**Report to the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights on “Social protection: a reality check”**

* **Preamble:**

Coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the adoption of ILO Recommendation No. 202, which reaffirmed the right to social security as a human right and set guidelines for establishing social protection fundamentals, and out of **Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights**’ belief in the importance of the thematic reports prepared by the special rapporteurs of the United Nations, both on-site and country mandates, and in their interest in providing them with information and opinions on the issues to which they attach particular importance, in order to include them in their thematic reports to the Human Rights Council or to the General Assembly of the United Nations, Maat for Peace would like to participate in this report with a view to contributing to the report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights to the fiftieth session of the Human Rights Council, to be held in June 2022, in which he requests an analysis of the gap between the legal basis and the actual reality of social protection as well as the situation of informal workers. as well as identifying obstacles individuals and families face in seeking social protection. Maat for Peace believes that the issues raised by the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty apply to the measures taken by many countries to ensure social protection for citizens during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

* **Background on Social Protection:**

Social protection systems help individuals and families, especially the poor and vulnerable, to cope with crises and shocks, find jobs, improve productivity, invest in their children's health and education, and protect elderly. It also helps to end poverty and promote shared prosperity. Comprehensive coverage of social protection services includes social assistance through cash transfers to those in need, especially children, benefits and support for those of working age in the event of maternity, disability, work injury or unemployed persons, as well as old age pension coverage. Assistance is provided through social insurance, tax-funded social benefits, social assistance services, public works programs and other basic income-saving programs.

Social protection systems have a prominent place among the sustainable development goals, with **sub-goal 1-3 goals** on poverty eradicationcalling for the development and minimum coverage of appropriate social protection systems and measures at the national level for all and for broad health coverage for the poor and vulnerable by 2030.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**ILO recommendation 202** also provides guidelines that should be taken into account in establishing minimum standards of social protection. In its preamble, the recommendation emphasizes that ***the right to social security is a human right and an important tool not only to eradicate poverty, inequality, social exclusion and social insecurity, but also to promote equal opportunities, gender and racial equality***. ILO recommendation 202 therefore provides guidance to Member States on ways to broaden the scope of minimum social protection and adapt it to national circumstances. It emphasizes the need for minimum social protection to include at least four basic safeguards:

1. Access to basic health care, including maternity care.
2. Provide basic income security for children, including access to nutrition, education, care and any other essential goods or services.
3. Providing basic income security for persons of working age who are unable to earn an adequate income, especially in cases of illness, unemployment, maternity and disability.
4. Providing basic income security for older persons.[[2]](#footnote-2)

These principles are derived from States’ human rights obligations. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, **in paragraph 2 of its general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security (article 9)** made it clear that the right to social security includes the right to benefits Without discrimination, to secure protection from matters including deprivation of income resulting from work due to illness, disability, maternity, work injuries, unemployment, old age, death of a family member, inability to pay health care costs, or insufficient family support. The Committee also stresses that it is the duty of States to provide social protection for all in a manner that guarantees comprehensive coverage based on reasonable, proportionate and transparent eligibility criteria that is affordable and accessible to beneficiaries in practice, and that ensures their participation in the administration of entitlements and access to information related to them. Men and women should enjoy equal Equality in social security, in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 2, on non-discrimination, and Article 3, on equal enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.[[3]](#footnote-3)

* **Major gaps in the social protection system during the Covid- 19 outbreak and populations not adequately covered by social protection systems:**

The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic around the world and the accompanying many measures taken to undermine its spread have revealed the devastating impact of social protection gaps in both high- and low-income countries. Despite the unprecedented expansion of social protection systems around the world during the Covid-19 outbreak, more than four billion people around the world remain without protection at all. In light of the inefficiency and inadequacy of plans to confront the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic, the gap between countries has deepened, and in many countries social protection plans have failed due to many reasons, including **the lack of investment in social protection**, especially in Africa, the Arab countries and Asia, where these countries spend on average about 12.9% of the GDP on social protection (excluding health), where high-income countries spend on average about 16.4%, twice what the upper middle-income countries spend 8%, and six times what lower middle-income countries spend, and 15 times what countries spend Low-income 2.5% and 1.1%, respectively.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Also among the gaps faced by many countries in implementing social protection systems are **the high levels of economic insecurity and the increasing rates of poverty and inequality rooted in social protection systems** around the world. From 2020, only 46.9% of the world's population received at least one social protection benefit, excluding health and disease benefits, while the remaining 53.1%, or 4.1 billion people do not receive any social protection benefits at all. Europe and Central Asia had the highest social protection coverage rates, with 83.9% of their population receiving at least one social protection benefit. The Americas also received 64.3% of their population social protection coverage, higher than the world average, while Asia and the Pacific each had lower coverage rates of 44.1%, followed by Arab States with about 40%, and Africa with very low coverage rates of 17.4%.[[5]](#footnote-5)

