

Forum:	General Assembly 3 (SOCHUM II)
Issue:	Improving Social Protection Systems to Reduce Poverty (SDG 1)
Chair:	Audrey Hsieh (Deputy Chair) & Jeffrey Huang (Deputy Chair)

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in article 22, states that “everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security”. However, there are still 4 billion people lacking access to social protection. With 1 in 10 people in the world living in poverty, actions to protect vulnerable people in poverty are crucial and urgent. One effective way of tackling this issue is through social protection systems, yet the ideal goal of providing efficient and comprehensive social protection services still remains a challenge faced by numerous nations.

There are several objectives of social protection systems. Short term objectives include emergency or shock relief, which includes finding jobs for the unemployed and doctor visits for the sick. Long term goals generally include social stability, empowerment, or improved lifestyles. One of the main purposes of social protection systems is to alleviate poverty. Through social protection programs regarding income security or employment, economic conditions of families will improve, leading to the overall economic improvement of the country. Countries then can allocate more resources on social protection systems, thus improving family poverty conditions even more. With the eventual decrease in poverty rates, families are likely to invest in children’s education, resulting in better jobs and wages. This creates a virtuous cycle that helps to set countries on the path towards reducing poverty.

Social protection can be categorized into three pillars. The first being labor market programs, which are aimed to promote employment, income security, and overall labor productivity. This can be achieved through the retraining of basic skills, wage subsidization, public works programs, and assistance in job searches. The next type is social assistance, which aims to assist vulnerable groups to improve living standards and meet the social protection floors as set out by the ILO. The final type is social insurance, which is targeted more towards supporting people at risk or with special conditions such as injury, disability, old age, or unemployment.

Definition of Key Terms

Social Protection

A set of policies and programs that are aimed to reduce poverty and social exclusion of those who are poor, vulnerable, marginalized, or dealing with risks. These are typically created and governed by the state, and often seen as an obligation to be provided to citizens.

Social Protection Floor (SPF)

Social protection floors are sets of guarantees and protection that aim towards preventing social exclusion, vulnerability, and alleviating poverty. These guarantees should ensure at minimum access to health care, and basic income security for children, active ages, especially those who are unable to reach and earn sufficient income due to unemployment, disability, sickness, or maternity, and older persons.

Social Exclusion

The process in which individuals are blocked from certain rights, privileges, resources, and goods and services usually a result of being in a state of poverty or unequal power relationships in economic, political, social, and cultural aspects.

Child Poverty

The state of children living with lack of resources, such as shelter, education, nutrition, sanitation, or health services, affecting them not just monetary poverty but causing damage to their physical, mental, social, and emotional development. One in every three children lives in impoverished countries, often resulting in deficits that are difficult to overcome, leading to poor living standards and limits to future opportunities.

Pension

An amount of money paid regularly by the state or a private corporation to a person that no longer works because of old age or ill-health. Pensions typically involve retired elderly, providing them with retirement benefits monthly or biweekly, helping to support a decent and secure lifestyle. Some governments also offer benefits for disabled and ill workers.

Unemployment Insurance

Monetary and income support provided by the state to people that are unemployed, who must meet certain qualifications such as the working conditions set out by the state and must have been unemployed due to no fault of their own.

Health Insurance

A system of insurance administered by the state or private agencies that cover the financial cost of medical, dental, and surgical expenses. Depending on the plan, health insurance may cover multiple aspects of care for the sick and/or injured, with the basics being to subsidize preventive care, such as doctor visits and prescription drugs/medicine.

Cash Transfer Programming (CTP)

Provisions of cash to individuals or households that are at risk of poverty or in situations of emergency or disaster, as a means of humanitarian support. Cash transfer programming is split into two categories, with unconditional CTP, or cash granted without any requirements or obligations, and conditional CTP, where beneficiaries must meet certain criteria, usually behavioral requirements, in order to receive monetary aid.

In-kind Transfer

Non-monetary support and donations in the form of goods, commodities, and services, usually accepted as an addition to financial contributions. An example would be school feeding, which provides free nutritious meals for students in school, aiming to reduce hunger and improve learning performance.

Non-Contributory Social Protection Systems

Non-contributory social protection systems are programs mostly financed through tax or other state revenues, often targeting vulnerable groups. There are also contributory schemes, which are systems that determine benefits based on the contributions made by the beneficiaries. One common example is social insurance, which covers employees through a specific circumstance, such as injury or sickness.

