How to realize gender-responsive social protection systems, including floors?

IPU & UNWOMEN event: Investing in gender equality: Parliaments ensuring social protection, public services and infrastructure deliver for women and girls

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Social security is a universal human right, but...

Only 45% of the world population is covered by at least one social protection benefit (SDG indicator 1.3.1)

4 billion people (55%) are still unprotected

If we consider all areas of social protection from child benefits to old-age pensions

Only 29% of the global population has access to comprehensive social protection

5.2 billion people (71%) are not, or only partially, protected

Source: ILO World Social Protection Report 2017-19, mainly based on Social Security Inquiry
What is needed to ensure that social protection promotes gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment?

- **Tackling gender inequalities**
  - Commit to tackling gender inequalities and promoting all women’s and girls’ empowerment through social protection programmes and systems.

- **Investing in extending coverage and improving adequacy**
  - Invest in financing gender-responsive social protection systems, to extend their coverage and improve adequacy.

- **Supporting participation**
  - Support local, national and international women’s rights organisations and movements to articulate demand for improved design and delivery of social protection for all women and girls, and to strengthen accountability.

- **Monitoring and analysis**
  - Invest in (i) gendered poverty and vulnerability assessments; (ii) improved data disaggregation, collection, quality and analysis; and (iii) research and evidence on policy design features to improve social protection effectiveness.

- **Building capacities and institutions**
  - Build the capacity of governments and partners to design and deliver gender-responsive social protection systems, and provide linkages to complementary services and programmes.

Source: SPIAC-B Joint Statement to CSW63.
Underinvestment in social protection

Public social protection expenditure, excluding health, latest available year (percentage of GDP)

Coverage gaps are associated to underinvestment in social protection

Negative impacts of austerity or fiscal consolidation cuts: narrow-targeting or eliminating schemes

The future of work requires a strong and responsive social protection system that ensures universal social protection from birth to old age:

- based on the principles of solidarity and risk-sharing
- to provide support to meet people’s needs over the life cycle

How to ensure effective protection for all?

- Building a social protection floor that affords a basic level of protection to all in need
- Complemented by contributory social insurance schemes that provide increased levels of protection
- Individual savings can only be a voluntary option to top up stable, equitable and mandatory social insurance benefits
How to achieve a quantum leap for gender equality in social protection?

Strengthen the national social protection system in a gender-responsive way

1. Ensure universal coverage and access to adequate social protection benefits for all throughout the life course, anchored in national legislation.
2. Accelerate progress towards building a social protection floor that guarantees at least a basic level of social security for all
3. Extend social protection to those in the informal economy and foster transitions to the formal economy
4. Ensure appropriate and adequate social protection for workers in all forms of employment
5. Strengthen mechanisms that promote gender equality (such as care credits in pension schemes that recognize and reward unpaid work)
6. Strengthen collective financing mechanisms (progressive taxation, social security contributions), and avoiding to shift undue financial and economic risks to individuals, which hurt particularly women.
7. Pursue a comprehensive approach that also addresses gender inequality in the labour market, promotes decent work, and fosters high quality public services, including child care and long-term care.
A particular responsibility for Parliaments

- Ensuring that national social protection systems, including floors, are appropriately anchored in national legislation
  - Translating the human right to social security (often also a constitutional right) into clearly defined entitlements that people can count on
  - Ensuring transparency and accountability
  - Essential for ensuring sufficient fiscal space and a stable budgeting framework
- Raising awareness
  - Social protection is a matter of rights and dignity, not handouts or charity
  - Social protection is essential particularly in times of crisis
- Ratification and application of international labour standards
  - ILO Centenary ratification campaign
  - Ratification of ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (No. 102)
- General Survey on application of Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202)
We have 12 years to make social protection a reality for all
Useful references

ILO reports, issue briefs, etc.

- ILO 2019: *A quantum leap for gender equality: For a better future of work for all*.
- ILO, 2018: *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*
- Ortiz I, et al., 2018: *Universal basic income proposals in light of ILO standards: Key issues and global costing*.
- ILO, 2016. *Maternity cash benefits for workers in the informal economy*
- ILO, 2013. *The Informal Economy and Decent Work: a policy resource guide supporting transitio*

ILO standards

- *Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation*, 2015 (No. 204).
- *Domestic Workers Convention*, 2011 (No. 189)
- *Maternity Protection Convention*, 2000 (No. 183)
- *Employment Relationship Recommendation*, 2006 (No. 198)
- *Home Work Convention*, 1996 (No. 177)
- *Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention*, 1952 (No. 102)

More information


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