

Where We Stand Statement: Social Protections

Where Things Stand

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines social protection as:

“Social protection, or social security, is a human right and is defined as the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Social protection includes benefits for children and families, maternity, unemployment, employment injury, sickness, old age, disability, survivors, as well as health protection. Social protection systems address all these policy areas by a mix of contributory schemes (social insurance) and non-contributory tax-financed benefits, including social assistance.”

Despite significant progress in the extension of social protection in many parts of the world, the right to social security is not yet a reality for a majority of the world’s population. Only 45 per cent of the global population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit, while the remaining 55 per cent – as many as 4 billion people – are left unprotected. ILO estimates also show that only 29 per cent of the global population are covered by comprehensive social security systems that include the full range of benefits, from child and family benefits to old-age pensions. Yet the large majority – 71 per cent, or 5.2 billion people – are not, or are only partially, protected.

And Where things need to go.....

Fundamental Action

Quality education accessible beyond the primary level, can be regarded as one of the major pillars of social protection, offering women and girls the opportunity to develop their full capacity and to engage in social entrepreneurship or find meaningful employment, thus enabling an income sufficient to sustain herself and her family. Along with the provision of supportive health systems, adequate housing to meet family needs and the safety of social security financial provisions across the life span, women and girls could be lifted out of poverty and provided with a self-sustaining future.

Governments should recognize and implement existing agreements. To be protected is not a privilege, but a right as stated in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This right was reaffirmed by the Social Protection Floors Recommendation unanimously adopted by 184 members of the International Labour Conference in 2012.

Further Action Required

Governments need to create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels to provide universal, human rights based social protection for all. Goal 1 of the 2030 Agenda for Social Development to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere,” calls for the implementation of “nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors,” as well as the achievement of “substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable” by 2030.

Where Soroptimist International Stands.....

Soroptimist International sees social protection as a key strategy for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all.

These are the principles that Soroptimist International strongly supports and will advocate for on behalf of women and girls:

- The right to social security, across all ages and for all vulnerabilities, as part of national legislation
- A comprehensive social protection program based on human rights
- A long-term funding strategy at the state level to support social protection systems
- Access to social services must be available to all without discrimination

As an international organization, with members in 123 countries, we encourage our members to advocate at their national level for the implementation and sustainability of social protection programs to empower women and girls.