

Global Social Policy Digest 11.2

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Global Social Policies: Redistribution, Regulation and Rights

REDISTRIBUTION

The G20 is now headed by the French, and among the [official priorities](#) of the French Presidency during 2011 is a commitment to development financing via innovative financing and, in particular, a tax on financial transactions. Seeming to keep his promise to put the Robin Hood or Tobin Tax firmly on the G20 agenda, [President Sarkozy said](#) on 24 January 2011 that

France is in favour of a tax on financial transactions. France considers that this tax is morally sound, given the financial crisis we have just been through [...] this tax is effective for finding new resources for development [...] France believes that the tax on financial transaction is the best

solution, but that it cannot alone solve the entire question of innovative financing.

Support came also from the European Parliament which passed a [resolution](#) in its favour on 8 March 2011. Subsequently 1,000 economists from 50 countries [wrote](#) to the G20 finance ministers urging them to act on the tax. On 17 February, global union federation and CSOs organised a [day of action](#) in support of the Financial Transaction Tax (FTT). [‘Meeting Needs of Developing Countries: The Role of Innovative Financing’](#) was also the topic of an CSO side event on the occasion of the [World Bank and IMF Spring Meeting](#) in Washington, 16 April 2011. Speakers included the French Development Minister, Henri de Raincourt, Sarah Anderson from the Institute for Policy Studies and Geoff Lamb from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (seemingly also Gates’ representative to the G20). The meeting discussed the role of new forms of financing, although [not all the speakers endorsed a fully fledged financial transaction tax](#). Neither the [Communiqué](#) of the Development Committee of the IMF/World Bank or [that of the IMF](#) on 16 April 2011 said anything about the tax. Duncan Green’s (OXFAM) [assessment](#) is that because of USA continued opposition, the tax is likely to be introduced only by a coalition of the willing such as France, Germany and South Africa.

While there is no substantive progress (yet?) on a global tax or other innovative forms of finance for development there is continued concern that the conventional Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) provided by government is still falling short of the promises made at the G8 Gleneagles Summit in 2005. The OECD reported [‘Aid Increases but Worrying Trends’](#) when releasing preliminary figures on ODA flows on 6 April 2011.

While the 2010 figures demonstrate a commitment to the neediest countries, they also confirm last year’s OECD predictions that some donors are not meeting targets they set at Gleneagles and other fora.

More detailed information can be found at the [new OECD DAC website](#), for example in [‘Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Developing Countries 2011’](#), providing comprehensive data on the volume, origin and types of aid and other resource flows to around 150 developing countries. The OECD is further continuing the process of monitoring the Paris Declaration in its [2011 Survey](#). More specifically, the OECD is preparing data and information about [‘Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment’](#).

The OECD was further concerned with aid for trade mechanisms, using an [expert workshop](#) in Paris to explore “ways of helping developing countries turn trade opportunities into trade flows, and trade flows into economic growth”. A recent book [‘Trade for Growth and Poverty Reduction: How Aid for Trade Can Help’](#) has also been released. Similarly, the World Bank in cooperation with the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries organised an event on [‘Aid for Trade and the Least Developed Countries. Opportunities and Challenges in a Post-Crisis World’](#).

However, instead of wondering, where the aid money could come from, or how it could be provided, the Jubilee Debt Campaign started [an initiative](#) to call upon the IMF to spend the money from selling gold on debt cancellation. More broadly on these issues, a [special high-level meeting](#) of the UN ECOSOC, the Bretton Woods Institutions, the WTO and UNCTAD (10-11 March 2011, New York) addressed issues

of aid for trade, debt relief, and new challenges regarding the impact of the global financial crisis.

Saving money from misbehaving individuals or companies as a strategy of containing public money also continues to be discussed in the context of the French G20 presidency. '[Joining Forces against Corruption: G20 Business and Government](#)' was an event, organised by the French Presidency and the OECD, supported by UNODC, 27-28 April 2011. Meanwhile, the OECD [announced](#) a new transparency and anti-corruption initiative.

Rather focusing on how aid is spent, the Center for Global Development (CGD) has released another [paper](#) on how to improve aid effectiveness. It proposes TrAid+ as a "new mechanism that aims to address these problems by creating a market for certified development outputs-outputs for which both the delivery and the quality have been verified". Further, Nancy Birdsall (CGD) presented a '[Cash on Delivery Aid](#)' approach "that allows aid agencies to address both short-term and long-term objectives of aid". The World Bank's contribution is '[Foreign Aid and Business Bottlenecks: A Study on Aid Effectiveness](#)' by Esteban Ferro and John S. Wilson (background material to this book can be found [here](#)).

