

Ms Lene Natasha Lind
Nordic-Baltic Executive Director at the World Bank

18 oktober 2021

Dnr: 2021-1404

Dear Ms. Lind

Act Church of Sweden would like to take the opportunity of the ongoing IDA replenishment process to raise some issues of concerns regarding the role of IDA20, and more generally of the World Bank Group, in promoting the right to social protection.

Investments in social protection are more crucial than ever. Indeed, in 2021, as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, approximately 96 million people have been pushed into poverty, of whom 47 million are women and girls¹, disproportionately hit due the negative impact of increased care workload on their economic power.

Facing these observations, many political leaders and international actors scaled up their social protection systems and responses. Yet, even if global spending on social protection increased, it only represents about 3% of global GDP.² Additionally, the measures taken were uneven, often insufficient in value and coverage and merely temporary.³ For instance, only 4.5% of the population in low-income countries benefited from cash transfers⁴; while less than 1 in 5 social protection measures enacted by governments were gender sensitive⁵, let alone transformational.

Nonetheless, the hopeful prospect of this situation is the renewed political interest for social protection, and a global better understanding of its crucial role in the realization of basic social and economic rights. The World Bank Group, being the biggest financial development partner regarding social protection, must take the opportunity of the early replenishment of IDA20 to make a strong move towards universal social protection floors, key tools to effectively fight poverty and help recognize, reduce, and redistribute care work.

Indeed, all social protection systems are not equivalent. Sadly, the World Bank has been promoting poverty targeted social assistance programs ("safety nets") for a long time. These programs are problematic as the targeting methods (such as proxy means tests) are inaccurate and leave many of the most vulnerable behind.⁶ Furthermore, the COVID19 crisis has exposed the fact that poverty targeted

¹ G. Azcona, A. Bhatt, J. Encarnacion, J. Plazaola-Castaño, P. Seck, S. Staab, L. Turquet, UN Women (2020). From insight to action - Gender equality in the wake of Covid19. Geneva. p. 6, 7.

² World Bank (2021). Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures - "Living paper" version 15 (May 14, 2021). Washington. p. 14.

³ US\$10.6 trillion were mobilized globally in social protection measures to respond to the COVID19 crisis, however, only 0.06% of that amount was mobilized in low-income countries. F.Durán Valverde et al., International Labour Organization (2020). Financing Gaps in Social Protection: Global Estimates and Strategies for Developing Countries in Light of COVID-19 and Beyond. Geneva

⁴ World Bank (2021). Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures - "Living paper" version 15 (May 14, 2021). Washington. p. 13.

⁵ G. Azcona, A. Bhatt, J. Encarnacion, J. Plazaola-Castaño, P. Seck, S. Staab, L. Turquet, UN Women (2020). From insight to action - Gender equality in the wake of Covid19. Geneva. p. 68.

⁶ S. Kidd and D. Athias (2020). Hit and Miss Report: An assessment of targeting effectiveness in social protection with additional analysis. United-Kingdom.

social assistance is often blind to the individual economic situation of caregivers and excludes “the missing middle” of mostly people working in the informal sector. This situation has recently been recognized by the World Bank’s Global Director for Social Protection and Jobs.⁷ Universal systems are more likely to help recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work⁸, forge a new social contract⁹, and strengthen domestic resources mobilization. As the crisis demonstrated, they are also a prerequisite for social protection systems to efficiently and timely respond to shocks.¹⁰

Additionally, on a technical note – but with enormous practical implications – the World Bank’s widespread support to the creation of “social registries” is a step in the wrong direction. These are inaccurate and expensive non-universal databases, which result in extensive exclusion of a large proportion of intended target groups.¹¹ “Social registries” should not be mistaken for civil registries, which are necessary institutional infrastructure for the implementation of universal social protection based on the provision of legal identification.¹²

Hence, we would like to invite you to seize the opportunity of the current IDA replenishment process to promote the right to social protection for all and support a move from a narrow perspective of “safety nets” to supporting countries’ efforts to establish social protection floors, in line with the International Labor Organization (ILO) standards and SDG target 1.3.¹³ The ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation 202 defines these as universal access to essential health care, and basic income security for children, persons in active age, and older persons.¹⁴

In order to increase international coordination and policy coherence, IDA20 investments in social protection should be aligned with the ILO Flagship Programme on Building Social Protection Floors for All.¹⁵ In the second phase of the Programme, starting now, 50 countries will be included – many of them IDA countries.

To that end, we have attached to this letter suggested re-wording of the policy commitments, narratives and result measurement systems of the “Human Capital” and “Gender and Development” IDA20 special themes, as presented to civil society in June 2021. This document has been prepared by the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, representing over 100 civil society and faith-based organizations and trade unions.

In order for member countries’ policies to be coherent across different international fora, it is important that your constituency insist that the World Bank considers recent decisions that were taken by the International Labour Conference, including the framework for action towards universal,

⁷ Michal Rutkowski, [COVID-19 reinforces the case for fundamental reform of our social protection systems](#), World Bank Blog. 1st May 2021.

⁸ Action Aid (2020). Who Cares for the Future: finance gender responsive public services! Johannesburg.

⁹ S. Kidd, G. Axelsson Nycander, A. Tran, M. Cretney (2020). *The social contract and the role of universal social security in building trust in government*. United Kingdom.

¹⁰ R. Beazley, M. Marzi, R. Steller (2021). Drivers of Timely and Large-Scale Cash Responses to COVID-19: what does the data say?. p. 2. “Consequently, we conclude that – although it is important to invest in preparing systems to respond to shocks by, for example, developing contingency protocols – the best place to start is by investing in the foundations of social protection.”

¹¹ S.Kidd, D. Athias, I. Mohamud (2021). [Social registries: a short history of abject failure](#). United Kingdom


¹² The World Bank is already promoting universal access to legal identification. See the [10 Principles of principles on identification for sustainable development: Toward the digital age](#).

¹³ SDG 1.3: Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

¹⁴ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:3065524

¹⁵ <https://www.ilo.org/secsoc/technical-cooperation-projects/building-social-protection-floors-for-all/lang--en/index.htm>



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adequate, comprehensive and sustainable social protection systems.¹⁶ Importantly, emphasis should be put on the building and scaling up of universal social protection floors, key to deliver on the poverty and gender equality SDG targets.

The Nordic- Baltic countries have robust experiences of the benefits of universal models, and an ambition to share these experiences in the global context. We hence look forward to hearing your views on potential review of the present policy framework.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Erik Lysén'.

Erik Lysén

Director of Act Church of Sweden

CC. Minister of Development Cooperation Per Olsson Fridh

¹⁶ [Reports of the Recurrent Discussion Committee: Social protection \(social security\): Proposed resolution and conclusions submitted to the Conference for adoption](#). International Labor Conference. June 2021.