Background Information

History

Social protection system is a fairly recent development. Originating in Europe during the Industrial Revolution, it was pioneered by nations such as Germany and Britain, where social welfare systems were created as a way to improve the harsh lives of the growing working class. During the period of the Great Depression, social protection was used in the U.S. for emergency relief and as a way to cushion the economic impacts. Over time, social protection has evolved and developed to cover ranges and areas not restricted to labor, such as used as instant relief mechanism and the alleviation of poverty.

Challenges

Cost

The cost of social protection systems still remains as one of the largest challenges to numerous Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs), who are considered to be most in need of such services. Many LEDCs lack enough funds and resources to establish comprehensive and high-quality systems to provide social protection. This inability to create an effective social protection system often results in other problems such as limited coverage or lack of information and updates.

Accessibility and coverage

With cost being a critical obstacle in creating complete and organized social protection systems, the lack of resources often results in limited coverage of social protection. Indigenous or minority groups living in remote areas and terrains are often separated from the majority, which makes them less likely to be provided with sufficient social protection programs. In informal economies, high amounts of coverage can be difficult to achieve, with an example being the country of India, which has to provide for 370 million people, in addition to 94% of the labor force in informal sectors.

Lack of information

People's lack of information about social protection lowers the chances of them receiving social protection services. Many vulnerable groups only have a minimum understanding of the operations of social protection systems, making it harder for them to reach out to gain access to these services. Language also acts as an immense barrier, with minority or indigenous groups often being left out as they are unable to understand the common language, enlarging the gap to their access to information.

The lack of information also occurs amongst governmental administration. Many countries lack sufficient information on their population and their economic conditions, so with family conditions constantly fluctuating over time, it is harder for such systems to be updating and adapting to new information. This leads to targeting issues, where governments still regularly subsidize those that don't need support anymore while leaving out the people that are in need of assistance.

Complex Registration

Complex registration of social protection programs might also discourage people from applying, as they are often dissuaded by the amount of time it takes for these programs to take effect. In addition, there are usually many obligations involved when applying for social protection, especially with conditional programs, where beneficiaries must fit requirements set by

the state in order to apply. Because of the complicated procedures in registration, it often takes a long time to file for a position to receive benefits, leading to many dropping out and not receiving the services they are guaranteed.

Appropriate data usage

Information on the population's economic and living conditions is crucial for establishing an extensive social protection system that is accessible to all those in need of it. However, some people are unwilling to cooperate since they are unsure of where and how their data is being used. Yet, even if the data is collected, numerous social protection systems still lack proper methods of collection and organization, which hinders processes in social inclusion.

Types of social protection programs

Universal vs targeting

Universal social protection programs are programs that cover every citizen, believing that all people should have the right to social protection. These programs avoid work requirements or any specific conditions. Advantages include large coverage, which can benefit overall conditions and developments in a country. However, since such programs usually neglect individual efforts and are often seen as overly-costly for many countries, some nations would in turn, support the use of targeted and conditional programs that limits resources to specifically qualified individuals. Although this is more cost-efficient, this method raises questions of who exactly should be the "targeted".

Conditional vs. Unconditional Cash Transfers

Conditional cash transfer programs require people to fit certain conditions in order to receive benefits. On the other hand, unconditional cash transfer programs do not require any criteria or actions for people to become a beneficiary. However, there are still doubts and questions about whether unconditional cash transfers foster over-reliance.

Government roles

Social protection systems are typically governed by the state and seen as an obligation for states to provide to citizens. Therefore, the government and its administration play a key role in the successful conduction and management of the nation's social welfare services. A main aspect of governments in social protection is the identification of beneficiaries. As they already have access to much citizen information, it is much easier for them to assist in the obtainment of data as well as the constant updating of such. Another common responsibility of governments is the delivery of social protection, with them

playing a part in supporting the distribution of resources and overseeing that operations are being carried out effectively as a whole.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Mozambique

With slow economic growth, 46% of Mozambique's population is in poverty. The government's significant measures to improve include the 2007 law on social protection, demonstrating efforts towards establishing basic funding and benefit programs. The Mozambican government has also launched a "Joint Program on Social Protection", cooperating with the UN to reach vulnerable parts of the population. More recently, The Mozambican Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare has signed an agreement to reach a common vision in building up basic social protection for Mozambique, showing the government's increasing priority of poverty reduction.

