

The Global Coalition for the Social Protection Floors: A new level of international cooperation

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The SAGE logo, featuring a stylized 'S' inside a circle followed by the word 'SAGE' in a bold, uppercase, sans-serif font.

The core team of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors held its meeting in Berlin, Germany, at the end of November 2013 at the invitation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The ICSW is one of the founders of the Coalition and has actively participated in core group activities since its inception, including the above meeting.

Created in summer 2012, the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, which now brings together more than 70 members, is open to NGOs that are representatives of their constituencies and that agree to the Coalition's principles and aims. Operating within a worldwide network structure but without any formal headquarters or secretariat, the Coalition seeks to communicate with international organizations such as the UN and the ILO, the Social Protection Inter-Agency Coordination Board and other relevant organizations, as well as contributing to international and regional forums. Based on the principles of inclusiveness, non-discrimination and mutual respect, the Coalition relies on collective output and solidarity in formulating negotiating positions. The main aims of the Coalition are as follows: to promote international debates on Social Protection Floor (SPF) issues and raise awareness of International Labour Conference Recommendation 202; to create a platform for learning experiences among civil society organizations worldwide, including the development of appropriate tools; to collaborate with national and regional social protection platforms and/or coalitions, where they have been established and promote the SPF objectives; and to advocate for the formation of inclusive coalitions, where they do not yet exist, aimed at promoting the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection floors.

Over recent years the ICSW has been actively involved in promoting social protection policies at the national, regional and global levels. The Recommendation 202 concerning national social protection floors, unanimously adopted by the ILC in June 2012, was a welcome political breakthrough. Not only it provided a boost to efforts of NGOs and other partners to recognize social protection as a core priority on the development agenda of today, but also underscored the need to address it extensively in the 2015 development framework that is currently being discussed at the UN. The implementation of social protection floor provisions at the national level – understood as guaranteeing a minimum level of income security and access to healthcare for all – can lead to reduction of poverty and inequality and sustaining equitable economic growth.¹ Social protection can enhance the social status and the rights of the marginalized and vulnerable groups, promoting the dignity and worth of individuals – one of the major concerns of social work profession. Social protection policies and programmes represent an investment in people that empowers them, promotes more equal access to opportunities and permits to increase their life options and trade-offs.

The meeting in Berlin discussed several new proposals and activities. One of them was how the SPF could be integrated as a stand-alone objective in the post-2015 development framework, for which the eradication of poverty remains the overarching goal. A report of the working group on mapping the activities of civil society organizations on social protection (Who is doing What and

Where) was discussed. While the mapping exercise has been important for discussing ideas, providing examples and case studies, and identifying focus groups to develop national dialogues on SPF, much more still needs to be done in that area. The other development was a signature campaign run by the NGO Committee for Social Development in New York (linked to Facebook and Twitter), which succeeded in collecting over 15,000 signatures in support of the SPF.

The meeting agreed that there is a need for the wider inclusion of new Coalition members, particularly from developing countries, and for better coordination of activities between the core group and within the entire Coalition, including establishing different focal points for each geographical region. Monitoring the activities of the Coalition members on SPF conceptualization and implementation should become a priority. The website of the Coalition will be established in the near future.

One of the important immediate outcomes of the meeting in Berlin was a decision to prepare a Joint Statement of the Coalition outlining its key principles and objectives for release during the 52nd session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development in February 2014 in New York. The Statement advocates a rights-based approach to social protection and underscores that SPF is a vital tool of universalism in social policy, diminishing people's exposure to various risks and vulnerabilities across the life-cycle, and promoting empowerment of people.

Sergei Zelenev
Executive Director, ICSW

Note

1. Social Protection Floor for a fair and inclusive globalization. Report of the advisory group chaired by Michelle Bachelet, ILO, Geneva, 2011, p.XXIV.