It is considered one of the groups that are still deprived of effective coverage of social protection are children and people with disabilities, where only one child out of every four children, or 26.4%, receives one of the social protection benefits. Only 45% of women who have recently given birth receive cash maternity benefit. Only one in three severely disabled persons receives disability benefit (33.5%).[[6]](#footnote-6)

* **Protecting informal workers with state social protection systems during the Covid-19 outbreak:**

There are more than 2 billion workers around the world working in the informal economy, most of whom are not covered by social protection systems, 1.6 billion of whom work in the most affected sectors. These groups did not have adequate or no prior access to existing social protection measures. Also, half of the world's population did not have access to health services before the Corona crisis, and 40% were not affiliated with a social health insurance system or a National Health Service, forcing many people to pay large amounts of their own money to get the treatment they needed.[[7]](#footnote-7)

We find, for example, that social protection coverage in Africa is limited and unequal. It ranges from 48% in South Africa to less than 10% in some West African countries. Spending on these programs is also uneven across the continent ranging from 4% to less than 0.5% of GDP. Although progress has been made in social protection programs for children and the elderly, there are still gaps in coverage of the unemployed and people with disabilities. Moreover, the majority of informal workers on the continent are rarely covered by any form of social protection.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In Nigeria, for example, lack of social protection exposes its population to serious welfare losses. Prior to the outbreak, less than 2% of Nigerians were enrolled in the country's social protection program known as the National Social Safety Net Project (NASSP). Social protection program coverage remained low throughout the Corona virus crisis. Between March 2020 and March 2021, only 4% of families received cash support from the federal or local government, far less than was needed to cope with the widening and deepening of poverty caused by the crisis.[[9]](#footnote-9)

In the north of the continent, the Egyptian experience is one of the highly praised experiences in this regard, as it launched Egypt’s strategy for sustainable development in February 2016 and through it sought to achieve social protection for the most vulnerable groups by providing the basic needs of poor families and providing health care to the most vulnerable groups, as well as protecting people with Special needs and the provision of job opportunities for the poor and low-income, through the many different social protection programs in Egypt.[[10]](#footnote-10)

During the Covid-19 crisis of 2020/2021, the Egyptian government made many efforts to care and protect irregular employment in various sectors, in particular contracting, construction, agriculture and street vendors. Where an inventory of irregular employment has been made at the level of the Republic and six grants have been approved for care, each with 500 pounds, for a total of 5 billion and 461 million pounds.[[11]](#footnote-11)

At the level of legislation - even before the Covid-19 crisis - the Social Insurance and Pensions Law promulgated by Law No. 148 of 2019 was keen to include the labor force from irregular workers to the social insurance umbrella. The law identified those categories, which are: Quran teachers, reciters, domestic workers and the like, and migrant workers Temporary workers in agriculture and the like, owners of agricultural lands who do not possess them and whose ownership is less than an acre, chanters and other servants of the church. The Ministry of Manpower was keen to build an integrated system to care for these workers, register them, and count them to provide all aspects of health and social care, and initiated social insurance procedures and granted them certificates to measure the level of skill and a license to practice the craft and to prove it in the national ID cards[[12]](#footnote-12). According to this law, the irregular worker is able to obtain a pension that will be determined according to the period for which he participated, and not less than the minimum pension, provided that it increases every year.[[13]](#footnote-13)

While in Qatar, it did not include foreign workers, especially those working in preparations for the 2022 World Cup, within the health care system - as a form of social protection - during the outbreak of Covid 19, as the Qatari government was involved in committing a number of violations of workers' rights related to the World Cup, but during the outbreak of the Covid crisis 19 It did not adequately provide health care as an integral part of social protection for foreign workers, as many human rights reports confirmed that they had been left prey to the Corona virus since its outbreak, and reports revealed in March 2020 that huge numbers of workers in Qatar were infected with the Corona virus and that the Qatari authorities refused to treat them and placed them Large numbers of them are in unqualified hospitals. Qatar also ignored the demands of the World Health Organization to conduct a periodic examination of the workers participating in the construction of World Cup projects to verify that they were infected with the virus. Doha also rejected the instructions of international organizations to treat workers by equipping a full medical hospital, in addition to its refusal to return for treatment in their countries, and threatened those trying to travel, as well as its refusal to have health insurance for workers in World Cup projects.[[14]](#footnote-14)

