

## Financing for development in the era of COVID-19 and beyond

### Cluster 2: socio-economic response: social protection, gender, youth, health, education, and human rights

#### Consultation with Stakeholders

11 March, 2021; 8:00– 10:15 am EST

#### Universal Social Protection

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion. I am really pleased to speak on behalf of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF). We are a global network of civil society organizations, trade unions and think tanks committed to the realisation of ILO-Recommendation 202 on social protection floors.

**We are calling for the implementation of the four Essential Elements of the ILO Recommendation 202, and the establishment of a [Global Fund for Social Protection](#)<sup>2</sup> as a key strategy to make this happen.**

Social protection is a universal human right that reduces and prevents poverty during the life cycle, demonstrated to have a direct and positive impact on health, food security, and inequality. It is therefore an important instrument to distribute wealth and to realise gender equality as well as to achieve more inclusive and socially cohesive societies, a key purpose of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The COVID-19 pandemic is showing us the urgency for universal social protection systems to protect people, and in particular the most vulnerable. While countries may have expanded social protection programmes on a short term basis many people are still falling through the net, among them undocumented informal workers, migrants, homeless, refugees.

Even though high income countries have put in place social protection responses these measures are very uneven between countries and in many cases, merely temporary.

An Oxfam study of emergency responses between April and September 2020 in 126 low and middle income countries shows that:

- In 81% of the countries, emergency responses cover less than half their population.

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<sup>1</sup> This is based in the internal document “Q&A on the Global Fund for Social Protection” prepared by the GCSPF working group for a Global Fund for Social Protection.

<sup>2</sup> A Global Financing Mechanism for Social Protection. A proposal for the decade of action on the Sustainable Development Goals 2020-2030, April 2020, <http://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/2020/04/a-global-financing-mechanism-for-social-protection/>

- In 29% of the countries, fewer than one in 10 people have been protected as workers in the informal sector.
- Benefits provided to families are short-lived and too low to pay even for basic needs.
- In low- and middle-income countries average investment has been just 0.46% of GDP, with only two of these countries reaching 2% ("[Shelter from the storm](#)", Oxfam).
- Most programmes recently set up are not long term
- 2.7 billion people still have absolutely no access to social protection
- The financing gap for low-income countries is about 78 billion USD, about half of total official development assistance provided in 2019 by OECD countries

The Corona crisis urges strengthened international solidarity, global cooperation and pooled funding to ensure investment in and development of inexistent or underdeveloped social protection systems in low-income countries, underpinned by strengthened tax capacity and international regulation to reduce tax evasion and avoidance.

There is political momentum for a Global Fund to support countries with financial and other resources - according to the financial capacity of states and disbursed according to social needs. Excellent financial management, transparency and accountability of the Fund, together with effective engagement of social partners, civil society organisations is essential. Decisions regarding design and implementation of social protection programmes to be supported by the Fund have to be taken by the government of the recipient country, based on national dialogues with social partners and civil society with support by the UN and its specialised agencies.

We believe the Fund is necessary to fulfil the right of millions to have social protection in line with International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as well as international labour standards and to achieve SDG goal 1 target 3.

Social Protection is a human right, as yet unrealised. The gap is still large. The time is right for the Fund, the time is now.

Thank you very much.