

21st Informal Working Breakfast on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

“Social protection floors to eradicate poverty: A matter of political will”

Hosted by the Bahá'í International Community and ATD Fourth World

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A diverse group of stakeholders¹ held a working breakfast to discuss key issues related to social protection and the Post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The following are highlights of the discussion:

- The social protection floor (SPF) is nationally defined. It comprises basic social security guarantees, which aim to alleviate poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion.
- Rather than an expense, the SPF should be seen as an investment in a country's human resources.
- The idea of the SPF is compelling given it didn't come from the ILO or human rights mechanisms but as a reaction of Southern countries to the Washington Consensus.
- ILO has played a key role in defining the concept of the SPF and introducing into different agendas at the regional level. Five core SPF indicators are: old age pensions coverage; coverage of families with children; coverage of people with disabilities, maternity, sickness; unemployment insurance; and health coverage. These should be established at the national level, with global monitoring.
- SPF has been a driver of economic growth in some countries. Overall, SPF costs may vary from only 1%-3% and, as such, countries should not be afraid of implementing such policies. The policies are implemented incrementally and represent *minimum* standards.
- The Latin American experience is a fairly successful example of SPF implementation, involving a high level of coordination among various government ministries and agencies. The example of the Bolsa Familia program raises questions about the training and employment dimensions of the SPF.
- SPF should be included in negotiations about the means of implementation (MOI) of the Post-2015 development agenda.
- Concrete data is needed about the impact of SPF.
- Current draft of the Post-2015 development agenda largely avoids references to *human rights*. This seems to imply a consensus among governments that human rights are not central to the development process. This is something which needs to be changed.
- *Accountability* seems to be an increasingly 'forbidden' word; countries are weary of externally imposed conditionalities and adherence to international-level frameworks. Yet, if accountability mechanisms are weak, the agenda will have little impact. More pushback on the issue of accountability is needed, as are a clear and coherent approach and strong language.
- Critique of the World Bank: (a) The WB makes almost no references to human rights in its programming (human rights language is used primarily in an academic context by the WB; It has set a goal of poverty eradication by 2030 but is reluctant to speak in terms of human rights, and governments are reluctant to say they are duty bearers); (b) Uses weaker terms such as 'social

¹ Permanent Missions: Afghanistan, Argentina, Ecuador, European Union, Finland, France, International Organization of la Francophonie, Ireland, Japan, Nigeria. Representatives from UN: ILO, UNICEF, UN Conference on Trade and Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN Development Programme, UN Millennium Campaign, United Nations Population Fund. Non-governmental organizations: Amnesty International, Bahá'í International Community, Franciscans International, Global Action to Prevent War, International Association of Schools of Social Work, International Forum for Volunteering in Development, International Presentation Association, Medical Mission Sisters, Mercy International Association, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Save the Children, Sisters of Charity Federation, SOS Children's Villages International, UNANIMA International, World Council of Peoples for the United Nations, YWCA.

safety nets'. SPF implies empowerment, legal rights, human rights and government obligations. 'Social safety nets' are a much weaker concept. Because the World Bank is such a core actor, it needs to strengthen its support of the SPF.

- SPF negotiations have been difficult and have yielded less ambitious targets than some would like. Negotiations have also addressed issues of universality.
- SPF will be implemented at the national level. Need to consider variation at the national level.
- SPF is a question of justice rather than political will. Two billion people don't have enough to eat; remedying this situation is not charity but justice. This can be hindered by ego.
- How can the international community and civil society put forward more compelling arguments about SPF so that it is adequately addressed in the Post-2015 agenda.
- Indicators are among the most political aspects of the SPF. They determine the definition and measurement of 'progress' (note example of the MDGs \$1.25 measure of poverty.) Experience with development of indicators should be shared among countries.
- MDG – adopting the \$1.25 measure and proclaiming that poverty has been slashed; with different indicators you get a very different outcomes; indicators are political.
- How do you see difference between SPF and a functioning liberal welfare state? Concept of democracy needs to be linked to the SPF.
- Regional cooperation is going to be very useful for ensuring MOI.