Remittances have also continued to be discussed, for example, the World Bank's Global Remittances Working Group [held](#) a meeting 15 April. UNCTAD organised a '[Single-year expert meeting on maximising the development impact of remittances](#)', 7 February 2011, and released a new UNCTAD report discussing the "[Impact of remittances on poverty in developing countries](#)".

Concerned about equality and equity as such is the Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives, an interdisciplinary group of civil society activists and scholars from all parts of the world. It has issued an '[Urgent Appeal to Change Mindset](#)' calling on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio 2012) to change the dominant mindset about public rights over corporate privileges, equity and nature. Whether the [statement](#) of the Special Adviser to the IMF, Zhu Min, at the Davos [World Economic Forum](#) (WEF) in later January 2011, saying that wealth inequality is the "most serious challenge for the world" is already a step in this direction is certainly rather doubtful.

REGULATION

A [further objective](#) of the French Presidency of the G20 is to 'Strengthen the Social Dimension of Globalization'. Four priority objectives are named in this area: promoting employment (particularly for young people and disadvantaged individuals); stronger social protection; respect for social and labour rights; and improved coordination of strategies among international organisations. The G20 labour and employment ministers will discuss this agenda at a meeting in late September. President Sarkozy also [announced](#) the first ever Social Summit on the eve of the G20 Summit (alongside the Business Summit):

There is no reason why we should have a Business Summit and not a Social Summit. And the question for France is how to give the ILO more weight in global governance. France would like us to consider setting up a minimum standard of universal social protection. That is not to say a single social model, which makes no sense, but a minimum standard, and France will not

resign itself to the fact that the eight ILO conventions on fundamental labour rights have not been ratified by all members of the G20, which are, for the most part, also members of the ILO. When you are a member of an organization, you ratify the standards produced and adopted by this organization.

OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are in the process of being [revised](#) with a concluding governmental negotiating session scheduled for 27-29 April 2011. Related to this the OECD Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) partnership [intends to help](#) multinational companies operate responsibly. At the same time, the Global Compact has seen the [number of expelled companies reaching 2,000](#), and, more importantly, was criticised by the UN's Joint Inspection Unit in a report entitled '[United Nations Corporate Partnerships: the Role and Functioning of the Global Compact](#)'. This report concludes that

the lack of a clear and articulated mandate has resulted in blurred focus and impact; the absence of adequate entry criteria and an effective monitoring system to measure actual implementation of the principles by participants has drawn some criticism and reputational risk for the Organization, and the Office's special set up has countered existing rules and procedures.

The Global Compact itself does not accept this criticism and [stated](#):

The report [...] is a deeply flawed and inaccurate document which misrepresents both the UN Global Compact's overall work and its long track record of positive impact. The report also threatens to undermine system-wide UN efforts to engage the private sector to address global challenges

However, in a different context the Global Compact was praised: In March 2011, 167 chief executives from all over the world signed the [UN's Women's Empowerment Principles](#) and declared that employing more women is good for business, but faster change is needed.

The [Tax Justice Network](#) has taken under scrutiny the IMF's [Coordinated Direct Investment Survey](#) (updated in December 2010). The Bretton Woods Project [argues](#) that it

doesn't take an advanced degree in economics to come to the conclusion that while the IMF cross-border investment data might be accurate, it highlights a fascinating but unexplained story about the role of secrecy jurisdictions in global investment flows

The Bretton Woods Project also [criticises](#) the World Bank and IMF's approach to tax avoidance and tax evasion:

The World Bank and the IMF formally recognise tax avoidance and tax evasion as a critical problem for developing countries' domestic resource mobilisation. The Bank's public position on tax evasion and tax havens does not however identify concrete measures to stop investing in companies practicing tax avoidance. The IMF addresses tax policy under its

surveillance mandate and in its technical assistance, but does not have an explicit framework or clear approach to deal with tax evasion.

The [Second Plenary Meeting of the OECD Informal Task Force on Tax and Development](#) took place 11-12 April 2011. The meeting was about to develop recommendations including how to counter international tax evasion/avoidance and improve transparency and exchange of information supporting the work of the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes. The outcomes will be published in June 2011.

