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WORLD SOCIAL PROTECTION REPORT

An abstract graphic in the bottom left corner consisting of several overlapping squares in various shades of blue and dark blue, creating a layered, geometric effect.

Universal social protection
to achieve the Sustainable
Development Goals

2017–19

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Preface

Social protection and the right to social security have been an integral element of the ILO's mandate since its creation in 1919. Since then, the ILO has supported its member States in progressively extending coverage and building their social protection systems, based on internationally agreed social security standards and good practice. While few countries had social protection systems in place a century ago, today virtually all countries do, and efforts to extend social protection coverage and benefits are continuing.

Over that period the ILO has developed and adopted a series of international standards which set out a normative framework for the right to social security. Complementing international human rights instruments, this normative framework today includes 16 up-to-date social security standards which guide national social protection policies. The most recently adopted standard, the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), reflects the global tripartite commitment to guarantee at least a basic level of social security to all in the form of a nationally defined social protection floor, and to ensure progressively wider scope and higher levels of protection.

This commitment to building social security systems, including floors, is also reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Most prominently, SDG 1.3 calls upon countries to implement nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, including floors, for reducing and preventing poverty. Furthermore, the importance of social protection for sustainable development is reflected in several other goals, including universal health coverage (SDG 3.8), gender equality (SDG 5.4), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8.5) and greater equality (SDG 10.4). Social protection policies not only protect people from various shocks across the life cycle, but also play a key role in boosting domestic demand and productivity, supporting structural transformation of national economies, and promoting decent work.

In light of the ambitious goals to be achieved by 2030, this *World Social Protection Report* provides a comprehensive assessment of the current state of social protection systems around the globe, their coverage, benefits, and expenditures, following a life-cycle approach. It highlights progress in expanding social protection as well as remaining gaps that need to be closed, and discusses key challenges to the realization of the right to social security. Based on the comprehensive ILO World Social Protection Database and the ILO Social Security Inquiry, an administrative survey submitted to

countries, the report presents first estimates of disaggregated coverage indicators for the monitoring of SDG indicator 1.3.1. Providing extensive, in-depth country-level statistics on various dimensions of social security, it thus serves as an essential reference for policy-makers and anyone interested in social protection.

While social protection is at the centre of the 2030 Development Agenda, the right to social security is not yet a reality for some 71 per cent of the world's population that has no or has only partial access to comprehensive social protection systems. It is clear that countries need to step up measures towards realizing this right.

At the same time the world is facing a number of fundamental challenges, such as demographic change, low economic growth, migration, conflicts and environmental problems. Employment patterns are evolving fast, with new forms of employment on the rise, with limited job and income security, and without adequate social protection. Growing income insecurity, including among the middle class, as well as decent work deficits have weighed heavily on perceptions of social justice and challenged the implicit social contract in many societies, while in others fiscal consolidation policies have threatened the long-term progress achieved towards the realization of the human right to social security and of other human rights.

These challenges can and must be addressed. Extending social protection coverage to those previously excluded and adapting social protection systems to new forms of work and employment, are essential to tackling decent work deficits and reducing vulnerability and insecurity.

The case for social protection is compelling in our times. Social protection measures not only support the realization of the human right to social security, but are both an economic and a social necessity. Well-designed social protection systems contribute to reducing poverty and inequality, while enhancing social cohesion and political stability. The important role of social protection for inclusive economic growth is underlined by bold efforts in strengthening social protection systems in a number of low- and middle-income countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Such progress in building social protection systems, including floors, demonstrates that our societies can afford to provide at least a basic level of social security to all, and to progressively extend the scope and level of social security coverage.

I hope that this report will be a valuable tool for practitioners and serve as an evidence-based resource for policy-makers in their pursuit to strengthen social protection, promote social justice and foster sustainable development.



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