

Social security for social justice and a fair globalization: Questions and answers

ILO, 22 June 2011

Over the past several years, the ILO has adopted a number of measures designed to promote social security coverage for the vast majority of the world's workers who currently lack coverage. Yet, in a world marked by rapidly spreading financial and economic fluctuations, the capacity of individuals to cope alone with economic risks is even more limited than before. It is in this context that the [100th Session of the ILC](#) in June 2011 discussed the strategic objective of social protection and specifically focus on social security.



The Conference report [“Social security for social justice and a fair globalization”](#) was the basis for discussions at the ILC. What does it say on the state of social security around the world?

The report shows that while progress has been made in the extension of social security coverage in some parts of the world, elsewhere stagnation and even contraction have occurred. Some level of social security protection exists in nearly all countries, though only a minority provide protection in all branches. In many parts of the world, coverage is limited to a few branches of social security, and only a minority of the population has access – both legally and in practice – to existing schemes. Also, in many places, the growing incidence of informal work led to stagnant or even declining rates of coverage. As a result, the great majority of the world population still lacks access to social security coverage.

What is the main priority for the extension of social security?



The first priority today is to provide the 75–80 per cent of those who are excluded with some form of social security, which will allow them to live without fear of losing their livelihood.

Clearly, women and men, as well as children, have a right to social security. The universal need for social security has been recognized by the world community as a human right. But the report goes further by insisting that social security is also a necessity. It is an economic necessity as it facilitates

productive employment, enhances productivity and strengthens economic resilience. It is also a social and political necessity as it reduces poverty and vulnerability and promotes social cohesion. Financial and economic fluctuations now have an immediate effect on labour markets and social welfare, so the capacity of individuals to cope alone with economic risks is more limited than before. The risks and opportunities inherent in globalization require effective social security. Also, national social security systems need to be stronger than ever to neutralize additional global risks such as pandemics and the expected effects of climate change. The priority thus is to provide, as quickly as possible, access to at least a basic package of social security benefits, that is a social protection floor, for all those until now deprived of it.

However, economic and social conditions vary from one country to another. Can we really afford social security everywhere?

Given the glaring need for social security and its enormous potential to help close the poverty gap, increase equality and foster economic performance, perhaps the most optimistic conclusion is that something can be done nearly everywhere. Once political will is in place, objectives are clearly, realistically and pragmatically established, institutions and fiscal space can be created to gradually put in place priority social security benefits and services in the form of a social protection floor even in the poorest countries. Then, along with further development, those countries can gradually build comprehensive social security systems. Also, developed and comprehensive social security systems need to be kept up to date through investment in good governance in order to remain relevant. One of the prerequisites for responsive governance is investment in the people who design, run and govern the system. That, also, is something that can be done everywhere.

How can good governance contribute to the extension of social security?

The report says that good and responsible social governance is indeed the central challenge to all national social security systems. With good governance, schemes can be set up and resources can be allocated (even if modest at first) to bring an adequate level of social security. Fiscal space and policy space need to be created by political will and investment in effective institutions. These economic and social policies should focus on the objectives of productive employment and decent work backed up by good governance based on well-informed social dialogue.



Finally, do you consider that social security can play more than just a social role?

Yes indeed. The report concludes that social security, in addition to its primary social role, is an investment in social and economic development, helping not only societies to be resilient in times of economic crisis but also to exploit its full productive

potential and hence achieve desired levels of welfare for all its members. There will be no universal acceptance of globalization unless we set up higher levels of social security. People need a minimum level of security to accept the risks of change.

