

Minutes

Opening – Shahra Razavi (ILO) and Loli Arribas-Banos (WB)

- Welcome to the participants
- Shahra Razavi (ILO)
 - COVID-19 crisis has reinforced the importance of robust and universal social protection systems. There are many challenges, including political will and limited fiscal space. Beyond immediate demands, there is the need for long-term solutions to prepare countries for next crises to come.
 - In these special circumstances, the exchange of ideas on how to best join efforts and coordinate global actions to support countries and population is paramount. As the UN and as donor agencies, the ILO has a special obligation to act in solidarity with those in need.
- Loli Arribas-Banos (WB)
 - The most recent poverty estimates -which are likely to change: WB estimates that there will be 50 million additional extreme poor in 2020 as a result of covid-19 at the 1.90/day poverty line, setting us back by half a decade in terms of progress made in poverty reduction [this number has recently been updated to approx. 100 million based on adjustments to GDP projections]
 - The additional extreme poor are concentrated in countries with already high levels of poverty; almost half in Africa, 10 million in FCV countries. Top countries: India, Nigeria, and DRC. 22 million in MICs - significantly affected.
 - The 4 ways in which the aggregate shocks translate into Household impact:
 - *Labor income* - loss of income due to illness and/or job losses;
 - *Non-labor income* - reduction in both international remittances and domestic remittances - from urban to rural, as well as the added challenge of urban migrants going back to rural areas with the risk of spreading the disease and losing access to social benefits;
 - *Disruption in market functions* - availability of food, and impact on food prices;
 - *Service delivery* - particularly health and education
 - Impact of this crisis is taking place very quickly, with little time to plan. It is felt by all households but not uniformly; the crisis was first felt in urban settings, particularly in the informal sector, but already showing signs of spreading to rural areas. It is predominantly affecting the chronic poor and vulnerable groups, such as women, migrant workers, and the elderly, and felt rapidly, with little time to plan.
 - Following policy responses are important: (1) Timely data on crisis evaluation and for monitoring and evaluation; (2) injection of financing and resource mobilization; (3) coordinated policy responses and joining forces; (4) importance of reaching poor people that were not covered and the missing middle.

SESSION 1A – COVID19 – Agency responses and how to support countries (chair: Loli Arribas-Banos and Michal Rutkowski, WB)

FAO (Natalia Winder Rossi)

- Impact on rural areas and food systems is materializing. Social protection is important not only as short-term measure, but also for economic recovery.
- Investments in social protection need to be sustained beyond the crisis.
- [Several knowledge products on COVID-19 were published.](#)
- Close coordination with many partners in many countries in order to enhance social protection in the current context and put in place shock-responsive social protection; as well as work in fragile and conflict settings with no existing social protection.

UNDP (Mansour Ndiaye)

- UNDP is leading the social and economic response pillar in the UN Covid-19 Fund.
- Currently supporting 60 countries in their COVID-19 response; as well as involvement in Joint SDG Fund projects.
- Focus: assessment of funding capacity and strategies; gender-responsive social protection; community-based social protection; scaling up of cash transfer; bridging humanitarian social protection measures and humanitarian responses.

UNICEF (Alexandra Yuster)

- Social protection was recently integrated into UNICEF core commitments and is essential in [COVID-19 responses](#).
- Four main areas of support: scale up of cash transfer; rapid extension of access to health care, gender-responsive social protection, strengthen public finance response.
- In the medium- and long-term, UNICEF is looking to expand shock-responsive social protection in line with recent framework.
- UNICEF is involved in at least 62 countries in the COVID-19 response, ideally with other development partners and in collaboration with IFIs.
- UNICEF is also involved in many global coordination efforts, among others SPIAC-B joint statement and Grand Bargain.

WFP (Sarah Loughton)

- WFP is concerned about impact of COVID-19 on food security and nutrition, but not limited to it.
- Main pillar of work relates to the design of appropriate social protection responses, based on assessment of needs; adapting existing schemes and delivery systems; creating new schemes if necessary and coordinating social protection with humanitarian measures.
- WFP provides both technical assistance and operational support, e.g. identification of new beneficiaries; emphasis on remote and digital mechanisms.