On [International Migrants Day](#) (18 December), UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged member states to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families. The [IOM said](#) that “migrant women need access to decent and skilled jobs commensurate with their education and experience”. The [‘2010 Forum on Immigrants: another migration policy is possible’](#) was held that day, organized by the Maghreb Social Forum. Other CSO contributions can be found at the website of the [‘December18’](#).

The ninth [Coordination Meeting on International Migration](#) took place 17-18 February 2011 in New York. It was intended to examine the development of indicators that measure the contribution of international migration to countries of origin and destination; to exchange information on recent initiatives to build capacities on international migration and development, and to discuss the contribution of various relevant organizations to the Global Forum on Migration and Development as well as to the informal thematic debate on international migration and development. Also, preparations for the [Global Forum on Migration and Development](#) (December 2011) are under way.

Further, the [World Migration Report 2010: The Future of Migration: Building Capacities for Change](#) was released by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). It calls for more effective systems to match supply and demand in labour markets, dedicate attention to managing social change associated with migration, and protect the human rights of migrants, and the rights of irregular migrants.

The [WHO announced](#) the launch of a web-based public hearing from 21 March to 17 April 2011 on the draft guidelines for monitoring the implementation of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. While Education International [alerts](#) us to the rights of migrant teachers.

The Doha trade negotiations continue. WTO head Pascal Lamy [said](#) on 21 April 2011 that “the package of negotiating documents underscores value of Doha progress, but differences over industrial tariff cuts effectively block further progress and put at risk conclusion in 2011”. Later in April, the WTO announced that [‘Members confront Doha Round deadlock with pledge to seek meaningful way out’](#). A [World Bank paper about Trade Agreements](#) concludes that

the nature of trade generated from different agreements can affect welfare differently. Indeed, North-South agreements may offer advantages, such as technology transfer and other productivity gains, while South-South agreements can foster deeper political and economic integration. These issues aside, [...] developing countries should continue to pursue these agreements.

More critical is an [article](#) at the Global Policy Forum, saying that “far from the win-win situation posited by comparative advantage theory, in real world free trade has created winners and losers.”

RIGHTS

The Human Rights Council [concluded its 16th session](#) on 25 March 2011 adopting 40 resolutions, concerning, amongst other things, the rights of the child (more discussions can be found [here](#)), the right to food, the protection of human rights in the context of HIV/AIDS, and the rights of persons with disabilities.

20 February was World Day of Social Justice, with the [ISSA website](#) reminding us: “The World Day recognizes that society must be based on social justice, a respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms – and on the right to social security for all.” Equally, Ban Ki-moon has stressed in his [message](#) for the day: “The focus of this year’s commemoration – achieving social protection for all – is critical in building fairer, more inclusive and equitable societies.” More in-depth thoughts about this can be found in a [report](#) by ILO starting by saying: “Somehow, it seems to have been forgotten: social security is a human right” (see also Social Protection section). More information also at the [ILO website on the right to social security](#).

John Ruggie, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, presented his report [‘Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations ‘Protect, Respect and Remedy’ Framework’](#) to the Human Rights Council. Among the commentaries¹ to the report, it says:

Because business enterprises can have an impact on virtually the entire spectrum of internationally recognized human rights, their responsibility to respect applies to all such rights. [...] For instance, enterprises should respect the human rights of individuals belonging to specific groups or populations that require particular attention, where they may have adverse human rights impacts on them.

The UN Global Compact [commented](#) on the report, and urged “strong endorsement to further multi-stakeholder cooperation and involvement in follow-up to the mandate and in all future activities and initiatives in the area of business and human rights”. A joint [CSO statement](#) notes that the IFC’s draft of its revised Sustainability Framework, intended to manage social and environmental risks associated with IFC activities, is not fully in line with this report.

The [First Session of the Open-ended Working Group on strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons](#) took place 18-21 April 2011, at the UN headquarters in New York. It focused on understanding the current situation of the human rights of older persons around the world. The [second session](#) is scheduled for the beginning of August.

