility, and deadlines ● Distinguish and promote national action and global action streams of GCSPF
Lack of engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To avoid the use of specific UN jargon ● To restrict the use of general mailing
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase social media presence on FB, Twitter, newsletters via email subscription on GCSPF website ● Explore other institutional linkages (e.g. to UNRISD)

2. Methodology of Working Groups

Following the review of the Nairobi Work Plan, the 6 aims of the Meeting guided the Working Groups and their deliberations, which indicated decisive action points for the future. The methodological approach was the following:

Day 1: November 24, 2019	Day 2: November 25, 2019
All members of the Core Team agreed unanimously to conduct discussions around the thematic areas of the Working Groups and decision-making in the format of a plenary.	The Coordinators of the Working Groups led small groups of 3-5 individuals to discuss the future actions of the remaining thematic foci for Day 2. A plenary was held at the end of all discussions to summarise the points and decisions that were taken over the two days.

3. Thematic Working Groups

The following paragraphs synthesise the discussions of the Working Groups on Days 1 and 2

4. Day 1: Summaries of the main discussions of Working Groups

The following paragraphs synthesise the discussions of the Working Groups on Days 1 and 2.

A. ILO General Surveys on Social Protection Floors: Fit for Purpose?

As a core member of the workers' group in the Tripartite structure, the ITUC works closely with the ILO. Due to this engagement, the GCSPF directly receives insights on institutional knowledge of binding and non-binding instruments on Social Protection Floors. Due to some existing instruments of the ILO that cover, explicitly, social protection (and floors), the [ILO Survey](#) was used as a primary example of how trade unions can participate in consultative processes with business associations and governments to highlight institutional challenges in the implementation of SPFs. In the survey, responses from 144 governments, 44 Trades Unions and 11 Employers were recorded, with results compiled into a four hundred paged report that was discussed in June 2019. The meeting highlighted that 50% of the world have no social protection coverage and that challenges encompass high numbers of informal workers, low level of benefits, low quality services, conditionalities, access problems, increased burden on workers, and austerity measures that continue to drive low coverage. Privatisation of benefits is also being pushed by employers, especially in Latin America. While the ILO Survey revealed the most substantive issues at play for SPF coverage in most countries, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), however, were not much evidenced at the meeting in terms of engagement. These are all issues of relevance to coalition members who are monitoring at the local and national level. The main question for GCSPF remains to be the following: are the existing standards fit for purpose?

B. GCSPF Working Group on Human Rights Monitoring

The ILO Committee of Experts monitors the implementation of Conventions, such as the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (No. 102), but it does not do that for ILO Recommendations, such as the Recommendation on Social Protection Floors (No. 202). The ILO monitoring procedure is principally accessible through ILO constituents – governments, employers' and workers' organisations. However, the Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) has explicitly accepted ILO Recommendation No.202 as a reference for country reporting. It is therefore already equipped for civil society to report on SPF implementation, as the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognises the right to social security and is ratified by almost all countries in the world. The third principal standard is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1943), in which the right to social security is mentioned as a human right.

The question at stake is whether these existing instruments suffice for implementation and governance (i.e. monitoring and evaluation) of SPF measures at the country level. It is also a question of the *enforceability* of these instruments, in the context of member states' obligations to deliver the rights entitlement of social protection. The GCSPF members deliberated on how they may influence governments and businesses to have a stronger commitment to human rights obligations, using their practice and advocacy role as "watch dogs."

Wouter van Ginneken of the International Movement ATD Fourth World will initiate the creation of "how-to" notes to encourage CSOs at the regional and country level to understand how to engage with a more robust monitoring framework. All concrete activities are noted in [Annex 1](#).

C. New IMF Policy on Social Financing; how should GCSPF respond?

After some reflection of the organisation's engagement with social spending and its adverse impacts, a new policy of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has been adopted. Several Coalition members have been involved in discussions with the IMF on SPFs as part of its reflection, along with academic experts, which in the end embraced policy reform not only with respect to strengthening social protection but also basic education and health spending of governments.² The IMF is to draft a guidance note for its staff to implement the new policy, due for completion by the end of 2020. Meanwhile, the new policy invites civil society to engage more with IMF staff when they visit member countries in order to advocate for protecting and expanding social protection, education and health programs. Formerly, IMF heard mostly from finance ministries and central banks, so the new policy might strengthen the case for social spending in policy planning. In addition and independently, members of the Core Team drafted a paper on the "legal, political, economic and moral imperatives to finance social protection for all" which can help guide advocacy with national authorities, IMF and other international institutions to strengthen SPFs (link is [here](#)).

