

Comments to IDA20 draft Deputies Report – Social Protection

26 November, 2021

Prepared by the Global Coalition on Social Protection Floors ad hoc group on IDA20, whose members represent Act Church of Sweden, Action Contre la Faim - France (ACF - France), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Oxfam International, Save the Children, and the We Social Movements (WSM).

I. General

The Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF) reiterates the message and detailed proposals that were presented in an [earlier document](#): IDA20 should support countries' efforts to implement social protection floors, rather than targeted social safety nets.

Having analysed the Report from the Executive Directors of the International Development Association (IDA) to the Board of Governors, we regret to see that none of our suggestions are reflected in the policy commitments nor in the results measurement system. While “progressive universalism” is mentioned in the narrative text of the report, the policy commitments and the results measurement system regarding social protection, which are the elements to which IDA will be held accountable, have remained unchanged.

Additionally, the report provides no definition of the concept of “progressive universalism”, nor any explanation of how universal social protection can be reached other than through social protection floors.

We therefore find that the World Bank (WB) is not truly committing to the effective realization of the human right to social protection, through the establishment of universal social protection floors.

Social protection floors are a set of universal guarantees including access to essential health care and basic income security for children (providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services, including for children with disabilities), persons in active age (in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability) and older persons.

In the International Labour Organization's (ILO) recommendation 202 on national floors of social protection, SDG target 1.3 on social protection systems, and 5.4 on gender equality, all countries have agreed to implement social protection systems, including floors. After COVID-19 has stressed the importance of social protection and the urgency of achieving universal social protection, including floors, IDA-20 should adopt specific and bold commitments toward this end.

II. Detailed comments on the narrative text

A. Human capital special theme

Para 88

The GCSPF acknowledges the mention of “broader goal of ensuring universal access” and welcomes the reference to ILO 202 and Convention 102 (footnote 83). We do challenge, however, the claim that the IDA approach of “progressive universalism” is in line with ILO202.

“Progressive realization” is of course mentioned in ILO202, but it can be pursued in many different ways, such as gradually changing the age limits for child benefits or old age pensions. “Targeting” is nowhere mentioned in the ILO202, while it stresses the “universality of protection”, by referencing “all residents and children”.

Furthermore, the report fails to give any reference to the concept of “progressive universalism”. Any use of such a concept should take the newly adopted definition of universal social protection as its starting point: “Universal social protection entails actions and measures to realize the human right to social security by progressively building and maintaining nationally appropriate social protection systems, so that **everyone has access to** comprehensive, adequate and sustainable protection over the life cycle, in line with ILO standards”.¹

In line with the definition above, and from an empirical perspective, we challenge the claim that it is possible to “ensure that all those who need social protection can access it when they need it” through a targeted system rather than social protection floors. Poverty targeted safety nets reliant on proxy-means testing, [social registries](#), and similar approaches, will inevitably exclude many people who need, and have the right to protection².

Finally, references should be made to the [International Labour Conference’s \(ILC\) framework for action](#), just as other international norms are referred to in other parts of the Human Capital Theme - see for example Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (box 3.6), International Health Regulations (para 85) and Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage (para 85).

Suggestion: Insert the following in the first sentence in para 88: Building on the robust progress in IDA19, and in line with the framework for action towards universal social protection systems adopted by the ILC³, IDA20 will support further incorporating adaptive social protection into national systems to reduce the risks of a range of shocks and provide a platform for the delivery of a range of other services to hard-to-reach individuals and groups.

Para 92

We regret to see that the ILO is not explicitly mentioned along with other international institutions that IDA is partnering with. It is our view that this omission is indicative of the lack of integration by the WB of the ILO’s standards and principles, in developing social protection policies and programs. Indeed, ILO is a standard setting organisation on social protection, whose standards and guidance should guide IDA’s interventions.

¹ Record of proceedings, International Labour Conference – 109th Session, 2021 [wcms_804457.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#)

² S. Kidd, D. Athias ; Development Pathways / Act Church of Sweden (2020). [Hit and Miss: An assessment of targeting effectiveness in social protection.](#)

³ Record of proceedings, International Labour Conference – 109th Session, 2021 [wcms_804457.pdf \(ilo.org\)](#)

Additionally, the ILO and the WB already collaborate in both USP2030 and SPIAC-B, both fora supposed to foster better coordination and harmonization in the development of social protection policies and programs across the globe.

