

ONLINE

SOCIAL PROTECTION

# REGIONAL DIALOGUE FOR ACCELERATING SOCIAL PROTECTION COVERAGE AND SUSTAINABLE FINANCING IN AFRICA

8 APRIL 2021

*Concept Note and Programme*



International  
Labour  
Organization



International Training Centre

## BACKGROUND

According to Article 22 and Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), everyone has a right to social security and a decent standard of living.

Social protection powerfully contributes to reducing poverty, exclusion, and inequality while enhancing political stability and social cohesion. It is a powerful tool to prevent and recover from economic crises, natural disasters, and conflicts. Social protection contributes to economic growth by supporting household income and domestic consumption. Furthermore, social protection enhances human capital and productivity. Social protection is therefore essential for inclusive growth and sustainable development. Advancing social protection is also a condition for social justice and transformative change in the world of work and for the successful achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG target 1.3, 3.8, 5.4, 8.5 and 10.4.

Africa has shown very strong political will at the highest level to put in place policies aimed at building sustainable development and combating poverty by promoting social protection policies and ensuring effective access to social security to all the population. The political commitment is reflected in the Yaoundé Tripartite Declaration on the implementation of the Social Protection Floor (2011), the AUC's Ouagadougou + 10 Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development (2015), the Addis Ababa Declaration on Transforming Africa through Decent Work for Sustainable Development, among others. The Agenda 2063: The Africa we want outlines an African Union (AU) strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of Africa in the next 50 years and the Abidjan Declaration for the Centenary made by Constituents during the 14th African Regional Meeting in December 2019, calls for progressively extending sustainable social protection coverage. Furthermore, ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security and other sub-regional instruments provide guidance for social protection access and portability of benefits to migrant workers and their families.

Despite the relative importance given to social protection, at both regional and national levels, social protection coverage remains limited in the Continent especially in West Africa. Most recent ILO estimates show that Africa has the lowest social protection coverage in the world - 17.8% of the total population. This is compared with the global average of 45% (ILO, SSI). There are significant disparities across the continent: Southern and Northern Africa have relatively high coverage rates with 39.2% and 43% respectively, while it is 14% in central Africa, 11% in Eastern Africa and 8.7% in West Africa.

The Coverage gap in Africa is associated with a significant underinvestment in social protection. The level of average social protection expenditure compared to GDP in Africa is less than 5% compared with a global average of 8.6%. The northern and the southern are the Sub-Region that spend the most on social protection (average expenditure of 8.1 and 5.2 percent of GDP respectively), compared to Central Africa (1.5%) and West Africa (0.7%).

COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation. The crisis exposed the glaring gaps in social protection and underscored the worrying consequences of insufficient coverage, particularly in the informal

sector. It has reinforced the importance of ensuring adequate social protection coverage over the life cycle and across all forms of employment. The crisis compelled many governments to temporarily extend social protection to uncovered groups by introducing extraordinary measures and legislation. Many of the COVID-19 response measures have been built on existing formal employment mechanisms – leaving out the informal economy. Active efforts to reach the informal economy with social protection during the crisis was curtailed by the challenges of informality, including identification. The crisis however, presents an opportunity to build back better and advance social protection.

The root causes of social protection coverage deficits in the Continent include:

- **Need for a rights-based approach:** A prerequisite for universal coverage is the translation of the rights to social protection into entitlements to benefits as prescribed by national law. In many countries, existing social protection programmes are often not embedded in law.
- **Underfunding of social protection systems:** Africa is the region where the public expenditures in the area of social protection are the lowest according to ILO estimations. According to ILO estimations, the financing gap for the provision of four social protection benefits (maternity, children, disability and old age) and health care amounts to 8.5 per cent of GDP.
- **Large informal economy which is largely uncovered by social protection programmes:** Informal-economy workers and migrant workers usually do not have effective access to social insurance schemes, nor are they covered by the very limited tax financed social protection schemes.
- **Weak governance and administration systems:** In many countries, social protection systems are not sufficiently implemented with regards to governance and administration. Broad issues are concerned, including the absence of tripartite social dialogue, inefficiency in administrative process such as registration, collecting contributions, financial management, and monitoring.
- **Absence of policy and institutional coordination:** Social protection systems are highly fragmented and there is no policy coherence among the different schemes and across sectors, particularly social, employment and economic sectors.