¹ commentary to point 12

The [Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) concluded its fifth session on 15 April 2011 (see also the [UN DESA website](#)). The Human Rights Council held an [interactive Panel discussion](#) on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The [55th session of the Commission on the Status of Women](#) (ECOSOC) took place in February and March, with the first time for UN Women to serve as the secretariat of the Commission. The [closing remarks](#) express great concern about the lack of progress in achieving MDG 5 (maternal health), and the [draft agreed conclusions](#) focus on the right to education and access to full employment and decent work (see also social protection section). Also the World Social Forum's [Education Assembly](#), meeting in February 2011 in Dakar, asserted and supported a number of points of agreement, including the right to education as a fundamental human right (see also education section). Meanwhile, the OECD DAC thinks about "[How to create an international movement for gender equality?](#)" and [women's economic empowerment](#) (see also a related [issue paper](#)). Also, [Duncan Green \(Oxfam\) discusses](#) the outline [draft published](#) by the World Bank for the World Development Report 2012 with regard to gender equality and development.

Global Social Governance

The emergence of the G20 replacing the G8 and the large agenda sketched out for it by the French Presidency, the side-lining and financial problems of the UN and the fact that the OECD is 50 this year and the IDA is 65 has led to a lot of soul searching, if not action, about the continued fragmented and ill-coordinated "system" of global social governance.

In this context the OECD makes its bid for importance. In '[A New Era of Global Co-operation](#)', Gabriela Ramos, OECD Chief of Staff and G20 Sherpa says

The crisis has opened up a new era of co-operation, which the OECD is determined to foster. The G20 is a terrific forum for gathering people together, bringing in different angles and expertise, and cross-fertilising ideas. It has shown it can nimbly respond to urgent challenges. Now it must show it can patiently build solutions for the future. The OECD stands ready to help the G20 succeed.

With the OECD, also its Development Assistance Committee (DAC) turns 50 – the DAC's achievements are presented in a special [report](#) (see also [DACnews](#)). Further reflections about the OECD's and G20's role and importance can be found in a [speech](#) to the CGD by Angel Gurría and in the [G20 Updates](#) of the German Böll Foundation. More on the G20 process is available at the [G20 Information Centre](#).

Alternatively it is [argued](#) that a revitalized UN General Assembly should be the main forum for global debate. How this can be realised, however, is unclear, given that, on 9 March 2011, Ban Ki-moon [called](#) for cutting the UN budget by 3% in the face of the global economic slowdown. Still more worrying are the news about the WHO: Richard Horton, editor of The Lancet, [reported](#) about huge cuts in the WHO's budget slashing its core functions – *WHO is "paralysed."* A proposal for effective reform of the WHO is provide [here](#). Better [news](#) was that on 24 February 2011 – the UN finally celebrated officially the birth of its new agency for women and girls (see also GSP digest 11.1). Related trade union and CSO work can be found at [UNCSW: A Union](#)

[Perspective](#). At the same time, an [ILO paper](#) takes up the UN's Delivering as One framework, again. Further from the ILO, the [proceedings of the ILO Governing Body's 310th session](#) (3-25 March 2011) are available.

The [World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings](#) were a damp squib (see also Redistribution section). A more general [assessment](#) by the Bretton Woods Project on progress in reforming the global financial architecture is equally dispiriting;

While official ambitions are to refashion the global financial architecture, the IMF has yet to publish new thinking on capital flows, the G20 discussion on global imbalances is mired in dispute, and the debate on a new monetary system may go in the wrong direction.

However, the head of the WTO used the event to [ask not to weaken the WTO](#), while the President of the World Bank [argued](#) that the Bank had to move on from funding governments and business to funding civil society. This idea was criticised by Todd Moss (CGD) who thinks [Robert Zoellick has got it all wrong](#) on in his proposals for a new role for the World Bank as some kind of global Open Society initiative. Todd Moss has also [reflected](#) upon the new role of the IDA at 65 (see also [here](#) and [here](#)).

Regarding the IMF, its own Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) has released an [evaluation](#) of IMF surveillance in 2004-07. The [press release](#) says:

While the IEO report focuses on financial sector issues because of the nature of the recent crisis, most of the recommendations deal with institutional changes that would improve the IMF's capacity to detect other types of risks and vulnerabilities that could be at center of a future crisis. The IMF must clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Board, Management and senior staff [...]