Tanzania

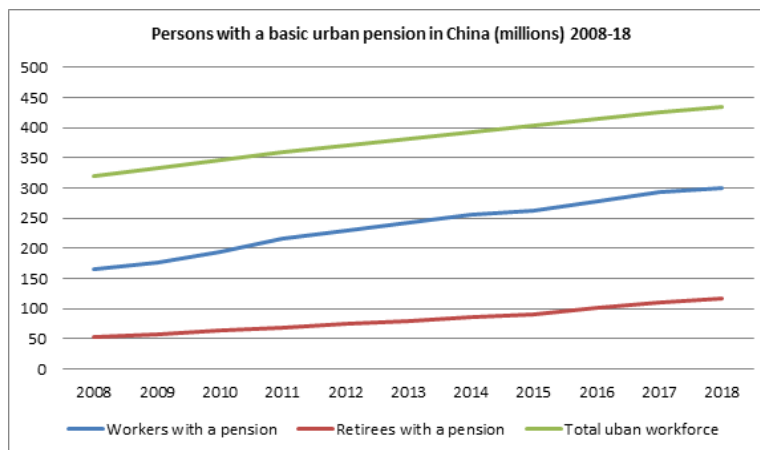
The Tanzanian population is rapidly growing alongside existent issues of poverty, leading to a majority not having access to basic sanitation, transportation, communication, or health services. Yet, less than 1% of citizens have access to social protection. Partnering with various organizations such as the ILO and UNICEF, a Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) has been developed, aiming to support sustainable livelihoods for all. Projects that offer entrepreneurship lessons for adolescents, hold family planning awareness sessions, and educate mothers to ensure infants' adequate nutrition have all been put in place, setting Tanzania on the path towards alleviating poverty.

India

With India's large population and persisting wealth inequality, there are multiple social protection schemes to tackle the issue. One of which is the Public Distribution System (PDS) where food grains are distributed by the government to shops to be sold at highly subsidized prices. This system is accompanied by the National Food Security Act of 2013 which entitles the poorest part of the population to certain amounts of food each month. Another example is the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), which is a state-sponsored health insurance scheme that supports low-income workers or workers from unrecognized sectors. The other large social protection program is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, which aims to secure the right to work to enhance rural areas' livelihood and income security through a guarantee of 100 employment days, though its effectiveness in boosting rural productivity is often doubted.

China

Accounting for over 72% of the global reduction of extreme poverty, China's social protection systems have been successful in reducing poverty in the past three decades. This is mainly due to the Dibao Program, an unconditional cash transfer program used to maintain livelihood security and push families above the poverty line. These targeted families include families with elderly in poverty and low-income families with members that are disabled or with low skills. Despite the accomplishments of the Dibao Program, fluctuations of family conditions from time to time often cause difficulties in the updating of information on household conditions, which can cause targeting error.



Caption #1: # of people with pensions increasing along with an increasing workforce in China.

South Africa

Ever since the transition to democracy in 1994, South Africa has created an advanced and well-resourced social protection system, formed by compelling frameworks in its constitution. The Child Support Grant, one of South Africa's most successful social grants, proved useful when it cushioned the economic blow during the global recession by preventing the increase of child poverty to keep families from falling into extreme poverty. Overall accomplishments of social protection systems in South Africa include the rights to social security and assistance for everyone in need, the increasing coverage of social protection for children and the elderly, and the establishment of unemployment insurance to seasonal farmworkers and domestic workers.

Ethiopia

Social security schemes in Ethiopia consists of two major pension schemes and a health insurance scheme, in addition to the Labor Proclamation requiring employers to provide employment protection. In 2005, the government implemented the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), which is a non-statutory and non-contributory transfer program. This program, which is the second-largest social protection program in Africa, provides more than 8.3 million beneficiaries with regular cash transfer.

