The **S**ocial **S**ecurity **I**nquiry | SSI
a quantitative database on social security

1   Objective and rationale of the social security inquiry

The objective of the ILO Social Security Inquiry (SSI) is to collect, store and disseminate comparable statistical data on social security worldwide. This includes expenditure and receipts of social protection schemes as well as data on protected persons, recipients of social benefits and benefit amounts.

The rationale of the inquiry is to address the lack of (comparable) social security statistics outside the OECD world. In this respect, the inquiry adopts a systematic approach compatible with existing statistical frameworks such as the European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS[1]) and the OECD (SOCX Social Expenditure Database[2]).

Collected information should:
Allow calculation of indicators for specific social security schemes and selected aggregate indicators at national level for as many countries as possible;

- Constitute a basis for analysis within the framework of studies and research work;
- Contribute to measure progress towards decent work with respect to its social security dimension[3];
- Be accessible to internal and external users but in a regulated way (different scope of access depending on category of users).

Such information provides elements of diagnosis for social policy implementation which have to be complemented by other sources and types of information (contextual indicators, qualitative information notably on the legislation and programmes, household surveys micro data, etc.).

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[1] ESSPROS is a common framework which enables international comparison of the administrative national data on social protection. It provides a coherent comparison between European countries of social benefits to households and their financing.

[2] The OECD Social Expenditure Database (SOCX) has been developed in order to serve a growing need for indicators of social policy. It includes reliable and internationally comparable statistics on public and (mandatory and voluntary) private social expenditure at programme level. Direct link: http://www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3343,en_2649_34637_381 41385_1_1_1_1,00.html

[3] See in section 2.3 *Decent work indicators framework*

2   Scope of the Inquiry: functions covered

The information collected and the indicators derived are classified by "contingency, risk or need". The contingencies, risks and needs therefore covered in the Inquiry encompass classification adopted in ILO Convention No. 102 and ILO Recommendations Nos. 67 and 69 namely: old age; disability; survivors; sickness and health; unemployment; employment injury and occupational disease[4]; family/children, maternity.
Supplemented by those encompassed in the wider definition of social protection namely: housing; basic education, other income support and assistance (n.e.c.) /social exclusion.

3   Scope: schemes and programmes covered

The notion of *social security* adopted here covers all measures providing benefits, whether in cash or in kind, to secure *protection,* inter alia, from:

(a) lack of work-related income (or insufficient income) caused by sickness, disability, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, old age, or death of a family member;

(b) lack of access or unaffordable access to health care;

(c) insufficient family support, particularly for children and adult dependants;

(d) general poverty and social exclusion.

Based on the above definition, the social security inquiry should cover:

- Private and public interventions
- Statutory and with exceptions non-statutory[5] social protection such as micro-insurance schemes
- Social insurance - income replacement
- Income support, minimum income guarantees and social cash transfers (either conditional or not; universal or targeted)
- Transfers in kind: social services - like basic education (under discussion) or health care but also

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[4] For the sake of easier reading, this function is referred to as the employment injury function in the text.

[5] In theory, the ILO social security inquiry covers both statutory schemes and some non-statutory schemes such as micro-insurance schemes. In reality, only a few countries present data on non-statutory schemes. The main reason being the fragmentation of these schemes and of actors involved resulting in difficulties in identifying these programmes or schemes and even harder to find sound data related to them. Bangladesh is one of the few examples available at present.

employment services and labour market programmes
- Transfers in kind: re-imbursements
- Subsidies and tax benefits – exemptions for social reasons

The main categories of institutions to be covered

- Compulsory and voluntary social insurance schemes;
- Universal non-contributory schemes;
- Provident funds;
- Special schemes for public employees;
- Employment injury schemes and employer liability in respect of employment injury;
- Family benefit schemes;
- Unemployment schemes;
- Industrial and occupational schemes or schemes and arrangements established by agreements between employers and workers;
- Public social assistance;
- National health services and health services provided by mutual health organisations.

Categories of institutions not covered
- Individual private insurance;
- Non-statutory welfare funds of establishments or occupational organizations;
- Private assistance and charity.