UN-ECLAC (Simone Cecchini)

- LAC is heavily affected by COVID-19 (both health and economic effects), though approximately one month delay with respect to Europe. Strong economic impact and increases in poverty are expected (29 million more poor people; back to levels in 2007).
- Countries have put in place measures for poor and vulnerable population groups and the formal sector; technical assistance provided to many countries in the region.
- COVID-19 Observatory systematizing all social protection measures of countries in the region.
- Information sharing on COVID-19 policy responses in ECLAC during two ministerial meetings and a technical meeting.
- Crisis shows the need to invest in social protection not only in the short term, but also the medium and longer term.

IMF (David Coady and Robert Pal)

- Global crisis requires global response.
- At recent Spring Meetings, the Fund:
 - supported a suspension of official bilateral debt repayments for the poorest countries through the end of 2020. Resources to be spent on COVID response needs.
 - doubled its emergency, rapid-disbursing capacity to meet expected demand of about \$100 billion and respond to the 103 countries that have approached the IMF.
 - reformed its Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) to help 29 of the its poorest and most vulnerable members through rapid debt-service relief on payments to Fund.
 - established a new short-term liquidity line that can help countries strengthen economic stability and confidence.
- [Additional IMF policy resources:](#)
 - Fiscal Monitor: [Policies to Support People During the COVID-19 Pandemic;](#)
 - Notes outlining [IMF Macro-Fiscal Policy Advice.](#)

EC DEVCO (Dörte Bosse)

- Looking at both short-term and long-term social protection measures.
- Work focuses on:
 - Re-allocations and speeding up implementation of geographic programmes, opening of thematic programmes through short call on technical assistance;
 - Commitment to long-term systems building, including a shock-responsive mechanism, monitoring and evaluation.
 - Way forward: In the context of the new programming cycle, efforts to revise the budget due to COVID-19; re-direction of development cooperation responding to socio-economic impact.

OECD (Alexandre Kolev)

- [Several resources on COVID-19, including a country policy tracker](#)
- Launch of policy dialogue on social protection and development, which provides interactive space for information sharing, with two focus areas on (1) informality and (2) financing and gender as crosscutting issue (two particularly timely areas in light of the crisis).
- Can be used to discuss role of social protection to address COVID-19 challenges.
- Close coordination with USP2030.

ISSA (Dominique La Salle)

- [ISSA products on COVID-19](#)
 - Webinar series on COVID-19
 - Social Security Monitor
 - Database of country measures/responses to COVID-19 (series of notes by type of activities)
 - Developing handbook/guidelines on resilient social security
 - Country profiles (contribution to ILO's World Social Protection Report)
- The 'machinery' of social security is a critical strategic tool for effective deployment of government responses in crisis; capacity to deliver must be maintained and enhanced irrespective of policy.

BMZ (Kerstin Imbusch)

- Germany has launched COVID-19 action programmes (both short- and long-term; bi- and multilateral); approximately 1 billion reallocated (plus maybe additional funding); social protection 1 of 7 responses.
- Need for strong national social protection systems and wherever they are available, measures should be based on existing schemes.

- International community needs to do its part to create fiscal space.
- BMZ work includes for instance collaboration with World Bank, WFP and UNICEF, series of Webinars on COVID19 in collaboration with www.socialprotection.org and other partners; launch of expert helpdesk SPACE (in partnership with DFID) which provides on-demand technical assistance.