Meanwhile, the Bretton Woods Project [discusses](#) the decision of the IMF to end European dominance of selection of its managing director, and introducing an open, merit-based and transparent process, and sets out the three key elements to ensuring a successful process. Speculation is now rife as to whether UK's Gordon Brown, slated for the post will be side-lined by a South African? (See also [here](#))

The Global Fund's [Inspector General reported](#) misappropriation in four countries. In December 2010, as a consequence, the Global Fund suspended or terminated grants. The press took this up several weeks later, generating a lively global debate about the functioning mechanisms and the scope of the fraud that happened and about global health and corruption in general. In the beginning of February, the Global Fund [then announced](#) it would implement a number of measures to meet such problems, as well as setting up a high-profile panel of international experts to review its systems, that will deliver a report in May 2011. In terms of sustaining the funding to the Global Fund, donors appear to react differently; [Sweden](#), for examples, has suspended its high level of contributions until the problems are fixed, but the [U.S decided to allocate US\\$1.05 billion](#) to the Global Fund (for 2011). At the same time, William Savedoff, in a [blog](#), discusses whether or not we can estimate the real scope of corruption from the information available (see also [here](#) and [here](#)).

International Actors and Social Policy

HEALTH

The WHO's Executive Board gathered 17-25 January 2011. It tackled, amongst other things, the establishment of a [consultative expert working group on research and development](#), the [health-related MDGs](#), [health systems strengthening](#), and the [future of financing for WHO](#) (see also Global Social Governance section)

It comes as a surprise to see the World Economic Forum has '[Health for All](#)' featuring as one of its key issues. However, instead of the WHO's slogan connected to the concept of [primary health care](#), what we find at the WEF is that it focuses on advocacy, dialogue and action through partnership; and announced the launch of the Global Health Data Charter (see also the connected proposal on [Global Healthcare Systems and Cooperation](#)). The WHO, instead, went back to looking at the '[Social determinants approaches to public health: from concept to practice](#)' and the '[Validity and Comparability of Out-of-pocket Health Expenditure from Household Surveys](#)'.

Health systems also found consideration in a World Bank Lunch Presentation '[A New Vision for Health Systems in the 21st Century: Investing in People](#)'. Julio Frenk presented the recommendations by the [Global Independent Commission](#) that he recently chaired (a connected website is <http://www.healthprofessionals21.org/>). The World Bank also published a paper reviewing the '[World Bank's Experience with Country-Level Health System Analysis](#)'. Among its conclusions the paper states that

Some areas of analysis are much better developed than others: for example, analysis of health outcomes and health care financing are typically detailed [...], while analysis of service delivery or governance and institutional arrangements are less so.

Other global debates considered the global economic crisis and health systems. Mark Pearson (OECD) said:

So changes in health spending help restore public finances? Not likely. The reason for the rapid growth in health spending has been that demand has been rising, due to new technologies, greater patient expectations and population ageing. These pressures continue. Holding spending constant will therefore seem like cuts in spending. Indeed, past experience suggests that holding health spending down for a few years is possible, but the underlying pressures eventually will overwhelm attempts to cap spending. The important challenge countries face is to reform their health systems to deliver high-quality health services to all at a reasonable cost.

In a paper, the IMF discusses '[Macro-Fiscal Implications of Health Care Reform in Advanced and Emerging Economies](#)' by means of case studies; and the [World Medicines Situation Report](#), released by the WHO, includes topics of access and human rights.

However, instead of debating models, there is more about the link between the crisis, health systems and development aid that particularly donor organisations are facing. The IMF [is questioned](#) on whether or not its loans do or may encourage countries to raise their health spending. A [contribution by the WHO](#) discusses health systems approaches with regard to the Global Fund for Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria spending. Further, at a roundtable discussion, facilitated by the Global Health Council,

the World Bank and USAID, Christopher Murray in January 2011 talked about '[Development Assistance During Economic Crisis](#)', referring to the Health Metrics and Evaluation report 'Financing Global Health 2010' (see GSP digest 11.1). For further information see [Health Financing News](#).

In terms of global health data and surveillance, the OECD now also includes the Gates Foundation in its health data (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/5/60/47539494.pdf>). Meanwhile, the Consultative Expert Working Group on Research and Development, Financing and Coordination (CEWG), held its [first meeting](#), 5-7 April 2011. The [outcome document](#) reports that the working group

decided that its focus should be on the financing and coordination of research and development for health products and technologies [...] However, it acknowledged the importance of other relevant areas of research and development which may require additional financing and/or improved coordination and that some of the mechanisms may also be utilized for: [...] Health policy and health systems, to improve delivery and access to new and existing products.

The WHO published an [assessment of the 2001 Abuja Declaration](#), asking after ten years if the pledge to increase government funding for health to at least 15% and urge donor countries to scale up support has made any impact. Overall, it concludes:

Only two African countries have reached that target. [...] 27 have increased the proportion of government expenditures allocated to health and seven have reduced it since 2001. In the other 12, there is no obvious trend up or down. Current donor spending varies dramatically [...]

