Social security

Making sure everyone can get support

Plain English

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Introduction

This is a report that was prepared for a meeting of the Human Rights Council. The meeting is from 24 February to 4 April 2025. The Human Rights Council talks about human rights. Human rights are things that all people should have. This includes civil rights, political rights, economic rights, social rights and cultural rights. This means that people should have the right to have money, be part of society and have a culture.

This report is about making sure people have social security. Social security is when people are protected if bad things happen. In the report, we explain what countries should do about social security. Social security can help people. Countries have tried to give more people social security. But there are still problems. It is important to have good social security systems. These systems make sure everyone is protected. They pay attention to people who might have more problems than others.

The right to social security

Social security is in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights explains what human rights people around the world have. An agreement called the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights says that everyone should have social security. This includes social insurance. Social insurance is when the government gives people money when they cannot work.

The International Covenant also says that countries should help families as much as they can. It says that countries should help mothers before and

after they have a baby. It also says that countries should help and protect children and young people. Countries should do everything they can to make sure that everyone has these rights.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights says that countries must make sure that people have the basics. This includes healthcare, shelter, water, food and education. They also say that countries must let everyone use social security. And they must protect the social security that is already there.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also helped to make sure that people have social security. This is an organization that speaks up for workers around the world.

Social security is about making sure that people have enough money to live on. The ILO has a set of rules called the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention. These rules say what countries should do to make sure people have enough money to live on. The ILO also made a set of rules called the Social Protection Floors Recommendation. This says that countries must make sure that everyone has at least the basics.

Sustainable development goals

The United Nations has a plan called the Sustainable Development Goals. Countries around the world have signed up to this plan. Sustainable Development Goals are goals to make the world better by 2030. One of the goals is to make sure everyone has social protection. Social protection is help from the government. It can be money, food, or healthcare. We want to make sure everyone has enough money to live. We also want to make sure

everyone has enough food, clean water, and a good job. We want to make sure everyone gets a good education, and that men and women are treated fairly.

What countries have been doing

Social protection

Social protection is important because there are lots of problems in the world, like climate change, pollution and wars. These problems can make it hard for some people to get what they need and be safe. This is even harder for women, persons with disabilities, older persons and children. By 2030, most of the people in the world who are very poor will live in places where there are wars or disasters. If things stay the same, 590 million people might be very poor in 2030. We need to make social protection better and help the people who need it the most.

Social protection has been shown to help make things more equal. It has helped during the Covid-19 pandemic and with climate change. Social protection is also very important when there are serious problems, like natural disasters and wars. It has helped people to be strong and helped the government to act quickly. During the pandemic, countries around the world gave people more social protection. But not everyone got the help they needed. The pandemic showed us new problems that need to be fixed by 2030.

Gaps in social protection

Not everyone has enough social protection. The ILO says that in 2024, more than half of the world's people had some form of social protection. But, 3.8 billion people still do not have any social protection.

Some countries have more people with social protection than others. Countries with less money have fewer people with social protection. People might not have social protection because:

- There are no good laws or rules about social protection.
- The systems only help people with formal jobs, like working in an office.
- There is not enough money to help everyone.
- There are not good long-term plans to help everyone.
- The systems leave out groups of people.
- The rules to get help are too hard.
- The systems do not have enough staff.
- People do not know enough about the systems.
- Countries decide that only some people should get help. But this leaves out many people who need help.
- Some people who should get help do not ask for it.

People who are in need of help, like people who are alone or poor, are often left out. The systems also do not work well together. This means that there are no good connections between different services. So, the help that people get is not as good as it could be.

No social protection for some groups

Some groups of people do not get enough social protection. This includes:

- People who do not have much money.
- Women.
- Children.
- Refugees and migrants.
- Persons with disabilities.
- Older persons.
- People who do not have a job.
- People who have an informal job. Informal jobs are not official. People who work in these jobs often do not pay tax, or get government support.

Women have less help than men. Many women do not get help when they have a baby. They also do not get as much money for when they are older. This is because women often do not have jobs that pay as much as men, and they do more work at home.

Over 2 billion people in the world work in an informal job. Most people who work in an informal job do not have social protection. It is very important that people who work in informal jobs get help and support.

Not enough money

Some countries do not have enough money for healthcare and social protection. These countries would need to spend more money to make sure everyone has enough social protection. Poorer countries would need to spend a lot more money. It is hard for these countries to get enough money for social protection. Many of these countries owe a lot of money. This has become a big problem for many countries. It is hard for them to pay back money they owe. This means there is less money for things like social protection. The world needs to help countries, especially the poorest countries, to spend more money on social protection.

Social security and human rights

Social security systems should be fair and respect people's human rights. Social protection should be good, cheap, easy to get and available to everyone. It should help people who need it the most. Countries should make rules to make sure that everyone gets the help they need. The best social security systems are made by listening to people who need them.

Making laws

It is important that every country has laws about social security. This will help to make sure that everyone can get the support they need. Some countries, like Colombia and Guatemala, have rules about social security in their laws. This is a good start, but more needs to be done.