For further concretisation, GCSPF members need to decide on how they wish to participate in the engagement process, and whether GCSPF engagement should be at the *national* or *international* level or both. All action points are listed in [Annex 1](#).

D. GCSPF and future engagement with the Partnership on Global Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (USP2030)

The mission of the USP2030³ is to support countries and international partners to commit to the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, which are in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. In particular, Target 1.3 of the SDGs, in which social protection is deemed as an important tool to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere" (SDG 1). An important milestone for GCSPF is that there are two seats reserved for CSOs and a trade union in the USP2030 Steering Committee (SC). The decision for the GCSPF is to select Bart Verstraeten from World Solidarity and Nicola Wiebe from Brot für die Welt to fill the seat for civil society organisations, on a rotational basis. The other seat is to be filled by the ITUC. The commitment of these organisations recognise that their positions must also reflect the needs of resource-poor countries and to encourage implementable actions at the national level. All commitments are further detailed in [Annex 1](#).

E. The role of GCSPF in the EU-DEVCO Program

The EU-funded Action Program on "Improving Synergies Between Social Protection and Public Finance Management" is a joint-programme administered by the UNICEF, the ILO, and Oxfam, HelpAge and World Solidarity (on behalf of the GCSPF). Under the remit of the GCSPF, the following services have and will be offered: a mid-term assistance to select partner countries; a detailing of priority areas for training; a convening of partners to research and promote implementation of national social benefits; designing a program and its associated activities in work plans; and a detailing of country-specific budgets.

Countries that have already been selected are Cambodia, Nepal, Uganda and Senegal to reflect the financial and administrative advantages of select GCSPF organisations. A preliminary mapping of issues and partners in Cambodia has already been conducted in a consultative process, and workshops will be held soon.

² Peter Bakvis, Miriam Brett and Barry Herman drafted a critique of the IMF thinking on financing social protection as it had been perceived by independent observers ([here](#)).

³ There are five core principles of universal social protection including, (1) protection throughout the life cycle; (2) universal coverage; (3) national ownership; (4) sustainable and equitable financing and; (5) participation and social dialogue.

All GCSPF members will be invited to engage in the fashioning of GCSPF-specific activities on social protection systems and floors. Members in other countries of focus (i.e. Angola, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, and Paraguay) are encouraged to engage with the ILO and UNICEF.

5. Day 2: Summaries of the main discussions of Working Groups

F. The role of the GCSPF in CSocD, CSW and the HLPF

2020 is a commemorative year for the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the High-Level Forum due to their long-standing processes within the United Nations system.

These high-level fora provide great entry points for Coalition members to promote and open-up discussions on social protection guarantees. As per the suggestion of the Working Group, a principle statement shall be created with key facts on SPFs, their financing and their beneficial impacts for discussions at international, national and local level meetings. While all three international fora have distinctive DNAs, the Coalition members are to be strategic in selecting related topics and targeted experts for a mix of “café workshops” and/or formal panels and/or side-events in the February Commission for Social Development, the March Commission on the Status of Women, and the July High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. In preparing for the HLPF2021 – not only for New York, but also for the regional conferences - the coalition could focus on “transformative social protection” – in line with the 2021 objective of “transformative sustainable development”. All activities are further detailed in [Annex 1](#).

G. A GCSPF Strategy on Global Financing Mechanism

As a consensus among members of the GCSPF, the long-term sustainability of resources for social financing must start at the national level. A number of studies have shown that nearly all countries can afford to finance a national social protection floor by their own means. Presently, only about 12 countries are deemed to require international assistance to finance minimum social protection. International support for the poorest countries unable to kick-start social protection or countries requiring additional support to maintain social protection floors in crises situations could come through financial global solidarity mechanisms. The GCSPF is interested to take action to trigger concrete progress on global solidarity for the financing of social protection.

It is in the interest of the GCSPF to agree on an advocacy strategy for a global financing mechanism.

H. Universal Health Care (UHC) as a cross-cutting issue

Health care needs claim to a higher policy position in the broader theme of social protection. After discussions in the Working Group, members decided that the best method to approach “health care” was through a universal approach via the SDGs, particularly 1.3, in which universality alludes to cross-cutting themes. SDG 1.3 focuses more broadly on social development and assumes a heavier role of the public institutions and public financing of social services. While the GCSPF should focus on accessibility, it does not preclude all the other criteria of what constitutes the ‘universality’ of Health Care, for example, availability, adaptability, affordability, quality. The Coalition should encourage and reach out to Health specific groups to develop advocacy material to stress SDG 1.3. However, universal health coverage should be noted as one of the highest cost-burdens within social protection. For the short-term, UHC might just be a case for awareness-building and advocacy.