DFID (Heather Kindness)

- Social protection is key part of COVID-19 response and for recovery; working on:
 - How social protection systems can withstand crisis;
 - Helping countries extend social protection to meet new needs;
 - Coordination among social protection actors and with humanitarian response
 - For recovery: how to build better and greener social protection that can respond to crisis
- Operational support and technical support (e.g. technical helpline SPACE with Germany); support to Grand Bargain group (humanitarian cash perspective); emphasis on inclusion, vulnerabilities of women and girls and persons with disabilities

IrishAid (Aileen O'Donovan)

- Launch of COVID-19 response plan where social protection is an essential part. Reaching the most vulnerable is the priority, prioritising countries that are already in crisis (e.g. fragile contexts); support mostly channelled through UN and missions.
- Prioritising efforts on coordination and encouraging coordination across UN, civil society and humanitarian nexus; also looking at possibilities of reprogramming current initiatives.
- Focus on the extension of social protection in both the horizontal and vertical dimension and promoting gender-inclusive social protection and digital innovations.

IPC-IG (Fabio Veras Soares)

- Major activities:
 - SP response to COVID-19 (with GIZ and DFAT)
 - Database in collaboration with other organizations to support advisory services of different partners and enable research, monitoring and evaluation
 - Large projects with UNICEF; all projects now focussing on COVID-19

HelpAge (Florian Jürgens)

- Elderly are worst hit by the crisis, but attention is often limited.
- Work aims to focus awareness on older persons (recent webinar), [concrete guidance for older people and carers](#), community groups, for governments and policy-makers; contributions to a number of initiatives to look at poverty impact.
- As part of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, supporting the urgent need for the international community to enable all countries to set up national social protection floor and calling for a [global financing mechanism for social protection](#)
- HelpAge calls for Global Financing Facility to support countries in building national SP systems, including floors

SIDA (Ulrika Lang)

- Long-term approach to develop shock-responsive social protection in close coordination with humanitarian actors; linking policy responses with existing systems and mechanism whenever possible.
- Close coordination with governments and development partners.

Save the Children (Luke Harman)

- Work with governments in over ten countries to make programmes more child-sensitive; recently finalised its new global approach, including shock-responsive and child-sensitive social protection systems.
- [Two parts of COVID-19 response:](#)
 - Advocacy, calling for international financing for social protection (will start a large advocacy campaign).
 - Support of governments.
- Some key concerns: huge gap between coverage and needs; how can the global community mobilise resources and disburse them; how to increase capacity at country level?

ITUC (Alison Tate)

- [Emphasis on enormous and urgent need for action as millions of workers have no job, income or food.](#)
- Need for coordinating the monitoring of social protection policies; coordinate multiplicity of initiatives for the sake of better advice.
- ITUC survey for unions for global advocacy work.
- Importance of social dialogue for delivery.
- [Strong advocacy for a Global Social Protection Fund](#) as expression of international solidarity; necessary to look at financing also from a global perspective.

socialprotection.org (Mariana Balboni)

- Part of joint and collaborative initiative [“Social protection response to COVID-19”](#), including weekly webinars (400-500 attendees) and weekly newsletters

UNDESA (Wenyan Yang)

- Provision of analysis of socio-economic impact of COVID-19, also in relation to the SDGs. Social protection systems, including floors, are important for the achievement of the SDGs and moving forward.
- Work on capacity development; aligning current activities to countries’ needs and looking into new resources and activities.

France/AFD (Julie Gomis and Nadine Poupart)

- Social protection is a core value; commitment to global and integrated approach to achieve universal access to social protection. France has strongly supported social protection also in the context of the G7 presidency in 2019.
- Africa is the main (but not only) target of AFD work, active in many other countries
- Financing agreements in collaboration with WB, ADB.

ILO (Shahra Razavi)

- Social protection has been a central element of the response; link between social protection and labour market/world of work and formalisation of work (e.g. COVID-19 monitor on losses of working hours; third edition will focus on informal employment).
- Two elements of ILO response in the area of social protection:
 - [Knowledge products:](#)
 - [Monitor](#) of country social protection responses with weekly updates: interactive function to find data by region, country, function, type of adjustment.
 - Rapid [Social Protection COVID 19 calculator](#) for quick costing of social protection responses.
 - Series of briefs on COVID-19 (e.g. sickness benefits, unemployment, financing, etc.)

