



Report of the Side Event entitled

“Social Protection Floors as Key Tools for Eradicating Poverty: Best Practices and Strategies for the Future”

Organized in parallel of the 56th Session of the Commission for Social Development

on February 2, 2018 by the International Movement ATD Fourth World in partnership with the Global Coalition on Social Protection Floors, Bread for the World, the International Trade Union Confederation and the NGO Committee on Social Development

Officially recognized in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development under the SDG 1, Target 1.3, **human rights-based social protection systems, including floors, is a key strategy to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, and combat social exclusion.** Social Protection Floors (SPFs) are nationally defined basic levels of income security in the form of various social transfers as well as universal access to essential services such as health care. When well-designed and adapted to the needs of the people who are furthest behind, **social protection floors can help break the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty.**

This side event brought together perspectives from a variety of development stakeholders, including grassroots organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, trade unions, Member States, and international organizations. The speakers also discussed with the audience the need to extend social protection coverage to all people — **including those left furthest behind** — through a rights-based approach that integrates strategies to be developed with existing national and international standards.

MODERATOR:

Peter Bakvis, Director, International Trade Union Confederation, ITUC/Global Unions, Washington Office

SPEAKERS:

Régis De Muylder, Project Coordinator, International Movement ATD Fourth World in Haiti;

Isabel Ortiz, Director, Social Protection Department, International Labour Office;

Hanta Fida Cyrille Klein, Counselor, Permanent Mission of Madagascar to the United Nations;

Héctor Cárdenas, Minister of Social Action Secretariat (Ministry of Social Affairs), Government of Paraguay



PROCEEDINGS:

The Moderator opened the side-event entitled “**Social Protection Floors as Key Tools for Eradicating Poverty: Best Practices and Strategies for the Future**” with a reminder that the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors was created in 2012, together with a framework for states to implement human-rights based social protection floors (SPFs) and systems. The Coalition’s working group focuses on four main issues- (1) making surveys of national and regional platforms that aim to support the implementation of SPFs, (2) examining options of financing SPFs, (3) monitoring the implementation of SPFs, and (4) advocating for an international instrument and UN resolution on social protection floors. As a member organization of the coalition, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) fosters participation of NGOS in national dialogues on implementing and advocating for SPFs at the international agenda.

How can social protection floors be used as tools for eradicating poverty?

Régis de Muylder, a doctor and Volunteer Corps Member in the International Movement ATD Fourth World shared the ways in which he, with his team and a Haitian NGO, *Service Œcuménique d’Entraide* (SOE), developed a **holistic approach** towards eradicating poverty by guaranteeing access to primary healthcare for the most vulnerable families through a micro-insurance system. The project prioritizes **the participation of the poorest families** through an integrative approach that includes a long-term commitment to build knowledge in the community; a grassroots project that emphasizes education, early childhood well-being, and health promotion; and recruitment and training of community health workers from the community itself. **At a cost of only \$11.50 per person a year, 918 families received healthcare in 2016.**

An evaluation of this project demonstrated that this healthcare system has virtually eliminated impoverishment from medical expenses and the need for individuals to forgo essential care for economic reasons. It has improved overall health outcomes of the families covered in comparison to the general population in the metropolitan area.

Dr. Muylder’s knowledge, based on his experience as a doctor, practitioner, and ATD Fourth World Volunteer Corps member, effectively informed the side event discussion of how the furthest behind could be reached through a grassroots approach that puts the poorest at the center. His suggestions for best practices and strategies moving forward include prioritizing universal primary health care; increasing the contribution of the State to health-care expenditure; and fostering a multidimensional approach that aims to reinforce the capacity of the community.



Isabel Ortiz as the Director of the Social Protection Department of the ILO, provided an overview of social protection floors and addressed the financial obstacles to their implementation. Social Protection Floors are defined as a series of universal guarantees for all citizens, across the life cycle, including support for people with disabilities and old-age pensions. These are a universal right for all, including those living in poverty. Although the ILO mandate on social protection floors has been approved, coverage gaps are massive.

