



The UN Social Protection Floor Initiative

Delivering Joint Support to National Efforts

A UN-System Response to the Crisis

Countries around the world are stepping up efforts to respond to the needs of their population during the current crisis and beyond. This brief summarizes the agreed framework and manual for implementation of the UN Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I). Mandated by the Chief Executive Board (CEB) of the United Nations in April 2009, the SPF-I is part of a set of multilateral actions to address the recent crisis, deploying all UN resources and capacities in support of effective national responses.

Purpose of the Social Protection Floor Initiative

The Social Protection Floor Initiative aims to promote nationally defined strategies that protect a minimum level of access to essential services and income security for all. Grounded in the Universal Declaration, ILO Conventions on Social Security, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments, it focuses on two critical components:

- *Services*: Ensuring the availability, continuity, 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
- *Transfers*: Realizing access to services and providing a minimum income and livelihood security through a set of essential social transfers, in cash and in kind throughout the life cycle (children, working life, old persons) paying particular attention to vulnerable groups.

The Social Protection Floor takes a holistic approach to social protection, by working on the systematic relationship between services (the “supply side”) and means to ensure effective access including transfers (the “demand side”). A national Social Protection Floor guarantees access to essential services taking into account key characteristics of the population in given contexts (gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, disabilities, populations exposed to natural hazards, etc).

Implementing the SPF Initiative: Key Actions

Supporting countries in their efforts in building, expanding, extending or reorienting their social protection systems. The initiative will offer:

- High-quality/low-cost *technical assistance* to countries specific for this initiative.

- A *mechanism for increased interagency collaboration* to take advantage the complementary nature of UN members in-country experience, practical knowledge and technical capacity.

At country level

The national SPF frameworks will come in different shapes and sizes. Each country has different social needs, development objectives and fiscal capacity, and will choose a different set of policies. Interventions could include various age and gender-sensitive social protection programmes, such as early childhood development programmes, family allowances and parenting services, nutrition supports, access to life-saving medicines, health-insurance and outreach services, water and sanitation, active and passive labour market programmes, social and disability pensions, special needs education etc.

Taking into account existing plans, cooperative arrangements, and national capacity on social protection, country-level activities would consist of some or all of the following:

- *Raising awareness/advocacy* at national level – entering SPF into the national policy debate
- *Taking stock* of the social protection situation and needs to identify key gaps
- *Identifying viable policy options and concrete proposals for the specific country context* to close protection gaps.
- Through national dialogue, *elaborating country-specific measures* constituting a national social floor that builds on existing Social Protection activities.
- *Evaluating the cost and long-term financial sustainability* of alternative policy options *and identifying financing options*
- *Supporting the implementation* of identified policy measures, i.e. introducing transfers and /or building the service delivery systems including *increasing national technical capacity*
- *Monitoring and evaluation* to track the progress of the national SPF approach.

The SPF Initiative will be integrated into existing national planning processes, rather than creating a parallel process. The process to develop the SPF framework should always be consultative, inclusive and participatory, involving government representatives from relevant ministries, UN social partners, parliamentarians and civil society.

UN Resident Representatives will be responsible for the initiation of a national SPF task force where governments have requested assistance from the UN System to support the development of national SPF plans. In countries, where a Social Protection country team already exists, the UN Resident Coordinator should advocate for the group to pursue the SPF approach and integrate the national SPF tasks force with the existent group.

Cooperating UN agencies and Bretton Woods institutions will provide capacity and support through expertise available at the country level or through the Global Technical Advisory Network that will provide backup to national SPF task forces especially regarding:

- Adaptation of generic technical tools required at the country level in the different areas of the SPF-I.
- Guidance for country applications, including hands-on training to local and international experts.
- Assistance to UN country offices for the recruitment and training of technical experts as well as national candidates with a technical background that need minimum upgrading to work in the social protection environment.

- The provision of technical assistance and capacity building to national SPF task forces.
- Support to South-South collaboration, including peer-reviewing arrangements to ensure high quality advice on a national basis.

At regional and global levels

The activities of the Global Technical Advisory network to be achieved in the short and, medium term are the following:

- *Joint advocacy* in creation of awareness of the initiative, highlighting existing evidence of the impact of the crisis and the need for social protection, and mobilizing external resources.
- *Capacity building for national planners & implementers* – building on existing training and capacity-building activities, support immediate and long-term capacity development for different levels and areas of work.
- *Information sharing and knowledge management* - drawing on existing publications, tools, expertise and data that are useful for the development of the SPF, enable UN system to improve coordination and collaboration so as to better assist their member states and improve access to relevant Social Protection information for civil society actors, governments, the development community, social partners and the general public.
- *Monitoring and evaluation* – Technical assistance to strengthen national capacities, development of robust evaluation frameworks which can be adapted, inventory of existing databases and tools.

Participating UN-system agencies

FAO, ILO, IMF, OHCHR, UN Regional Commissions, UNAIDS, UNDESA, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNRWA, WFP, WHO, WMO, World Bank.

ILO and WHO are lead agencies at the global level. Leading and cooperating agencies may vary at the country level based on which agencies are best equipped to lead the SPF Initiative in concrete country contexts. Collaboration is also sought from development partners: i.e. bilateral donor agencies, development banks and NGOs working in social protection.

For further information on the Social Protection Floor Initiative, including the full version of the Manual and Strategic Framework and contact details, please visit:

<http://www.socialsecurityextension.org/gimi/gess/ShowTheme.do?tid=1321>

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