

National Social Protection Floors in Asia and the Pacific

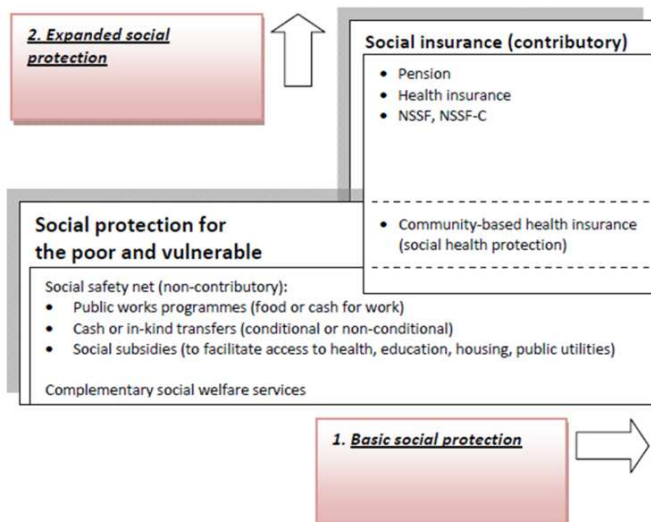
Building human capital and fostering economic growth

A priority for many countries in the region

While Asia-Pacific as a region has made significant economic progress in the last two decades and has lifted millions out of poverty, not all have benefited from these gains. Millions of people are still poor, deprived of access to essential social services, and increasingly vulnerable to economic downturns and the consequences of climate change. This threatens to reverse the hard-won human development gains of the past decade.

In this context several countries – including Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vanuatu and Viet Nam - have taken measures to ensure access to basic health care, income security, free education and food security for all those not yet covered by statutory social security schemes. Such measures are part of the Social Protection Floor (SPF). In some cases the schemes are universal – as in the case of the Universal Health Care Scheme in Thailand. In others the schemes are targeted towards the poorest – as is the case with the anti-poverty programmes in Indonesia that include access to health care, child benefits, and public works programmes.

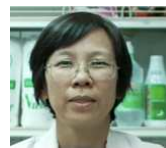
Some countries – such as Cambodia – have included the SPF concept in their National Social Protection Strategies (NSPS). Cambodia’s NSPS, adopted in 2011, states that the SPF is only a starting point. As the country develops people should have progressively greater access to sustainable and decent employment and higher levels of social protection.



What are Social Protection Floors?

Social Protection Floors (SPFs) are nationally-defined sets of basic social security guarantees. They aim to prevent or alleviate poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion. Such guarantees can be achieved through contributory or non-contributory schemes, either means-tested or universal.

In a country where a nationally-defined SPF is in place:



All residents should have access to a nationally-defined set of goods and services supporting essential health care, including for maternity.



All children should enjoy basic income security to at least at a nationally-defined minimum level, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services.



All persons of working age who are unable to earn sufficient income (for example because of sickness, unemployment, maternity or disability) should enjoy basic income security, at least at a nationally-defined minimum level.



All persons in old age should enjoy basic income security, at least at a nationally-defined minimum level.

The documentation of countries’ experience in establishing national floors of social protection feeds global discussions and reports, such as the recent publication “Social Protection Floor for a Fair and Inclusive Globalization” (known as the “Bachelet Report”) which was launched in Viet Nam, Thailand and Indonesia at the end of 2011; it was also useful for the preparation of the Recommendation concerning national floors of social protection.

National Social Protection Floors in Asia and the Pacific

Social Protection Floors top the regional policy agenda

In the Colombo Declaration (Colombo, Sri Lanka, 22 February 2011) seven Ministers in charge of social development from South Asia, reaffirmed their commitment to “advance the agenda for a Social Protection Floor”.

At their 67th session in May 2011, member states of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific adopted a resolution on “Strengthening social protection systems in Asia and the Pacific.”

The commitment to building “effective Social Protection Floors, in line with national circumstances” was reaffirmed by the ILO’s members at their 15th Asian and the Pacific Regional Meeting in Kyoto, Japan, in December 2011.

Two recommendations on the implementation of nationally-defined SPF were formulated in September 2011 at the 6th ASEAN Governments-NGO Forum on Social Welfare and Development, held in Bangkok, Thailand and in March 2012 at the ASEAN tripartite seminar held in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam.

An opportunity for the UN to work as one

In a number of countries UN agencies support the establishment of nationally defined SPFs using a collective or coordinated approach. Thailand’s UN Social Protection Floor Joint Team, established in March 2010, is a successful example of working as one to promote the SPF agenda and principles, formulating recommendations for the government, providing technical support and capacity building.

At the regional level the *UNDG Asia-Pacific Social Protection Issues Brief* lays out a joint UN position on social protection in Asia and the Pacific and presents potential entry points for UN Country Teams when supporting the development of national strategies for social protection, as well as their progressive, coordinated implementation.

Recommendation on national Social Protection Floors: a major breakthrough

Despite recent progress, in most countries in the Asia-Pacific region the four basic components of the SPF are not yet guaranteed to all. There is therefore a need to extend social protection further.

The *Recommendation concerning national floors of social protection* was adopted at 101st Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2012. The Recommendation provides useful guidance for ILO members who wish to (a) establish and maintain SPFs as a fundamental element of their national social security systems; and (b) implement SPFs within strategies on the extension of social security that progressively ensure higher levels of social security to as many people as possible, guided by ILO social security standards.

Knowledge sharing – Get involved!

Contribute to ILO’s knowledge sharing platform on social security extension, the GESS platform, and visit the pages dedicated to the social protection situation in Asia.

www.social-protection.org



ILO’s contribution to the establishment of nationally-defined SPFs in Asia and the Pacific receives support from:

- The ILO/Korea Partnership Programme,
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