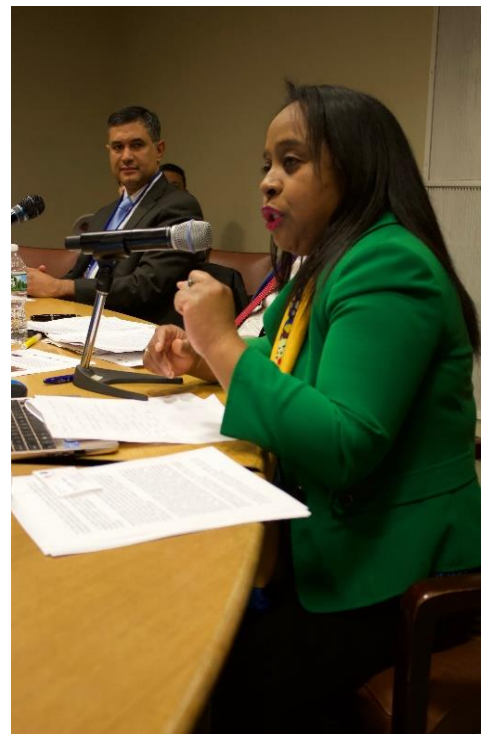
Only 45% of the population has access to the minimum of one social protection guarantee.

The ILO has created a number of tools, including the SPF calculator, to demonstrate the fiscal space, in even the poorest countries, available for developing social protection floors. **Financing Social Protection Floor would only cost between 1 to 9% of GDP.** The ILO encourages all to contribute to open, national dialogues on this topic in each country.



Hanta Fida Cyrille Klein, Counselor at the Permanent Mission of Madagascar, emphasized the necessity of a **human-rights approach** to social protection systems, including floors, in order to cover the needs of the poorest. Madagascar itself implements social protection floors to eradicate poverty, **particularly in its most rural areas.** The government prioritizes SPF growth through both its ministry and national office for social protection, which recently adopted a social protection law related to its non-contributory scheme for the elderly.

The government's overall objectives are to reduce by 50% those living in extreme poverty and to provide at least half of the most vulnerable population with an effective social protection floor by 2030. Its four main strategies towards achieving this are: to increase basic income of the poorest populations; to improve access to basic social services including health care; to promote and protect the fundamental human rights of the most vulnerable; and to ensure progressive implementation of their non-contributory pension scheme for the elderly.



Madagascar has advocated the adoption of a **UN Resolution** as a key step forward in raising the importance of Social Protection as a human right.

Héctor Cárdenas, Minister of Social Action Secretariat of the Government of Paraguay, spoke more specifically about the ways in which Paraguay has prioritized **inclusion of indigenous people** in different social programs.

One of their most emblematic social programs that has gained national coverage, is the Cash Transfer Program called “Tekopora.” The objective of this program is to improve the quality of life of the Indigenous population by promoting their rights to food, health, and education. This is accomplished through increasing the use of basic services and strengthening social networks in order to

break the intergenerational transmission of poverty. This program has made enormous progress by incorporating families of indigenous communities, increasing coverage from 3% in 2013 to more than 95% at the end of 2017. The goal is to reach 100% of the population in this year. Thanks to this inclusion, there is a decrease in family uprooting, and improvements in food security and school retention. The recognition and implementation of the **right to Prior, Free, and Informed Consultation** and for the indigenous communities to be seen as rights holders, is essential for their specific inclusion to the Social Protection Program.



Discussion with the audience: Following these interventions, further discussion between the speakers and participants focused on **initiating, financing, and scaling up social protection programs**

- **Initiating social protection program.** It was asked how such programs could be initiated with limited data and resources. Dr. Regis De Muylder explained that very little data had been available when he began his healthcare program in Haiti. However, through a firm commitment to working directly with the community, he was able to build up an understanding of the people’s health status through dialogue and an ongoing presence within the community.
- **Scaling up smaller social protection programs to the entire country.** It was agreed that scaling up cannot be accomplished without political will, collaboration with public institutions, and partnerships with local organizations
- **Financing and ensuring sustainability of social protection programs:** public sector organizations must commit to financing floors that target the most vulnerable. Collaboration and creativity are necessary in developing methods of expanding fiscal space for social protection.

To conclude, and as highlighted by the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, it is crucial to acknowledge the interdependence of the right to social protection with other economic, social and cultural rights if we are to eradicate poverty by 2030. As the side-event showed, the right to social protection is connected to the right to health, to education, decent work, housing, water and sanitation but also the right to participation, to consultation, and to the rule of law. The same interdependence lies in the 2030 Agenda. Only **a holistic and integrated approach**, based on the indivisibility of human rights, will enable the international community to fully achieve the Objectives of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.