

► International symposium on improving synergies between social protection and public finance management

**Tuesday 27 and Wednesday 28 June 2023, 1:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
CEST, ILO Geneva & online**

Background Information

Launched in October 2019, the European Union (EU)-funded Programme on [Improving synergies between social protection and public finance management](#) (SP&PFM Programme) has been supporting countries in their efforts towards achieving universal social protection. The Programme is jointly implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF), in collaboration with EU Delegations and stakeholders in each country.

The SP&PFM Programme, as an integral part of the ILO’s Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All, has been providing technical support to 24 partner countries to enhance the design and implementation of their social protection systems, ensuring they are gender-responsive, disability-inclusive and shock-responsive. The Programme has contributed to strengthen the sustainability of social protection financing through strong advocacy for increased fiscal space for social protection and improved public finance management. The Programme has also played a crucial role in supporting the social protection related COVID-19 responses in 17 partner countries and building more resilient and responsive social protection systems. Examples include the shock-responsive family package in Cambodia, the internally displaced persons programme in Ethiopia, and the unemployment protection sectoral responses in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The SP&PFM Programme achieved several milestones in supporting partner countries in improving their social protection systems. The Programme assisted in the adoption of national social protection policies and laws (Cambodia, Nepal, Senegal and Togo), and the introduction and improvement of schemes and programmes for people with disabilities (Cambodia, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Senegal), adolescent girls (Uganda), and the unemployed (Bangladesh, Ecuador, Peru, Sri Lanka). Working with employers’ and workers’ organizations, and the civil society, the Programme contributed to the extension of coverage of social security schemes, including to workers in the informal

economy (Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Nepal, Paraguay, Senegal, Togo, and Uganda). The Programme also contributed to improving the digitalisation of delivery and identification mechanisms through notably national single registries (Nigeria, Senegal), improving management systems of social insurance institutions, including social health insurance (Cabo Verde, Kenya, Nepal, Togo, Zambia), introducing digital innovations for the administration of the systems (Burkina Faso, Nepal), and consolidating statistics and monitoring and evaluation frameworks in almost all countries.

Additionally, the Programme strengthened the link between social protection and public finance management by enhancing the economic case for investing in social protection, conducting gender-responsive social protection expenditure reviews, improving social budgeting and programme-based and performance-based budgets, analysing fiscal space and assessing financing options, conducting costing and actuarial valuations for extending coverage, and capacity building on public finance management for social protection, including for social partners and civil society. Lastly, the Programme acted as a catalyser for advancing the research agenda on social protection and public finance management, which supported advocacy efforts for increased and better investment in social protection.

Objectives

The international symposium proposes to disseminate and exchange on the different experiences, practices and innovations of the Programme by:

- taking stock of the results achieved and impact of the SP&PFM Programme;
- showcasing and learning from the partner countries' experiences in extending social protection to all, and ensuring its sustainable financing and improved public finance management for social protection; special attention will be given to innovative practices and digital transformations in strengthening gender-responsive and disability inclusive social protection;
- reviewing strategies for building social protection systems that are more resilient to future shocks, environmental changes and economic and digital transformations;
- sharing the findings and innovations of the research, methodologies and tools developed through the Programme and its country interventions (e.g. multiplier effect study, Inter-agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) tool on financing, methodology for assessing public finance management of social protection, digital social protection);
- moving forward the agenda on universal social protection, its financing and public finance management, including through the [Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals \(USP2030\)](#), the [Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All](#), the [Global Accelerator on](#)

[Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions](#) as well as the link with the [Global Gateway of the EU](#).

Invited audience

Ministries of Finance, Ministries in charge of social protection, and public institutions, employers' and workers' organizations, members of the GCSPF, the European Commission and EU Delegations of the partner countries, as well as the experts of the Advisory Board of the SP&PFM Programme will be directly invited to this event. In addition, other UN Member States, International Organization of Employers (IOE), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), civil society organisations, UN agencies, International Financial Institutions, other development partners, regional integration communities/organisations, and academia, who either financially or technically contribute to and advocate for universal social protection will also be invited to join the event on-line, as observers.

Provisional Agenda

Tuesday 27 June 2023, 1.30 pm to 5.30 pm CEST

Opening panel

Panel 1: Extending social protection for all

The session will showcase innovative practices and achievements in extending social protection, including workers of the informal economy, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that social protection systems enhance gender equality and are inclusive of people with disabilities. Employers' and workers' organisations, as well as civil society, play an important role in advocating and implementing measures for the extension of social protection, for instance among small- and medium-sized enterprises, informal economy workers and other vulnerable groups. The presentation will also highlight the financing and digital strategies for supporting such extension.

Panel 2: Advocating for investing more and better in social protection

The session will have a focus on the advocacy and analytical work undertaken by the SP&PFM Programme to pledge for increased investments in social protection, showcasing the results of the multiplier effect study, discussing options for creating fiscal space, and advocating for investments aligned with international social protection principles. The sessions will also highlight the difficulties countries face in mobilizing additional domestic resources, especially in a post-COVID-19 situation characterised by multiple food, energy and economic crisis, growing debt burdens and austerity context.

Wednesday, 28 June 2023, 1.30 pm to 5.30 pm CEST

Panel 3: Improving public finance management for social protection

The COVID-19 crisis, and the unprecedented expansion of social protection benefits in response to it, has provided many lessons that will help countries improve the public finance management rules and procedures of the social protection budgets, including through the digitalisation of the processes. A key question is to what extent those reforms or digital adaptations introduced during the COVID-19 period have remained in place or shaped more effective public finance management rules and procedures.

Panel 4: Strengthening social protection systems and digitalization to prepare for future crisis and just transitions

This panel will allow representatives of governments, employers and workers' organisations, and civil society of partner countries to highlight the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 crisis and to discuss integrated policy approaches and digital transformations of social protection, including innovative delivery mechanisms that will prepare social protection systems for future crises. Digital innovations in particular are key to preparing social protection systems for future crises, environmental transition, and support economic and societal transformations, taking into consideration the need to close coverage and financing gaps, and to improve public finance management for social protection. The discussion will give due attention to gender inequality as women tend to be more adversely affected by crises than men, largely due to their labour market disadvantages and disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work.

Panel 5: Joining forces to continue for universal and sustainable social protection

This panel will allow keynote speakers, development partners, EU, ILO, UNICEF and GCSPF to commit to continue joining forces for achieving universal social protection as a key instrument for reducing inequalities and facilitating just transitions, including through the Global Gateway of the EU, the Digital Convergence Initiative, and other EU programmes, as well as the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions.

Closing remarks and way forward

Notes

It will also be possible to attend the international symposium online via Zoom. The link will be sent to participants once they accept the invitation.

French, English, and Spanish interpretation will be available.