



2010 JOINT WORLD CONFERENCE ON SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Agenda

Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I) - Brief

An overview of the SPF-I

The UN Social Protection Floor (SPF) Initiative promotes universal access to essential social transfers and services. More than 75% of the global population do not enjoy a set of social guarantees that allow them to deal with life's risks. Ensuring a social protection floor for these people, struggling just to survive, is a priority. It would also be probably the fastest way to achieve the MDGs.

There is strong evidence that social protection contributes to economic growth by raising labour productivity and enhancing social stability. Investing in a Social Protection Floor is investing in social justice and economic development. Ensuring a SPF for the entire world population represents a considerable challenge, but calculations by various UN agencies show that a basic floor of social transfers is globally affordable at virtually any stage of economic development, even if the funding is not yet available everywhere.

This policy note is largely derived from documents created by the UN SPF-I.

What are its origins?

The current financial and economic crisis is having dramatic social, health, hunger and education effects. In times of crisis, transfer incomes, notably social assistance and social security benefits paid to unemployed workers and other vulnerable recipients, act as social and economic stabilisers. Benefits and guaranteed access to services not only prevent people from falling further into poverty but also limit the contraction of aggregate demand thereby curtailing the potential depth of the recession. And yet, still 75-80% of the global population do not enjoy a set of social guarantees that allow them to deal with life's risks. So there is a need for a social protection floor below which nobody should fall. The international community has to support the development of a social protection floor to protect people during the crisis and thereafter.

In April 2009, the UN Chief Executives Board (CEB) launched [a social protection floor as one of its 9 initiatives](#)

(<http://www.socialsecurityextension.org/gimi/gess/RessShowRessource.do?resourceId=12656>) to cope with the global crisis. The report "[The global financial crisis and its impact on the work of the UN system](#)"

(<http://www.ilo.org/gimi/gess/RessShowRessource.do?resourceId=12603>) provides an overview of each initiative.

What is its legal base?

There is a legal base for the social protection floor: Several articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are related to the right to social security (article 22), right to education (article 26), right to health and well being including food, housing, medical care and necessary social services (article 25).

What are the concepts underlying the SPF-I?

The Social Protection Floor corresponds to a set of basic social rights, services and facilities that a citizen should enjoy. It can be seen as a core obligation of ensuring the realisation of minimum essential levels of rights embodied in human right treaties. The Social Protection Floor could consist of 2 main elements that help to realise these human rights:

1. **Ensuring the availability, continuity, and geographical and financial access to essential services**, such as water and sanitation, food and adequate nutrition, health, education, housing and other social services such as life and asset saving information.
2. **Realising access by ensuring a basic set of essential social transfers**, in cash and in kind, to provide a minimum income and livelihood security for poor and vulnerable populations and to facilitate access to essential services. It includes social transfers (but also information, entitlements and policies) to children, people in active age groups with insufficient income and older persons

The SPF promotes a holistic and coherent vision of national social protection systems as a key component of national development strategies. It seeks to support countries in identifying and closing crucial protection gaps through coherent and efficient measures that maximise the effects of scarce resources on the reduction of poverty and insecurity, to ensure “guaranteed access” to essential services and social transfers.

Resources

Global Extension of Social Security (GESS) website including:

The **Manual** for Social Protection Floor joint UN country operations.
<http://www.socialsecurityextension.org/gimi/gess/ShowMainPage.do>

The UN Social Protection Floor Initiative - Brochure
<http://www.socialsecurityextension.org/gimi/gess/RessShowRessource.do?resourceId=14583>

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