Further, a [High-level UN Commission was established](#) to track results and resources for women's and children's health.

Is perhaps the solution to all of this in the report [Creating a Global Health Policy Worthy of the Name](#), released by the Development Policy Forum (DPF)²?

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Perhaps of most interest following the unlamented departure of Robert Holzmann as Head of Social Protection from the World Bank is that under his replacement Arup Banerji the World Bank is planning a new Social Protection and Labour Strategy for 2012 – 2022. An [online consultation](#) is now open. The [proposed strategy](#) argues for an approach to social protection made up of Prevention (insurance), Protection (assistance), and Promotion (human capital formation through CCTs, employment creation, public works). It even mentions the UN's Global Social Floor policy though falls short of formally endorsing it. Arup wants to turn social protection projects into systems, to focus on low and middle income countries, to emphasise the promotion aspects and, of course emphasise the Banks as a knowledge resource in this matter. It has little (yet) to say about pensions! A [report](#) of a consultation with global trade unions is also available.

² A partnership between Friends of Europe, the UN, the World Bank, the Agence Francaise de Développement (AFD), the UK's DfID, and the GTZ, with support of the IMF.

Students would have much fun comparing and contrasting this emerging social protection policy with that of the ILO's. A most recent version authored by Michael Cichon, Head of Social Security at ILO is to be found in a [Friedrich Ebert Stiftung paper](#). There is increasingly little to distinguish the policies as the Bank moves in the ILO direction. One issue might be the extent to which forms of behavioural conditionality are attached to cash benefits - for this see an UNRISD report about '[Conditionality in Anti-Poverty Programmes](#)'. However, the [Bretton Woods Project](#) is convinced that "its general approach to health and continuing push for privatisation of public service have come under fire again."

In a [UN Press release](#), Cichon explains the importance of the upcoming June ILO conference in advancing the UN Global Social Floor campaign. Only 2 percent of global GDP would be required to provide basic security systems to the world's poor, he says. In a collaboration with UNDP and the UN South-South Co-operation Programme, the [ILO reports](#) on Successful Social Protection Floor Experiences.

Interesting is yet another UNESCO sponsored meeting of Social Development Ministers within a region, this time South Asia. The [Colombo Declaration](#) of 20-22 February 2011 emerging from that says that we agree to "adopt a comprehensive approach to social protection, encompassing prevention, protection and promotional measures".

Similarly UNICEF has published a [paper](#) on social protection as one of its many papers addressing the topic of 'Recovery for All'. It also released the '[State of the World's Children 2011](#)' report focusing on the situation and rights of adolescents. On families, the OECD has published a new report '[Doing Better for Families](#)'.

An interesting historical review of the development of the global politics of poverty alleviation analysing the views of the Bank and the UN up to date is provide by Timo Viopio's thesis from '[Poverty Economics to Global Social Policy](#)'.

The first [Global Poverty Summit](#) was held 17-19 January in Johannesburg, South Africa. The event was attended by about 50 experts on poverty matters, and discussions were about the WTO's Doha Development Agenda and its potential to reduce poverty, and the MDGs (see also [here](#)). Further, the 49th session of the Commission for Social Development took place in New York, 9-18 February 2011. It was concerned with "Poverty Eradication". A [background note](#) to the event refers to the importance of social security for tackling poverty, calling for a basic social protection floor (see also [here](#)). It passed [resolutions](#) on ageing, youth, and persons with disabilities. Several [side events](#) brought global campaigners on social protection together. Nevertheless, Abhijit Banerjee and Ester Duflo argue in "[Poor Economics](#)" that "so much of anti-poverty policy has failed over the years because of an inadequate understanding of poverty." A bit similarly, a CGD [paper](#) explains that most of the world's poor no longer live in low-income countries, which makes that "donors will have to change the way they think about poverty alleviation [and] should design development aid to benefit poor people, not just poor countries, keep supporting middle-income countries, think beyond traditional aid to craft coherent development policies, and work to help create space for more inclusive policy processes in new and old MICs." A new MDGs progress index can be viewed [here](#).