Further resources

ILO Publications

- ILO. 2011. [*A new era of social justice*](#) (pdf 1.25 MB) Report of the Director-General, Report I(a), International Labour Conference, 100th Session, Geneva, 2011 (Geneva).
 - [Français](#) (pdf 10.04 MB) • [Español](#) (pdf 1.28 MB)
- ILO. 2011. [*Social protection floor for a fair globalization: Policy coherence and international coordination*](#) (pdf 232 KB) (Geneva)
 - [Français](#) (pdf 317 KB) • [Español](#) (pdf 240 KB)
- ILO. 2010. [*Employment and social protection policies from crisis to recovery and beyond: a review of experience*](#) (pdf 819 KB), an ILO report to the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers Meeting, Washington, DC, 20–21 April 2010 (Geneva).
- ILO. 2010. [*Employment policies for social justice and a fair globalization*](#) (pdf 1.55 MB), Report VI, International Labour Conference, 99th Session, Geneva, 2010 (Geneva).
- ILO. 2010. [*Extending social security to all: A guide through challenges and options*](#) (pdf 2.35 MB) (Geneva)
- ILO. 2010. [*Social protection floor initiative*](#) (pdf 221 KB) (Geneva)
 - [Español](#) (pdf 217 KB)
- ILO. 2009. [*Building decent societies : rethinking the role of social security in development*](#) (pdf 179 KB) (Basingstoke).
- ILO. 2009. [*ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization*](#) (pdf 134.87 KB) (Geneva).
 - [Français](#) (pdf 1.59 MB) • [Español](#) (pdf 144.50 KB)
- ILO. 2009. [*Recovering from the crisis : a global jobs pact*](#) (pdf 93.22 KB) (Geneva)
 - [Français](#) (pdf 105.47 KB) • [Español](#) (pdf 107.50 KB)
- ILO. 2009. [*The International Labour Organization and the quest for social justice, 1919-2009*](#) (pdf 62.57 KB) (Geneva).
 - [Français](#) (pdf 75.64 KB) • [Español](#) (pdf 70.03 KB)
- ILO. 2008. [*Social security for all : investing in social justice and economic development*](#) (pdf 458.23 KB) (Geneva).
 - [Français](#) (pdf 566.78 KB) • [Español](#) (pdf 527.17 KB)
- ILO. 2004. [*A fair globalization : creating opportunities for all*](#) (pdf 2 MB) (Geneva).
 - [Français](#) (pdf 2.25 MB) • [Español](#) (pdf 1.18 MB)
- ILO. 2004. [*Organizing for social justice : global report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work : report of the Director-General*](#) (pdf 454.96 KB) (Geneva).
 - [Français](#) (pdf 511.71 KB) • [Español](#) (pdf 937.61 KB)

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- ILO. UNDP. 2011. [Successful Social Protection Floor Experiences](#) (pdf 4.70 MB) (Geneva)
- ILO. WHO. 2010. [Social protection floor initiative](#) (pdf 688 KB) (Geneva)
 - [Français \(pdf 694 KB\)](#) • [Español \(pdf 694 KB\)](#)
- ILO. WHO. 2009. [The social protection floor : a joint crisis initiative of the UN chief executive board for co-ordination on the social protection floor](#) (pdf 152 KB) (Geneva)

ILO Videos

- [What Does Social Justice Mean to YOU? - !\[\]\(cdf2842d82858164c68c92720a337fb9_img.jpg\)](#)
- [Juan Somavia, ILO Director General - Voices on Social Justice - !\[\]\(3973dad7f2f3eafb2c144deb79d5c822_img.jpg\)](#)
- [Kofi Annan, Nobel Prize Laureate and Former UN SG - Voices on Social Justice - !\[\]\(78688513da7a924039ac16e546d7bf8b_img.jpg\)](#)
- [Achieving the Millennium Development Goals with Social Protection - !\[\]\(508a1136d49b79584e89f03b586dfa9e_img.jpg\)](#)
- [Michelle Bachelet on Social Protection Floors as a Response to Demands for Social Justice - !\[\]\(857a1917d2813fe7f9df1c2d3a9286e1_img.jpg\)](#)
- [A Window of Opportunity for Social Protection - !\[\]\(6c12030baa33d7760a5e4c7c9e008d93_img.jpg\)](#)

ILO Websites

- [100th Session of the International Labour Conference](#)
- [Social Protection Floor Advisory Group](#)
- [Global Extension of Social Security](#)
- [Global Jobs Pact](#)
- [Social security](#)
- [Decent Work](#)
- [ILO Global Job Crisis Observatory. Social security](#)
- [ILO Global Job Crisis Observatory: Fair globalization](#)
- [Online Information Resources on Social security](#)