I. The role of GCSPF on Care Work

From the perspective of social protection, “Care work” should be conceptualised as a highly-gendered issue in work and unpaid labour. At this juncture, it is not considered as a core issue of social protection. Therefore, the role of the GCSPF on Care Work should be in the promotion of the concept, particularly to

recognise the role of women and the high burdens for women of all ages that are associated with care work. The recommendation is to encourage more women's groups to join the Coalition to raise awareness on the issue in national policy-making spaces. Substantive issues that are linked to social protection (including floors), should be detailed further by the Working Group.

6. *Way forward: Communication, Membership and Governance*

The sections above summarised the discussions of the Working Groups, the general scope and direction of the GCSPF members as well as some of the forthcoming activities to be undertaken. For more concrete action points, please see [Annex 1](#), which illustrates the oncoming activities of the Coalition in the near, medium and long-term future.

This Section concludes the key takeaways of the two-day Strategy Meeting on communication, membership and governance. It synthesises all of the gaps and highlights the future communication strategies of the GCSPF, future outlooks on the governance structure.

On the issue of strengthening the coordination of internal affairs and communications, all participants agreed that better strategies are crucial to making the Working Groups' activities successful in the near and long-term future. As this is a hefty job, particularly due to the expansive network of civil society and trade unions within the Coalition, more resources both in terms of time and finances are needed. Investing in the coordination of better communication strategies could include identifying regional focal points to oversee GCSPF networking, the sharing of information, and the promotion of synergies in common events and the production of policy briefs; translation of existing and new documents for a wider reach; the creation of GCSPF templates for Working Groups' action plans that enlists the responsible parties, content of responsibilities, deadlines, and indicators to monitor progress; and finally, the use of Working Groups to engage and draw in new members to the Coalition.

With regards to governance of the GCSPF, the current structure holds a majority of members from the Global North. Seeking to change this, all participants suggested an amendment to a new governance structure, in which the Core Team should consist of a 50 percent representation of Global South members. This requires funding and would require financial contributions of more organisations. Currently, support to network meetings is only provided by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Bread for the World; therefore, more resources need to be mobilised from GCSPF members from the Global North.

Collectively, **the Core Team decided to convene a Zoom meeting by the end of January, while working group coordinators would be asked to finalise the workplans for the Working Groups by mid-January 2020**. This meeting would also serve to update each other on all of the core activities that were designated to the coordinators of the Working Groups.

Annex1: Action Plan 2020-2021

The action plan 2020-2021 includes the activities by the eight working groups and it will be shared as soon as possible.

Annex 2: Participants

	Name	Organization	Country
1.	José Florito	Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC)	Argentina
2.	Bart Verstraeten	World Solidarity	Belgium
3.	Evelyn Astor	International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)	Belgium
4.	Hilde Van Regenmortel	Oxfam International	Belgium
5.	Martha Bekele	Development Initiatives (DI)	Ethiopia
6.	Wouter van Ginneken	International Movement ATD Fourth World	France
7.	Nicola Wiebe	Brot für die Welt	Germany
8.	Noel Colina	Asia Monitor Resource Centre (AMRC) and Global Network Asia	Hong Kong
9.	Sylvia Beales Gelber	Africa Platform for Social Protection (APSP)	Kenya
10.	Moussa Charafeddine	Friends of the Disabled Association (FDA)	Lebanon
11.	Tom Johannesen	International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)	Norway
12.	GVD. Tilakasiri	Free Trade Union Development Center (FTUDC)	Sri Lanka
13.	Klaus Kühne	International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)	Switzerland
14.	Odile Frank	International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)	Switzerland
15.	Cyndi Araujo	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) – Geneva	Switzerland
16.	Stefanie Olbertz	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) – Geneva	Switzerland
17.	Florian Juergens	HelpAge International	UK
18.	Winifred Doherty	Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd	United States
19.	Barry Herman	Social Justice in Global Development	United States
20.	Roberto Bissio	Social Watch	Uruguay
21.	Ana Zeballos	Secretariat	Uruguay

	Individual Members		Country
22.	Cäcilie Schildberg		Germany
23.	Michael Cichon		Germany
24.	Daniel Horn		UK
	Special Invitees		Country
25.	Aura Sevilla		Philippines
26.	Suzi Gao	<i>(Reporting)</i>	Switzerland