On pensions, there is [Trimming Pensions](#) by Edward Whitehouse (OECD), and ['Pensions at a Glance'](#) argues that recent pension reforms will still be insufficient to cover increased costs in the future, despite increases in retirement ages in half of OECD countries. More generally from the OECD is ['Society at a Glance 2011'](#) providing OECD social indicators including information on demography and family characteristics, employment and unemployment, poverty and inequality, social and health care expenditure, and trust and tolerance. UN DESA is concerned about ["enhancing the voice of older persons"](#) and announced an 'Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing' with a first session in April 2011.

An ILO [report](#) alerts us to global unemployment reaching dangerous levels. Nearly half of all workers - more than 1.5 billion people - endure in vulnerable or insecure jobs (see also ['OECD Labour Force Statistics 2010'](#)). Accordingly, Sharan Burrow (ITUC) states: ['Decent work is not a slogan'](#). The OECD's ['Economic Policy Reforms 2011: Going for Growth'](#) tells us what to do about this with a different story: "structural reforms offer best lever for boosting jobs". From the ILO comes further ['From the Great Recession to labour market recovery: Issues, evidence and policy options'](#).

EDUCATION

The [International Women's Day](#) was celebrated for the 100th time in its history under the topic `Equal Access to Education, Training and Science and Technology: Pathway to decent work for women`. Not so much focused on women's issues as such, the Council of Global Unions has issued a [statement](#) to World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings (see also governance section) and demand they "pay as much attention to employment deficits as they do to fiscal deficits and to take co-ordinated action to support job creation, education and skills training." A note about the World Social Forum and a statement on education can be found in the Rights section.

With regard to the education needs of children, Desmond Bermingham (CGD) [offers](#) top-12 tasks for delivering all children a good education and by that way do something about the hidden crisis in global education. UN DESA addresses issues of quality, access and innovation in education in its [March newsletter](#). The UN ECOSOC convened a special event ['Partnering with the philanthropic community to promote education for all'](#) (28 February 2011) (a background note is available [here](#)).

The World Bank's new education strategy is still discussed within and outside the organisation (see GSP digest 11.1). Before the World Bank board discussion of the draft education strategy in January, Zoe Godolphin [argued](#) that

the Bank's proposed approach fails conceptually because it does not accept that education is a human right. It also fails pragmatically because it continues to advocate a template approach instead of supporting genuinely country-driven priorities in education planning.

Similarly, the Global Campaign for Education [wrote](#) to the Bank's executive directors, complaining:

The strategy lacks recognition of education as a human right, a public good and a responsibility to citizens. [...] [It] focuses too heavily on private

sector and market-based approaches to education, and on education as an instrument to serve the job market.

New publications have further included the OECD's '[PISA 2009 at a Glance](#)', a companion publication to the PISA 2009 Results, and the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning's [newsletter](#) on "the complex equation of education financing".

FOOD

The G20 gathering in Paris (see also redistribution, regulation and governance section) also addressed the new [rise in food prices](#). A [blog](#) from the Center for Global Development discusses impression from the G20 meeting. The renewed focus on the food crisis was provoked by the FAO presenting new data. FAO reported another peak of world food prices, even higher than during the 'food price crisis' in 2008 (see [data](#) of the world bank -- <http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=4210>). Further, '[The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011](#)' with a special focus on women and the gender gap. A policy brief '[Price Volatility in Agricultural Markets](#)' provides information about food security and policy responses. Related data can also be accessed through the World Bank's [Food Price Watch](#). Also the Global Policy Forum has updated it [Tables and Charts on Global Food Aid](#).

The IMF has released a new paper entitled '[Food Prices and Political Instability](#)'. It states that:

From a macroeconomic perspective, it is worthwhile to restate that international food price increases induced in the net food exporting countries a significant increase in real per capita GDP and real per capita investment (the "terms of trade effect"). At the same time, international food price increases induced a significant decrease in real per capita consumption and a significant increase in income inequality. Thus, increases in the international food prices had real macroeconomic effects that went beyond average per capita income: they were associated with a significant decrease in consumption and a significant increase in the gap between rich and poor. All in all, our empirical results are broadly consistent with the often made claim by policy makers and the press that food price increases put at stake the socio-economic and political stability of the world's poorest countries. Arguably a large share of the variation in the international food prices is due to changes in the demand and supply of the High and Middle Income Countries. A natural question beyond the scope of this paper is what can and should be done by the developed world and international organizations in response to drastic increases in international food prices.

The UK Government Office for Science has released a report '[The Future for Food and Farming: Challenges and Choices for Global Sustainability](#)' arguing that the current system will not end hunger. It calls for a more "open" world trade system in food commodities.