4 Scope: Data collected through the inquiry

The objective of the social security inquiry is to collect **quantitative data** on social security to calculate a set of indicators which are, as far as possible, comparable across countries and over time and available on a regular basis.

Two main categories of quantitative data are collected:

- Expenditure and Financing information:
  How much is invested in social security and where do the resources come from?
- *Who is covered and for which benefit(s)?* This includes some coverage indicators in terms of persons protected as well as actual beneficiaries, when possible desegregated by sex and age and average level of benefit by function, sex and age

This is complemented by some qualitative information on the main characteristics of each scheme or benefit as well as some direct links to the main responsible institution or to key documents and related resources.

The social security inquiry's main sources of data are registers and accounts of the institutions administering the social security schemes and programmes. As such, the inquiry is based mostly on administrative data with their specific advantages (low cost and exhaustive information on the population covered) and limitations (no information on the population not covered and their needs and the structural issue of data availability and quality especially in the developing world).

The box 1 below describes the main steps of data collection.

Box 1 | **Main steps of data collection and data collected**

Step 1 | **Inventory of social security schemes** and definition of each scheme

↳ Name of the scheme; Public / private schemes; mandatory or voluntary; Type of scheme: defined benefit, defined contribution, provident fund; Contributory | non contributory schemes

Step 2 | **General information at scheme level**

Data collection of both qualitative and quantitative information about target groups, sources of funding, qualifying conditions, etc.

- **Target groups**: Who is covered (or excluded) by the scheme. The objective is to identify the main group legally covered or actually targeted by the scheme or social security programme and to quantify this group.
- **Protected persons**: number of affiliated members and active contributors (in the case of contributory schemes or programmes) as well as average earnings, if available desegregated by age range and sex
- **Expenditure** at the scheme level following the international agreed classification: benefits expenditure (cash, in kind or rerouted social contributions), Administration cost; transfers to other schemes; and other expenditure
- **Revenue** at the scheme level: Social contributions (employers, employees/protected persons, rerouted contributions); General government contributions; Transfers from other schemes; and other receipts

Step 3 & 4 | For each scheme, **Benefits inventory and data collection at the benefit level**

The benefit is defined by the function (main contingency or risk addressed); the type of benefit (in cash or in kind; means tested or not); the target (which can be individuals or households) and the periodicity (periodic benefits such as pensions; ad-hoc benefits or lump sum). The data collected at the benefit level are the following:

- Benefit expenditure and minimum level if any
- Beneficiaries by age group and by sex
- Level of benefit by age group and by sex

5   Structure of the Inquiry and data collected

The ILO Social Security Inquiry aims at two levels: national data and scheme-level data. This dual approach is necessary to access information which is rarely available at the national level.

The core of the information in the ILO social security inquiry database can be found in the "Scheme information" section.

In addition to scheme level data, two categories of information are collected at the national level

- Some general data used as denominators for the automatic calculation of indicators. This covers population, employment and economic and financial data collected from the national statistical office or from the responsible ministries as well as from existing international[6] sources.
- Social security expenditure and revenue data available either from national or international sources according to the classification used in the country[7].

6   Data flows: data collection and data dissemination

6.1   Main channels for data collection

The main channel of data collection is through a national coordinator at the country level. This is the most efficient way to identify schemes (including programmes and projects targeting specific groups of the population and not necessarily publicly managed) but also the most costly one. In addition to the issue of resources availability, the regularity and sustainability of the process of data collection can also be seen as one of the limitations of this option.

