

Why are human rights considerations fundamental to social protection responses to COVID-19?

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Audience questions to follow-up

Question 1 – Paola Siclari – For Simone Cecchini - *What should the key changes in the current Chilean social protection system be in order to structurally respond to the Human Rights in the post covid-19 era? Saluti Simone!*

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 2 – Americo Erilio Tarcisio – *It is common to hear that the Government does not have money to support non-contributory social protection. Is it the obligation of the Government to support vulnerable and poor citizens? Do the poor people have the right to be assisted?*

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 3 - Roosje Saalbrink (Womankind Worldwide) – For Abdul Alim - *Thank you for sharing your insights. In regard to making States take priority in fiscal spend (investment) in social security and seeing it as a right, can you recommend strategies or success stories, as well as the role of different actors?*

Abdul Alim: *Given the lack of fiscal space it is important to governments and civil society to incentivize private sector to take on more public services at affordable costs. This can be done through formal private sector with making policies that encourage private sector to institute social security schemes covering all its employees but also extending it to subsidiary and ancillary services which provide support to large corporations. Informal social support that is widespread in extended family settings and communities is another venue that can be tapped. Such schemes have met with some success in Tunisia where Islamic “zakaat” is used to create central funds which are then disbursed by the government. States can also provide incentives for informal workers to enrol in social security schemes and universal pensions. Example is from Chile where state has provided non-contributory schemes.*

Question 4 - Delia Cuffy-Weeks (Commonwealth of Dominica) - *How do you suggest that SP programme can reach rural populations to ensure their human rights are respected?*

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 5 - Oumar Diop - Usually governments include provisions for human rights (education, health, labour, social security, etc) in their Constitution. How can they be held accountable for realizing these human rights? What is the UN accountability and how does it apply in countries?

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 6 – Oumar Diop - How do you assess the strategies and practices of UN organisations to ensure respect of human rights?

Simone Cecchini: *The promotion and respect of human rights is the raison d'être of the United Nations, following the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), we strive to promote the economic, social and cultural rights of the population of the region, and to ensure that public policies, especially social protection policies, are designed and implemented under a human rights focus. This is obviously only a minor part of all the work done at the UN, and it is difficult to do a self-assessment of our work. However, I am not afraid to say that at least in the social protection field, ECLAC's work has contributed to place human rights at the centre.*

Question 7 - Miki Gilbert – For Alexandra Barrantes - If poverty is a policy choice and we understand most national policies are not independent of the international and regional convention, are we in essence saying that poverty is designed and mainstreamed into policies? Where are the gaps and should the fight against poverty as a human right be forever?

Alexandra Barrantes: *The idea around poverty being a choice, or not unavoidable, is that policymakers (and those that advice policymakers) have options when it comes to allocating public resources. As such, a social protection approach that focuses primarily on issues around fiscal austerity and the “efficient” allocation of scarce resources by targeting the “poorest of the poor” (which is, in reality, [impossible](#)) or “the other,” many segments of society that are poor, or vulnerable to poverty, fall through the cracks. If governments and development partners providing policy advice to low and middle-income countries base their social protection provision on a rights-based approach, investment in social protection would require Governments to push for the use of the maximum resources available and for a progressive realization of the right to social protection for all. Ultimately, it is about policy options when it comes to creating fiscal space to address different Government priorities.*

Question 8 – Prof. Pratibha Mishra (Guru Ghasidas University) - Who is responsible for social protection: state, people, the government or NGOs?

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 9 – Oumar Diop - *What mechanisms and tools exist for the "universal" approach? There are a lot of tools for the "othering" approach targeting specific groups and not citizens as whole.*

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 10 – Anne Sophie Laenkholm - *The discourse around SP seems to almost uniquely focus on transfers/benefits, while the social care pillar of SP is largely ignored. Yet this is hugely important in the C-19 responses in light of increasing GBV and violence and neglect of children; and is very much linked to human rights considerations. How do we put this aspect on the agenda?*

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 11 - Nangar Soomro – For Alexandra Barrantes - *Thanks Alex for the excellent presentation. My question is that there are programs which are universal in principle but not inclusive in practice, what practical steps can be taken to ensure that the most vulnerable population groups like IDPs and persons with disabilities are not left behind?*

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 12 – Oumar Diop - *How are labour systems (wages, informal economy workers incomes, labour productivity, etc) explaining the inequalities? What is the effect of working poverty? How can the national wealth be better distributed to reduce poverty and working poverty?*

Simone Cecchini: *In developing regions like Latin America and the Caribbean, much of household incomes are generated in the labour market. Labour market inequalities translate into income inequalities, and also into inequalities in access to social protection. Also, gender inequalities are very visible in the world of work, as women have higher rates of informality and are responsible for much non-remunerated work. The current pandemic has magnified these problems, as informal and poor workers are not able to generate sufficient incomes and are vastly excluded from social protection, and women have taken up the burden of care. While many countries have implemented social assistance measures to include the informal sector, often this has not been enough. Necessary measures to strengthen social protection include broadening non-contributory cash transfers and promoting care systems. In order to promote equality, actions are thus needed both in the labour market (for instance, through formalization and promotion of decent work) and in social protection, where redistribution and solidarity are needed.*

Question 13 - Rosa M Voghon - *How do we ensure SP within a universal approach when participation is a big gap in democracy effectiveness worldwide? In my experience from Cuba, universality sometimes means the loss of quality for services in order to provide for all. How could that challenge be addressed considering financial and participatory resources?*

First of all, I would like to highlight that the concept of universality of social protection encompasses in practice at least three aspects: population coverage, sufficiency of benefits and sustainability of financing. Thus, universality does not only mean that we all have access to social protection, but that the transfers and services provided are adequate (which includes quality) and that there are sufficient and sustainable financial resources to support social protection policies and programmes over time. Secondly, we must stress that a human rights approach to social protection takes into account not only outcomes but also processes, and that the process to develop and strengthen social protection systems must be based on broad participation of the population. A huge crisis such as the current one should be an impulse to see the importance of promoting universal social protection worldwide. In democratic countries, social protection policy reforms should be based on broad agreements, which we call “social compacts”, and sustained by “fiscal compacts” to guarantee financing.

Question 14 – Cinthia Vidal - *To guarantee a comprehensive approach with a life cycle approach, an institutional arrangement is required from the government so that some entity or organization guarantees that unity. Currently, one of the main limitations to strengthen a comprehensive protection system is that there is no state ministry or organization that articulates the interventions of each ministry. Is there any experience that can point us to how they have overcome this problem?*

Shea McClanahan: We have a forthcoming case study for UNDESA on SP governance in Kenya, where some of these obstacles are beginning to be addressed.

Question 15 – Gabriel Fernandez - For Simone Cecchini - *Don't you think many developing countries still under the "structural hang-over" are influencing how social protection is viewed and undermining human rights and claim based rights, hence providing the State with the argument of low fiscal space to allow them to meet their obligation under the social contract. Thanks.*

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 16 – Louise Moreira Daniels - *Even before COVID, we were already in a difficult time for human rights, with the rise of political movements, parties, politicians that think little of human rights. Then COVID comes, and the huge need for responses*

that uphold rights, but with very limited fiscal spaces. It's a challenge for those advocating for universal lifecycle cash transfers. We use the human rights argument, the economic argument, and in some contexts, only the economic one resonates. And even then, the "there is no fiscal space" arguments comes up. How do we overcome this?

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).

Question 17 - Alejandro Biondi (CIPPEC, Argentina) – *What are some concrete ideas about how to make cash transfers more shock-responsive in Latin America?*

This question was addressed live. Watch [here](#).