Robert Zoellick, president of the World Bank, enumerates a number of measures that the G20 should adopt in order to meet the food crisis, among them strengthening social safety nets for the poor (see [here](#) and also [here](#)), and also a new [research paper](#) by

the World Bank discusses the implications of the rise in food prices. However, Olivier de Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, [says](#) that “these measures tackle only the symptoms of the global food system’s weaknesses, leaving the root causes of the crisis untouched.” He himself proposes eight priorities that the G20 should act on: support countries’ abilities to feed themselves, establish food reserves, limit financial speculation, establish a global reinsurance mechanism, support farmers’ organisations, protect access to land, complete sustainable agriculture, and defend the human right to food. Related to this, the Human Rights Council organised an [interactive dialogue](#) with de Schutter. Also the Bretton Woods Project [critically discusses](#) the World Bank’s answer to the food crisis.

The OECD [proposes](#) to tackle volatility in food prices with better functioning markets

The [challenges for social movements in the food crisis](#) are discussed by Eric Holt-Gimenez.

Isabel Ortiz and others from UNICEF wrote a paper ‘[Escalating Food Prices: The threat to poor households and policies to safeguard a Recovery for All](#)’, concluding “by advocating for urgent policy actions at national and international levels to ensure a “Recovery for all” that will eradicate hunger and malnutrition among children and poor households”.

World Bank papers discuss [Trade Restrictions in Food Markets](#) and [short-run poverty impacts of the rising food prices](#).

The ECOSOC’s [Briefing on Rising Food Prices](#) on 18 February 2011 discussed the impact and effects on agricultural production, food security and development and the UN system’s response.

Amanda Glassmann from the Center for Global Development [discusses](#) the implications of rising food prices for health and nutrition of the poor.

HABITAT, LAND, HOUSING

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme has published three key habitat related reports in the early part of 2011. At the end of March 2011, the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT launched ‘[Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements 2011](#)’ at the London School of Economics. The report is said to review

the linkages between urbanization and climate change, two of the greatest challenges currently facing humanity in the 21st Century, and whose effects are converging in dangerous ways. It illustrates the significant contribution of urban areas to climate change while at the same time highlighting the potentially devastating effects of climate change on urban populations. It reviews policy responses, strategies and practices that are emerging in urban areas to mitigate and adapt to climate change, as well as their potential achievements and constraints. In conclusion, the report argues that urban areas have a pivotal role in both climate change mitigation and adaptation and identifies strategies and approaches for strengthening this role.

[State of the World's Cities 2010/2011 - Cities for All: Bridging the Urban Divide](#) notes that “the world's urban population now exceeds the world's rural population.” It questions what this means for the state of our cities, given the strain this global demographic shift is placing upon current urban infrastructure? Following on from previous State of the World's Cities reports, this edition uses the framework of 'The Urban Divide' to analyse the complex social, political, economic and cultural dynamics of urban environments [and] focuses on the concept of the 'right to the city' and ways in which many urban dwellers are excluded from the advantages of city life, using the framework to explore links among poverty, inequality, slum formation and economic growth”.

Finally, [the State of Asian Cities 2010/11](#) is the first report on Asian Cities. UN-HABITAT notes that it

throws new light on current issues and challenges which national and local governments, the business sector and organised civil society are facing ... [and puts] forward a number of recommendations [as well as a number of] good, innovative practice that countries of all sizes and development stages have accumulated across the region.... [The] report highlights a number of critical issues – demographic and economic trends, poverty and inequality, the environment, climate change and urban governance and management.

The theme for this year's [World Water Day](#) (celebrated on 22 March 2011) was ‘Water for Cities: Responding to the Urban Challenge’. There are a number of additional readings on the ‘About World Water Day’ link which may be of interest to some. Those interested in the role of ‘aid’ in water and sanitation may visit the [OECD webpage](#). This site has a link to a document entitled ‘Financing water and sanitation in developing countries: the contribution of external aid, June 2010’.

The institute for Human Rights and Business notes on its [website](#) that “The range of human rights implications linked to access to water, particularly in areas of water scarcity as well as in contexts of pollution of aquifers or rivers by business activity, remain largely unexplored. Many business sectors rely on access to water and a growing number are involved in water management in countries around the world. How should consensus on issues relating to the role of the private sector concerning water be shaped and how might rights-based approaches support such efforts?”