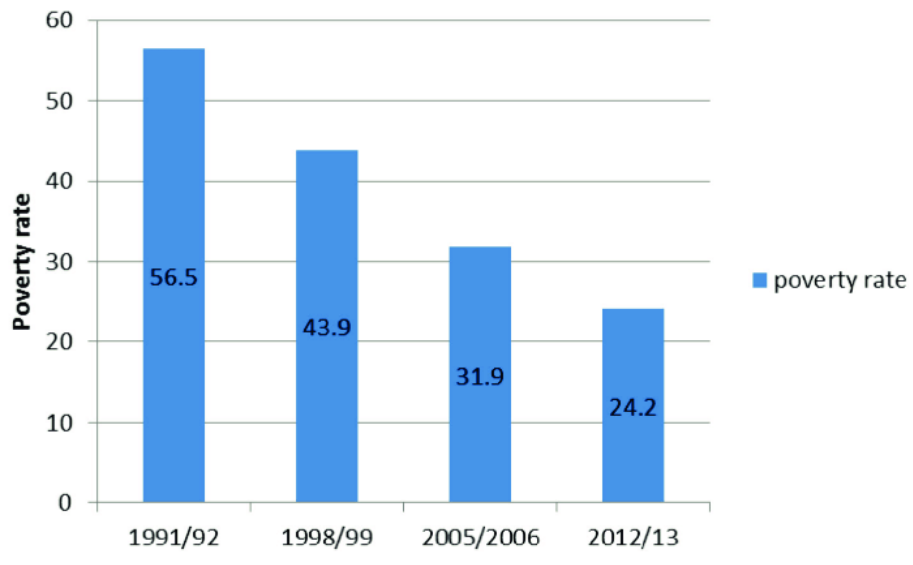
However, legal, economic, political, social, constraints limit enforcement to make a more complete social protection system in Ethiopia. As a result, the National Social Protection Policy was drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and its partners to address these limits for a more comprehensive social protection system.

Indonesia

According to the Indonesian constitution, social security is a right for every citizen, including the entire population and foreign workers. The 2004 National Social Security Law ensures access to income security for old age, injury, or death and health care, which affected an estimated 10 million people in Indonesia. The Family Hope Programme PKH, which is a national conditional cash transfer program that covered more than 6 million people from impoverished households with children or pregnant women. Another social protection program is the Raskin Program, which targets the poorest 30% of the population and provides subsidized rice to them on a monthly basis. However, social protection systems in Indonesia has limited coverage of programs, especially in the eastern part of Indonesia. In addition, there is limited access to social protection and security in informal sectors and many of its social protection programs overlap.

Ghana

With the help of social protection systems and an increased number of beneficiary participation, the poverty rate in Ghana has dropped from 56.5% to 24.2% from 1992 to 2013. The government has implemented the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) as well as the National Health Insurance Act of 2004, both insurance schemes that cover benefits for its residents. In addition, they have partnered with UNICEF in initiating the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program (LEAP), which is a cash transfer program that targets poor families with special needs, providing them with social support.



Caption #2: Decreasing poverty rate in Ghana due to social protection systems.

Dominican Republic

After going through an economic crisis in 2003, the government established a Social Cabinet tasked with monitoring the nation’s social assistance programs. The main target of the project is to increase the effectiveness of such systems through a focus on getting proper documentation for the poorer community who were excluded from services due to a lack of identification. The Social Protection Investment Project conducted a search for undocumented citizens and guided them through the process of obtaining the papers, allowing for the government to update families’ poverty status in order to correctly operate and help those in need.

Burkina Faso

With half the country’s population living under the poverty line, Burkina Faso is one of the most impoverished countries in the world. However, the social protection systems in the country do not yet meet ILO’s universal standards. Thus, UNICEF is working together with the government, beginning with reviewing the current state of social protection in the nation, in hopes of eventually reinstating more effective policies.

Niger

With more than 50% of the population in rural areas living in poverty, Niger is often categorized as an impoverished state. Despite the high poverty rate, Niger lacks sufficient social protection systems to counter poverty. One of the factors of this is the lack of efficiency in allocating and using resources, as

well as the difficulty to meet the needs of the increasing population. The limited government budget and weak coordination also make it hard for Niger to form strong social protection systems.

International Labor Organization (ILO)

