



**Virtual High Level Side Event on
“An Inflection Point on Social Protection”**

Hosted by the Government of Pakistan
Date: July 7, 2021
7:00am—9:00am

This event is designed to promote the establishment of a platform involving stakeholders, who, recognizing the upheaval and distress of the pandemic, are considering possible options to accelerate global social protection knowledge and practice.

The pandemic has deeply imprinted lives of rich and poor, young and old, across the globe – with loss and grief, with uncertainty, and disrupted daily rhythms. But its deepest weight falls on the poor and the new poor – because they carry multiple burdens already. This toll may be among the most destructive and potentially disruptive consequences of the Pandemic.

While post-Pandemic data are largely still unavailable, simulations of predicted poverty trends show an increase on the order of up to 135 million in monetary poverty and 550 million in multidimensional poverty (World Bank 2020; UNDP and OPHI 2020), on top of the 750 million who were poor by the \$1.90/day poverty line, or the 1.3 billion who were MPI poor, before the pandemic. However, the real extent of the problem will only be evident when sufficient post-covid data become available; this notwithstanding, livelihoods have been decimated all over the world at an unprecedented scale, and a whole new generation now risks living in the shadow of poverty unless we take urgent action now to dramatically increase social protection.

The cost of COVID-19 is not limited to lives lost and morbidity; it is staggering in terms of hunger, children dropping out of school and foregone healthcare—and as always it is women and girls that are disproportionately bearing the brunt of this tragedy.

Before the pandemic, ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions was already recognised as the first goal of the 17th Sustainable Development Goals, and as the ‘greatest global challenge’. And now, COVID 19 threatens to wipe out the development gains of the last century and reverse three decades of gains in poverty eradication. We need to be mindful that the MDG on poverty eradication was achieved five years ahead of schedule, but now with the corresponding SDG, we are sadly moving backwards.

There is therefore the need to mobilize a major re-commitment to the first SDG goal by all concerned actors.

The experience in Pakistan leads us to believe that it is possible to rise to the occasion.

History shows us that disasters, and their tragic consequences can catalyze social change. This crisis may well have a silver lining. We now have a one in a generation opportunity to build a fairer world that ends poverty and inequality. Social Protection needs to factor in strongly in our efforts to end poverty and build back better. The Pandemic has unearthed an opportunity to recast the role of the welfare state, to expand and deepen it but to also make it shock responsive and resilient.

The spread of the pandemic shed light on our interconnectedness: a risk in one country can quickly expose others. Similarly, the crisis has also revealed the need for interconnected solutions. We clearly have an opportunity to create an historic inflection point, whereby traditional and non-traditional actors can display the determination required to expand social protection to all who need it. Strong acceleration towards this goal is now possible by using new data, technologies, and actors appropriately, supported by basic social protection policies at scale. As a corollary, the jobs and conditions thus created could open up a wider horizon of human development and well-being on a shared planet.

While withholding untapped potential, this historic inflection point also presents uncertain prospects for the future. The global social protection Covid response has certainly been unprecedented, including featuring a total spending level of nearly \$3 trillion; an average increase in coverage of about 240% relative to pre-pandemic levels; and a doubling in generosity of transfers. A total of 3,333 social protection measures have been planned or implemented in 222 countries or territories since the initial lockdowns in early 2020.

Yet, whether the response to the crisis is temporary. Hence, whether Covid is a game-changer for social protection – i.e., whether it will *permanently* propel the agenda toward a “new normal” in levels and quality of provisions – will depend on an array of critical factors. These include political will and vision; societal attitudes toward redistribution; fiscal prospects; delivery capabilities; and possible competing sectoral priorities.

The aim of the preliminary high-level meeting of stakeholders is to discuss the key role played by social protection in the pandemic; explore future prospects for establishing stronger social protection systems; and identify concrete options to accelerate global social protection at global and country level. The meeting will focus on the desired outcomes of interest as well as the processes and tools that can assist in achieving them.

The platform would initially include two components, namely (i) a High-Level meeting to review key experiences in Covid responses and identify possible directions for the future; and (ii) an interactive Global Community of Practice that would allow country practitioners to directly connect, exchange and learn from each other’s experiences.

Agenda

7 July 2021
7:30am – 9:00am

7:30am – 7:35am	Welcome by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan/ President of the ECOSOC
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7:35am – 7:55am	Keynote Addresses
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7:55am – 8:20am	Panel Discussion
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8:20am – 8:55am	Moderated Interactive Discussion
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8:55m – 9:00am	Closing Remarks by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan/ President of the ECOSOC
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