

Civil Society Call for a Global Fund for Social Protection to build a better common future

This is an updated version of the Call, which has been endorsed by more than 200 civil society organizations in September 2020. The revision is made in light of new political developments through April 2026.

We, civil society and faith-based organizations, trade unions and members of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, noting the significant challenges in the fight against poverty, exclusion and inequalities, call on governments worldwide to ensure – through national and global justice and solidarity – that national social protection floors are guaranteed and in place in all countries through sustainable funding, made available to all people, with the support of a **Global Fund for Social Protection** (or another appropriately named international financing mechanism that would pursue similar objectives). National floors of social protection are vital to leave no one behind. They ensure universal access to essential health care and basic income security across the life course. Social protection is a human right and an essential lever to realise the sustainable development goals and their targets (specifically SDGs 1.3, 3.8, 5.4, 8.5 and 10.4). It underpins the global commitment to end poverty and reduce inequalities for all people within and between countries (SDGs 1 and 10).

We recall that

- The member states of the United Nations have long agreed on the fundamental human rights of all people to social protection and to health;¹
- Despite this, only 52,4 per cent of the world's population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit; in Africa this is only 19,1 per cent;²
- Social protection systems are proven direct and fast-acting mechanisms that reduce and prevent poverty, help counter inequality (particularly gender inequality), and can unleash the creativity and productive capacity of people by providing a basic level of security that ensures dignity and access to all essential goods and public services;
- Social protection is a vital investment in socio-economic development and supports resilience to climate disasters, conflict, economic and other humanitarian crises;
- Social protection systems offer highly effective safeguards against the social and economic fallout of health and socio-economic crises;
- In times of crisis - as conflicts and wars, or disasters caused by climate change - investments in social protection have a strong economic stabilizer effect and thus contribute to long term, sustainable and inclusive economic growth;
- Multiple studies have shown that ensuring a basic level of social protection for all is affordable for most countries and entirely achievable through global justice and the solidarity within the international community.

¹ As enshrined, for example, in articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), articles 9 and 12 of the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), ILO Convention 102 (1952) and Recommendation 202 (2012) as well as other instruments and confirmed by the Sustainable Development Goals (2015).

² ILO (2026), World Social Protection Data Dashboards, <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=19>

We recognize, that

- Many national governments develop, finance, implement and monitor social protection floors, with the participation and monitoring of civil society, trade unions and informal worker organizations.
- Generally and principally the financing of social protection systems must fall to national budgets.

There are, nevertheless, a few countries where technical support for the setting-up of national social protection floors and co-financing from the international community are required due to multiple factors, including high socio-economic vulnerability and persistent low levels of national revenue. Although studies show that social protection floors can be created at relatively low cost³, some low-income countries face these financing gaps and, even if they strengthen the mobilisation of domestic resources, are dependent on temporary international co-financing of the minimum social standards;

- Both the UN Secretary General⁴ and the International Labour Conference⁵ have expressed their support for the establishment of a new international financing mechanism such as a Global Fund for Social Protection;
- The urgent need for establishing a Global Fund for Social Protection has recently been emphasized again by the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC);⁶
- The UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions⁷ is an encouraging first step towards a better coordination of the international support for national social protection floors, although it still has too few participating countries and lacks sufficient financial resources;
- In the outcome document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (the so-called Sevilla Commitment) the international community pointed out that it will provide support to developing countries that aim to increase social protection coverage.⁸ A similar demand is also stated in the Doha Political Declaration of the “Second World Summit for Social Development”.⁹

³ For more details on the basis for the calculation of the concrete financial resources required, see Cattaneo et al. (2024). Financing gap for universal social protection: Global, regional and national estimates and strategies for creating fiscal space; Kidd et al. (2025), Universal Social Security Is Feasible in Low-Income Countries: A Critical Review of the ILO’s Calculations on the Cost of Bridging the Gap; ILO (2025), The ILO financing gap estimates. A response to Kidd et al. (2025); Kidd / Athias (2025), Continuing the debate: a response to the ILO’s defence of their social security financing estimates; Kidd et al. (2025), Beyond the unaffordability myth: a pragmatic approach to universal social security; see also <https://www.developmentpathways.co.uk/home/universal-social-security-costing-tool/>.