The International Labor Organization (ILO) is a UN specialized agency established in 1919, who aims to bring together governments to set labor policies as a way to ensure decent work for everyone. It encourages employment opportunities and enhances social protection, assisting nations to extend social protection services to all members of society. A notable achievement is the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), which establishes worldwide minimum standards of social welfare benefits. The ILO also drafted the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, which guides nations towards establishing social protection floors to extend coverage of social security and to build more comprehensive social protection programs as a whole.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
June 28th, 1952	<p data-bbox="432 1048 1394 1128">ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) adopted.</p> <p data-bbox="432 1167 1453 1451">This convention sets internationally agreed standards on the branches of medical care, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit, old-age benefit, employment injury benefit, family benefit, maternity benefit, invalidity benefit, and survivors' benefit. Member states are required to ratify at least three of the branches, although the eventual goal is to ratify all nine. This convention acted as the flagship of succeeding ILO social security conventions.</p>
March 6-12, 1995	<p data-bbox="432 1559 967 1588">World Summit for Social Development</p> <p data-bbox="432 1626 1453 1805">The summit in Copenhagen aimed at combating poverty, full employment, and social integration, signing an agreement to put the people at the center of countries' developments. The following meeting in June 2000 in Geneva reviewed the summit's achievements.</p>
June 2-18 1998	<p data-bbox="432 1910 1142 1939">86th session of the International Labor Conference</p> <p data-bbox="432 1977 1453 2051">This conference in Geneva discussed employment and jobs as well as child labor. This declaration noted vulnerable groups including migrants and</p>

unemployed workers. It also promotes principles such as the elimination of child labor, discrimination in employment, and compulsory labor.

89th session of the International Labor Conference

June 5-21, 2001

At the conference, participants reaffirmed previous measures to extend social protection measures to all in need and stressed the role of social protection in securing social peace and inclusion. This conference later helped to influence the World Bank in expressing support for social protection services.

The UN Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I) launched

April 2009

Realizing the need for social protection floors, UN Chief Executives Board launched the initiative to oversee UN developments in social protection to provide better assistance and to ensure the effectiveness of social protection systems. This was significant because it brought more partnerships outside the UN to work to promote social protection floors.

ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) adopted

June 14, 2012

Serving as an update to the previous ILO No. 102 Convention, the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation focuses on setting out a basic guideline for functioning and effective social protection systems. With this new convention in place, governments are able to take a more direct and immediate approach towards developing their own systems.

Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)

Believing that everyone in society should have the right to enjoy basic social security but seeing that not all countries have extensive and comprehensive social protection, the ILO established the Social Protection Floors Recommendation. It assists countries in establishing social protection floors as well as applying them to improve and extend social security.

- ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)

Seeing that not all countries provide complete social security branches, the Social Security Convention was established. The convention covers the branches of medical care, sickness

benefit, unemployment benefit, old-age benefit, employment injury benefit, family benefit, maternity benefit, invalidity benefit, and survivors' benefit. Regular evaluations are required, which strengthens social relationships between employers, workers, and governments.

- ECOSOC Promoting Social Integration, 22 July 2010 (**A/RES/2010/12**)

Recognizing the importance of social integration among societies, this resolution stresses ways in which social integration could be achieved, such as productive employment, equally distributed benefits, and social protection systems to eradicate poverty.

- The Future We Want, 27 July 2012 (**A/RES/66/288**)

A follow-up resolution of the declaration The Future We Want, it aimed at sustainable goals of poverty eradication, food security, health, productive employment, as well as promotion of social protection floors for all.

- ESCAP Strengthening social protection systems in Asia and the Pacific, 28 April 2014 (**A/RES/67/8**)

This resolution from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific aimed towards strengthening social protection systems as a way to achieve universal access to social services and minimum social security to all.

Possible Solutions

Set nationally defined standards that are fitted to a nation's own needs. By setting standards, it ensures a basic foundation in which all members of the community can access some form of social protection. It is important to do so as it helps set a guideline to which governments can further develop their own systems yet still adhering to the basic needs of a social protection structure. Nations can start by first reviewing and observing the current status of their social protection systems, which is an essential step in helping to construct practical policies.

Ensure the constant updating and monitoring of data. In many developing countries, people aren't able to access the social protection systems solely due to the fact that they lack the proper identification papers for it. The constant updating of data needs to be enforced to ensure that those in need are able to be properly documented, allowing them to qualify for access to services such as health and social insurance. In addition, there need to be adequate levels of monitoring put in place to make sure that goods and services sent out are reaching the correct beneficiaries, thus, lowering the chances of resources being lost in transport, which is detrimental to both sides involved.

Extend social protection coverage to include all of the population. One way of doing so would be to launch universal social protection schemes, rather than targeted ones, as these are available to everyone within a certain group and decreases the chances of discrimination against particular parts of the population. However, this method could be considered cost-ineffective and not rewarding each individual based on their efforts, causing some nations to lean toward a more cost-efficient targeted approach. Nonetheless, targeted programs also have their downsides as they often target the incorrect group of people, with only small amounts of the population receiving the aid, not having a big impact in reducing poverty as a whole.

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