* **Challenges facing social protection systems:**

Social protection programs in many countries face a number of challenges of limited and inadequate levels of support. In many countries, social protection systems target vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly and the disabled. However, a large number of persons who may not have another source of income, particularly those who are unemployed, are excluded.[[15]](#footnote-15)

In Egypt, youth exclude the other major component of the informal sector from access to social protection programs. About 43% of youth who work informally are deprived of all forms of social protection, which has serious long-term consequences of depriving large numbers of young people of insurance and pension coverage as they reach retirement age.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Also, one of the challenges facing the activation of social protection systems for all without discrimination is to ensure equality of treatment between migrant workers, especially the elderly, and citizen workers in retirement systems as one of the aspects of social protection systems, which is one of the necessities in order to protect their right to social protection and avoid negative effects on the market the work.

The most prominent example of inequality here is the Gulf countries, where foreign workers have been excluded from the retirement systems that benefit citizens in the Gulf region, and the social protection systems in the Gulf countries have allowed their governments to shirk their social responsibility, as the countries of the region deepen the fragility of the situation experienced by immigrants despite their being fundamentals of the economy. The Covid-19 crisis has only made the fate of the older ones worse. For example, Kuwait chose to return foreign workers to their countries of origin. Since January 2020, the residence permit has not been renewed for migrant workers over 65 years of age.

Foreign workers in the Gulf States have also been excluded from generous pension schemes, being exclusively reserved for their citizens. As the Covid-19 crisis showed that foreign workers were treated in a "Thrown after use" formula, although they form the backbone of the economics of the Gulf Area's retirement regulations towards foreign workers. One. The region has no obligation to foreign workers after the expiration of their employment contract because they receive end-of-service benefits, but the Corona crisis has revealed that even the end-of-service bonus has not been received by many foreign workers, many of whom during the Corona crisis were forced to sign voluntary resignations.[[17]](#footnote-17)

* **Recommendations:**

1. Increasing financial allocations and government appropriations for social protection in order to fill the funding gaps for social protection programs.
2. Combining international efforts to eliminate inequality, eradicate poverty and promote decent work for all without discrimination in order to leave no one behind as the ultimate goal of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
3. Redirecting financial and administrative resources from other social assistance programs and focus on providing a comprehensive basic income for all, ensuring basic needs and protection against risks.
4. Reducing the growth of the informal labor market and build a more advanced information network on workers without legal contracts to ensure protection in times of crisis.
5. Policies must be developed and implemented that include childcare subsidies and services.
6. Significantly integrating civil society into policies to address major crises such as the Corona pandemic, providing a more comprehensive and reflective vision for decision makers, where civil society can contribute to filling gaps in Governments' social protection systems.

1. يمكن الرجوع إلى الغايات المراد تحقيقها من القضاء على الفقر ( الغاية 1-3) ضمن اهداف التنمية المستدامة على موقع ادارة الشؤون الاقتصادية والاجتماعية -الامم المتحدة، الرابط، <https://sdgs.un.org/ar/goals/goal1> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. تقرير الأمين العام عن مسألة إعمال الحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية في جميع البلدان، معروض امام الدورة الثامنة والعشرون ، 22 ديسمبر 2014، الرابط، <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/Pages/ListReports.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. تقرير الأمين العام عن مسألة إعمال الحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية في جميع البلدان، معروض امام الدورة الثامنة والعشرون ، 22 ديسمبر 2014، الرابط، <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session28/Pages/ListReports.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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5. معلومات الوزراء: المبادرات والجهود الحكومية نجحت فى تحقيق الحماية الاجتماعية، اليوم السابع، 17 نوفمبر 2021، الرابط، <https://bit.ly/31DFizT> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. World Social Protection Report 2020-22, International Labour Organization, 01 September 2021, link, <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_817572.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. World Social Protection Report 2020-22, International Labour Organization, 01 September 2021, link, <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_817572.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Four lessons COVID-19 provides for improving Africa’s social protection systems, Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa, 1 September 2021, link, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2021/09/01/four-lessons-covid19-pandemic-improving-africa-social-protection-systems-cash-transfer/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Jonathan Lain & Tara Vishwanath, The COVID-19 crisis in Nigeria: What’s happening to welfare? New data call for expanded social protection in Africa’s most populous country, World Bank Blogs,16 November 2021, link, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/africacan/covid-19-crisis-nigeria-whats-happening-welfare-new-data-call-expanded-social-protection> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
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