Derived from this main channel, there is another one — the "ideal one" — based on a voluntary network of collaborators in the schemes and countries. The inquiry has been developed in order to allow direct data entry online by producers and users of social security data. Ideally, data can be entered and updated regularly directly from individual schemes, providing that they could find a direct advantage in doing so.
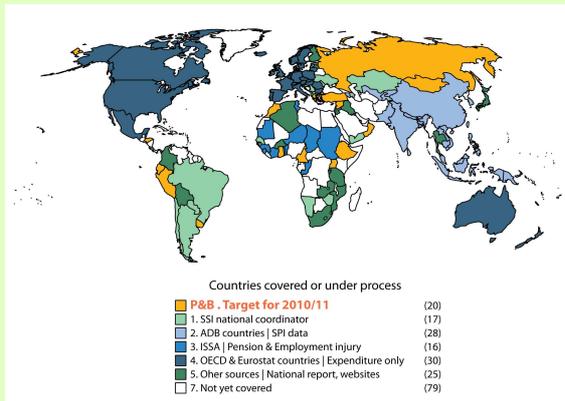
A second channel is the inclusion of data from available international and national sources and promoting the use of the social security inquiry methodology and tool by other organisations (ISSA, ADB, others)

- **ADB** data on expenditure and coverage used to calculate the Social Protection Index of the Asian Development Bank.
  - one of the main sources for 27 Asian countries (other Asian countries were covered using the first channel).
  - A comprehensive overview for one or two years but incomplete since 2005 depending on data availability from secondary sources.
- Data on expenditure, financing and coverage for selected countries collected by the International Social Security Association (**ISSA**) until 2006/2007 and stored in the *ISSA statistical database on social security in developing countries*.
  - Detailed information on expenditure and revenue for long-term benefits and in some cases on employment injury
  - 25 countries with a focus on developing countries mostly from Africa and Asia
  - Covers public compulsory statutory scheme(s)
- Data on expenditure from the **OECD** *Social Protection Expenditure* database (SOCX) with an "automatized" process to import data from SOCX into SSI format.
- National secondary sources composed of social security institutions annual and statistical reports, official websites as well as information collected in the course of specific ILO technical cooperation projects.

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[6] Several international existing databases: 1) UN population prospects (revision 2008) for population and fertility data; 2) ILO Laborsta for employment (total and by status), unemployment and economically active data; 3) IMF and Eurostat ESPROSS for social security expenditure (and revenue in the case of countries covered by Eurostat).

[7] Within the European Union, the standard is the ESSPROS system while comparable data for other parts of the world are available through the IMF's Government Finance Statistics (GFS), either according to the new GFS 2001 standard, or the older GFS 1986 standard.

Figure 1   Main sources of information used by country

Countries covered or under process

P&B . Target for 2010/11	(20)
1. SSI national coordinator	(17)
2. ADB countries | SPI data	(28)
3. ISSA | Pension & Employment injury	(16)
4. OECD & Eurostat countries | Expenditure only	(30)
5. Oher sources | National report, websites	(25)
7. Not yet covered	(79)

* Most countries are covered from several sources, most probably the best option to come with a comprehensive overview of social protection provision at the national level.
Source: ILO Social security Department

6.2   Flexible options for data dissemination

The policy in terms of data access and dissemination is to follow national specific schemes preferences. The online utility proposed various modes of consultation depending of users' rights: i) consultation mode versus edit mode; ii) public mode versus restricted through a username and a password. The login and password determine the list of countries, the list of schemes, the functions, etc.

7   **Aggregate** indicators and coverage measurement issues

At present there are two main categories of indicators available from the inquiry. The development of indicators is an ongoing process depending on data available and the needs expressed by users.

- **Expenditure indicators** (30 indicators in total):
  - Total social protection expenditure (public or private, mandatory and/ or voluntary), with and without health as a percentage of GDP or of the total government expenditure
  - Social benefit expenditure by social security branch as a percentage of total social benefit expenditure

- **Coverage indicators by function** (or social security branch) – around 10 indicators per social security branch

- Indicators of coverage are presented by branch or contingency and not an aggregate indicator of coverage.
- Indicators refer either to "protected persons" (affiliated or active contributors) or to actual beneficiaries
- For each indicator, various denominators are proposed with, as far as possible a reference to the target group for a defined contingency.

Depending on data availability and type of indicators, data are available for more than one hundred countries for one or several years (between 2000 and 2009).

The ILO social security inquiry online
http://www.ilo.org/dyn/ilossi/