⁴ UN (2021), Our Common Agenda, Report of the Secretary-General, 10 September 2021, p. 28.

⁵ International Labour Conference – 109th Session (2021), Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social protection (social security), 19 June 2021, para. 21 c; see also Yeates et al (2023), A global fund for social protection. Lessons from the diverse experiences of global health, agriculture and climate funds, ILO Working Paper 97.

⁶ UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights & ITUC (2025), Urgent Call for a Global Fund for Social Protection and Strengthened International Commitments at FfD4. See in this context also Watkins et al. (2025), Building Equitable Social Protection Systems for a Sustainable Development Goal Recovery: The Case for a Global ‘Virtual Financing’ Mechanism.

⁷ <https://www.unglobalaccelerator.org/>.

⁸ UN Doc. A/CONF.227/2025/L.1, para. 27 i.

⁹ UN Doc. A/RES/80/5, para. 29 g.

We call on all governments

- **To create a Global Fund for Social Protection**, based on the principle of global solidarity, to support countries to design, implement and, in specific cases, provide temporary co-financing for national social protection floors as described in International Labour Organization (ILO) Recommendation 202. The mandate of the Financing Mechanism would be to:
 - Support the introduction and full implementation of national social protection floors with the effective participation of social partners, organisations representing people of all ages, including women, people with disabilities, older persons, minorities, and those living in poverty, in their design, implementation and monitoring;
 - Ensure that national social protection floors are embedded in national legislation and programmes with budget provision to provide for sustainability and reach, and to support their expansion in the event of shocks that affect entire communities;
 - Co-finance – on a transitional basis – the technical and financial costs of setting up social protection floors in low-income countries where such transfers would otherwise require a prohibitively high share of the country’s total tax revenue;
 - Support the strengthening of domestic resource mobilisation, including strengthened international tax cooperation under the umbrella of the UN, to underpin the sustainability of national social protection systems;
 - Offer additional support for specific shock-responsive social protection interventions in countries when required.

We envisage, that

- The Global Fund for Social Protection
 - Should be integrated into the UN system, with a central role for the ILO;
 - Would build on existing financing and coordination mechanisms;
 - Could be a component of or a complement to the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection and Just Transitions¹⁰;
 - Should be well coordinated with other global financial instruments (e.g. the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage) whose resources are partly used for social protection programmes;
 - Should be governed by a board, representative of both recipient and donor states, civil society organizations, organizations of employers and workers (including informal workers) in accordance with ILO Recommendations Nos. 202 and 204 (the governance structure of the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection and Just Transitions could serve as a model for this);
 - Should be guided by the international standards of the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation to improve the quality, impact and effectiveness of development cooperation, as agreed in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,¹¹ notably the respect for country ownership and the necessary support for national systems;
 - Should operate under the principles of accountability, transparency and participation;

¹⁰ See above, Fn. 7.

¹¹ UN, Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (2015), para.58.

- Should be open to financing through various sources which can include
 - Official development aid (ODA) resources, and development finance facilities; multilateral grants and funds for emergency response;
 - Specifically earmarked sources, such as national, regional or global financial transaction taxes (FTT), global corporate taxes, taxes on extreme wealth, arms trade taxes, climate damages taxes, windfall profits taxes, air ticket solidarity levies and maritime shipping levies;
 - Rechannelling of Special Drawing Rights;
 - Debt-for-social-protection swaps.¹²
- UN organizations, and development cooperation organizations, including civil society active in the countries of focus will provide technical country support. The technical support facility established under the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions can be a good starting point.

We therefore

- **Call for the establishment of a Global Fund for Social Protection (or another appropriately named international financing mechanism with similar objectives) to help end avoidable human suffering, poverty, extreme inequality, ill-health and avoidable deaths associated with the current and future crises,**
- **Invite all stakeholders to invest urgently in the development and universal roll out of national social protection floors, which will address the human right of all people in all countries to social protection, and is key to SDG achievement, through the principle of national and global solidarity.**

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¹² For the different financing options, see, among others, de Schutter (2025), Financing social protection floors, https://www.srpoverity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Financing-social-protection-floors_Olivier-De-Schutter_20-Jan-25.pdf.