Countries should make sure that they have enough money for social security. Countries should also think about how to make sure that everyone can get the support they need. Some countries have made good plans and rules for social security. For example, Timor-Leste has made a plan called the National Strategy for Social Protection. This plan has three goals: to reduce poverty, to give more support to workers, and to make government services better. This country is also working on making sure that different parts of the government work together to make this plan happen. Jordan and Nepal have made plans to help people. This has helped different parts of the government to work together and help people better.

Social protection floors

As part of making sure people have the right to social security, we should make social protection floors. These are rules in each country that give people certain basic things they need to live. These rules must give people the things they need to live throughout their lives. They should pay special attention to people who are most at risk of being hurt by lack of money or other problems. This includes children, older persons, persons with disabilities, people with informal jobs, and people who are not from that country.

The ILO says that social protection floors should give people basic social security. This means they should give people the basic things they need to live a good life, like healthcare and money to live on. There are different ways to give people these things, like giving them money or giving them items and services they need.

Countries can use different ways to make social protection floors, depending on what their country is like. Some poorer countries have made social protection floors. This has shown that all countries can afford to make them.

Spending money on social protection floors before problems happen can stop countries, communities, and people from being hurt by serious problems. Spending money on social protection systems, especially on social protection floors, is important for reaching the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Making sure everyone can get social protection

Countries can use different ways of giving people social protection. These ways might include getting people to pay for help through things like insurance, or giving people government help for free. In Mauritius, everyone over 60 years old gets money from the government each month. In Kenya, everyone over 70 years old gets money from the government each month. In Oman, the government gives money to everyone who is a child, everyone who has a disability, and everyone who is over 60. In Mongolia, the government gives money to all children.

Some countries are making changes to help people who work in informal jobs. They are doing this in two main ways:

- Formalization: This means making these jobs more official. This can include things like social insurance. This way, the government can give money to these people.

- Non-contributory social protection: This means giving money to people even if they have not paid into social security.

In Togo in 2021, a social security fund made a new program for people who work in informal jobs. This program included them in the old-age pension program. In 2022, Jordan made a special fund to help people who work in

informal jobs. This fund will give them money and social security. This will help 13,000 people move from informal jobs to formal jobs.

Countries like Switzerland and Eritrea have made changes to their social security systems to help more people. For example, Eritrea made a new law in 1994 to make sure everyone in the country gets enough money to live. They made new laws about things like maternity leave, pensions, disability benefits, and health care. It is important to make sure people get enough money to live on. Countries should make sure that the money they give to people changes as the cost of living changes. For example, in 2021, Cambodia made a new pension program for people who are getting older. This program will help 1.5 million people and give them good services through technology.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) looks at human rights around the world. They are doing a lot of work on social protection. They are looking at how much money the government spends on social protection and other things. One thing they did was to look at how well social protection works for people who work in informal jobs in Cambodia. They found that more than half of the people they asked did not want to pay for health insurance. Many said this was because they did not have enough money. They also found that how much money you have, how big your family is, and what job you have should all be thought about when deciding how much you should pay for social protection. They also found that people need to know what social protection is available to them. The OHCHR hopes that this information will help the government to make social protection better.

Being fair to women

It is important that social protection helps women. This is because women often do not have as much money as men. Also, women often do a lot of work at home and taking care of people. Sometimes women are hurt because of their gender. Because of this, women may not have much control over their lives.

Social protection can help stop poverty. It can also help women and children get out of poverty. The support can also help women be stronger, and help fix the things that cause women and children to live in poverty.

This support should also be fair for men and women, persons with a disability, and people of different ages. It should also respect the rights of the people who look after others and the people who get looked after. To do this, everyone should understand and value care work. Care work is very important for having a fair society that helps everyone.

Paying for social security

It is important that everyone can get social security. Countries need to put more money into social security to make this happen. Every country can do this in different ways. One way is for countries to spend money they already have on social security. Another way is to make sure people pay the right amount of tax. Countries can also get help from other countries to pay for social security. This help is called official development assistance. The countries who give other countries official development assistance are called donors. If all donors gave enough money to official development assistance, it would make a big difference. We also need to change the way

we support countries that owe money. The UN is working on a plan to help countries work together on taxes. They will keep working with countries to find ways to pay for social security. This includes making sure that the money for social security is not used for other things. It includes making sure that the money is spent wisely and that people who need help are involved in the decision-making.

What should happen next

The Secretary-General has some suggestions for countries to make sure people have enough money and support to live well. They are:

1. Make sure everyone has the right to social security.

2. Make sure that their laws about social security are fair, and follow human rights laws.

3. Make sure everyone can get social security, including persons with disabilities, children, and refugees.

4. Make sure that everyone can get basic support, through social protection floors.

5. Make sure that social security is enough to give people a good life.

6. Check that they are not being unfair, especially for people who do not have computers or do not know how to use them to claim social security.

7. Make it easier to apply for social security.

8. Make sure that people who work in informal jobs can get social security.

9. Make sure that women and girls can get support.

10. Spend more money on social security.

11. Make sure that countries have enough money to pay for social security.

12. Make laws to say that people have the right to social security.

13. Support the UN in our work to protect people's human rights.

14. Use the Second World Summit for Social Development in 2025 to talk about social security and other important topics.