Finally, the second phase of ILO Global Flagship Programme “Building Social Protection Floors for All”, is starting now and will operate in 50 countries, many of which IDA countries. There is a great potential to increase collaboration so that IDA20’s investments in social protection complement, and are coordinated with, the capacity building initiatives implemented in IDA countries through the Flagship Programme. Strengthening partnerships with all stakeholders is an important strategy in the ILO programme (see the [strategy document](#) and report of a recent [meeting with development partners](#)).

Support for the suggestions above can be found in para 33: “At global, regional, and country levels, IDA partners with countries and institutions to **respond to client needs in a coordinated and effective manner**. This includes collaboration with multilateral, bilateral and domestic partners, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other MDBs, the **United Nations (UN) and its agencies**, the European Commission, bilateral partners, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and the private sector.”

B. Gender and Development special theme

Para 119

Adaptive social protection, based on the principle of targeting, as currently implemented by the WB, cannot help push forward a transformative change to gender inequalities. These programs are unfortunately too often too small, only temporary and conditioned to targeting criteria that creates unnecessary exclusions. Narrowly targeted ASP that is reliant on proxy-means testing and similar approaches, excludes many women who need, and have the right to, protection.

In what the WB see as a “progressive” vision of universality, it attempts to create super-efficient adaptive systems in lieu of social protection floors. However, gender integrated social protection floors would be effectively supporting gender equality by challenging gender norms; including through the recognition, redistribution and reduction of unpaid care work.

Adaptive social protection programs, as currently implemented by the WB, disregard the administrative costs of these systems and the numerous pitfalls of narrow targeting methods. Like all systems based on poverty targeting, they can further divert time and resources away from the realization of the human right to social protection and gender equality.

Para 120

We regret to see that the WB’s approach in IDA20, by endorsing the WB’s Gender Strategy, only considers gender equality through the lens of access to the labor market and economic empowerment, disregarding the need for a shift in unequal gender norms, transformative of gender inequalities. Indeed, the four pillars of the strategy fail to address the need, not only for a reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work hampering women’s equal access to employment and economic empowerment, but also for a recognition of care work as a crucial tool for human development.

In that sense, universal social protection floors, can foster a shift in unequal gender norms by recognizing the value of unpaid care work, while reducing and redistributing it between men and women, and women and States (notably through universal health care).

Para 123

The GCSPF welcomes the emphasis put on childcare services as a means to challenge the gender and economic inequalities through women's access to the labor market. Childcare and social care services, as well as social protection floors, are indeed key tools to help recognize, reduce and redistribute care work, from poor households, and specifically poor women, to the State, and hence favor their participation to the labor force.

However, we regret that the "Gender and development special theme" does not mention universality of these services. While the policy commitment related to child care mentions "quality" and "affordability" of the services, it also specifies that these will be intended for "low-income parents". While low-income parents are obviously the ones most in need of these services, the ways in which the World Bank will determine which parents' incomes are low enough to benefit from the service is artificial in countries where most of the population is poor (see above our comments regarding the targeting approach).

In addition, the approach of the WB regarding childcare is solely based on the need for women to access the labor market. It disregards the ways in which childcare can help challenge gender norms by recognizing the value of, and the right to care in our societies. Children benefiting from care services have a right to quality and affordable services as a mean to foster their human development, while these same services can help reduce and redistribute unpaid care work. Additionally, care workers, a majority of whom are women, would benefit from better working conditions aligned with the recognition of the value of care services.

III. Comments on Policy commitments and RMS

A. *Human capital special theme*

Policy Commitment 1: we welcome the emphasis put on HSS and UHC as overarching goals. However, we regret to see that no mention is made of the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of health services

Policy commitments 3, 4 and 8: we regret to see that no substantive changes have been made to the policy commitments regarding SP.

Policy commitment 6: we reiterate our support to the universal view adopted in this policy commitment.

RMS: we regret to see that the RMS does not mention universals social protection floors, contrary to the GCSPF's recommendations.

B. *Gender and development special theme*

Policy commitments 2 and 3: we regret to see that no substantive changes have been made to the previous version, however we welcome the increase of 3à to 35 IDA countries in PC2

RMS: we regret to see that the RMS does not mention childcare services, contrary to the GCSPF's recommendations.