Considering the political, social and economic imperative for accelerating the extension of social protection in Africa and as required by the 2019 Abidjan Declaration, ILO regional Office had developed a strategy, structured into four action areas:

- Action area 1: Enhance coverage and adequacy through strong social protection strategies, legal framework and programmes
- Action Area 2: Close financing gaps by ensuring adequate and sustainable financing for the extension of social security coverage
- Action Area 3: Develop strategic partnerships
- Action Area 4: Create an enabling Environment

The extension of social protection to workers in informal economy and creating more fiscal space for social protection are major challenges for achieving universal social protection coverage in Africa.

## OBJECTIVES

This meeting is an opportunity for relevant stakeholders to discuss the policy options for the extension of social protection to workers in informal economy and creating more fiscal space for social protection.

Specific objectives are :

- To discuss the challenges faced by African countries in extending social protection to workers in the informal economy as well as good practices;
- To Identify policy options for the extension of social protection to workers in the informal economy;
- To discuss financing social protection extension strategies.

## FORMAT AND CONTENT

The meeting will be held exclusively online and structured into three sessions:

- **Session 1: Challenges for the extension of social protection to workers in informal economy and good practices:** Panel with six speakers (A representative from a Ministry in charge of Social Security, A representative from a Social Security Institution, from workers and employer' organizations, A representative from the UNDP and AU), followed by plenary discussion
- **Session 2: Financing social protection extension strategies:** Panel with six speakers (A representative from a Ministry of Finance, A representative from IMF and WB, a representative from ILO's Social Protection Department, a Representative from employer and workers' organization), followed by plenary discussion.
- **Session 3:** Wrap up and way forward (plenary discussion).

The meeting will be organized by the ILO in close collaboration with the African Union Commission and UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa.

The meeting will be conducted in English, French and Portuguese. Simultaneous interpretation will be available throughout the meeting.

## PARTICIPANTS

- African Union Commission representatives – AU Commission and AU Organs
- Representatives from Regional Economic Communities (RECs)
- Representatives from Governments (Ministries in charge of social security and Finance)
- Representatives of workers and employers' organizations at Continental and national level
- Representatives from social security institutions and social security association
- Development partners (EU Delegation, EC, ICMPD, SIDA, UK Aid, Irish Aid, SDC AfDB, World Bank, IMF)
- UN Agencies (UNDECO, UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNICEF)
- Civil Society Organizations, Research and academia

## DATE AND SCHEDULE

- ONLINE E-Conference link to be communicated March
- 8 April 2021 from 08:00 am to 11:00 am (GMT)

Times	Sessions
08h00 – 08h20	<b>Opening remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commissioner of Social Affairs (AUC)</li> <li>• Regional Director of UN Development Coordination Office</li> <li>• Director of SOCPRO</li> <li>• Regional Director of ILO</li> </ul>
08h20 – 09h30	<b>Session 1 : Challenges for the extension of social protection to workers in informal economy and good practices</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaker 1 : A Representative from a Ministry of Social Security (10 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 2 : A Representative from a social security institution (10 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 3 : A Representative from a workers' organization (5 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 4: A Representative from an employers' organization (5 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 5 : A representative from AU (10 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 6: A Representative from the UNDP (10 min)</li> <li>• Plenary discussion (20 min)</li> </ul>
09h30-09h35	<b>Break</b>
09h35 – 10h35	<b>Session 2: Financing social protection extension strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaker 1 : Deputy Director, ILO Social Protection Department (10 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 2 : A Representative from a Ministry of Finance (Egypt) (10 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 3 : A Representative from IMF (10 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 4: A Representative from WB (10 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 5: A Representative from an employers' Organization (5 min)</li> <li>• Speaker 6: A Representative from a workers' organization (5 min)</li> <li>• Plenary discussion (20 min) pre-registration</li> </ul>
10h35-10h40	<b>Break</b>
10h40 – 10h50	<b>Session 3: Wrap up and way forward</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Representative from Government</li> <li>• A Representative from an Employer' Organization</li> <li>• A Representative from a workers' organization</li> </ul>
10h50 – 11h00	<b>Closing remarks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ILO Regional Director for Africa</li> <li>• AUC Commissioner of Social Affairs</li> </ul>

# INFO

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION  
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