- Country level work: Global Technical Team receives numerous request by governments, social partners, development partners; with focus on informal workers and importance of building on existing machinery. Currently also at least 74 collaborations (involving UNICEF, WFP, WHO, and many others), including:
 - 27 UN Joint Fund projects on social protection (that are repurposing 20 per cent of the funding on COVID 19);
 - 8 EC DEVCO projects, starting now to respond to the COVID 19 crisis on social protection;
 - COVID-19 technical advisory facility to support countries.

World Bank (Loli Arribas-Banos)

- Impact has been very quick and widespread, giving governments very little time to prepare appropriate and needed responses.
- Policy response will vary across countries, but with commonalities in 3 main areas:
 - **Analytics:** The Key to maximizing the impact of policy choices is have **timely data** on both how the crisis evolves and data and analysis on the impact of policy choices;
 - **Financing:** The response to this crisis requires a substantial mobilization of resources, and short-term liquidity. Significant additional resources are needed to reach existing poor and new poor - 4 billion will give 1\$/day for 2 months to 50 million people.
 - WB's First phase: USD\$16 billion for new operations with strong focus on containing the pandemic;
 - WB's Second phase: USD\$160 billion allocated in the next 15 months towards emergency response, recovery and resilience; drawing on existing portfolio and with a focus on 5 key areas: delivering cash and in-kind transfers to poor and vulnerable households; livelihoods support through employment programmes; assistance to microenterprises; support to behaviour change and physical distancing; services access; and support for institutions in charge of delivering these programmes.
 - **Convening and Coordination:** Coverage of the existing poor and vulnerable was already a challenge before the crisis, in both LICs and MICs. In low-income countries, almost 90 percent of people in the bottom 20 percent of the distribution receive no safety net transfers. In MICs, coverage of the poorest improves, but the challenge is with the 'missing-middle': nearly 2 billion informal workers are not reached by social protection systems – they are too poor to afford social insurance, and not poor enough to qualify for social assistance.
- It is very important to mobilize resources and to have a coordinated response from all development actors.

SESSION 1B – Joint COVID-19 work (chair: Shahra Razavi, ILO)

David Stewart (UNICEF) on SPIAC-B statement

Great collaboration by all to develop the joint statement with important key messages on social protection and COVID-19 in a short amount of time.

- 4 key points of the statement:
 - Look at all aspects (health, economic, social) of the crisis;
 - Inclusive social protection, ensuring that the most vulnerable are included (older persons, women and girls, people of disabilities, children);
 - Mobilisation of finance of vital importance;
 - Look at the immediate response, but with a view to building stronger systems over the medium- and long term.
- What can we do with this statement and concretely move it forward?
 - Actively share and advertise the statement, both internally and externally;

- Over time, revisit the statement and decide on key points that SPIAC-B should be pushing for;
- Use opportunity to learn and find a way to work together effectively and rapidly.

Monitoring

- **Ugo Gentilini (WB): The new edition of the “Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures”** looks at the duration of programmes, average increase in benefit relative to pre-COVID-19 times, and the way in which programmes are adapted (including from an administrative standpoint).
- **Fabio Duran Valverde (ILO):** ISSA and ILO cooperate on the monitor that is updated weekly, as of date it includes more than 600 COVID-19 response measures in 125 countries (on April 24).

Brian Lander (WFP) on Global Humanitarian Response plan

- Global Humanitarian Overview Plan was launched prior to COVID-19, focussing on 53 countries (with response plan for each country).
- It is now being revised, including the inclusion of new countries.
- Three strategic priorities:
 - Containment of crisis;
 - Preserve assets and social cohesion;
 - Ensure continuity of supply chains.

David Stewart (UNICEF) on joint country support

- WFP and UNICEF drafted chapter on SP response for UN:
 - Social protection as the second pillar of the UN response (after health)
 - Messages in the report remain at a high level: supporting governments to expand social protection systems, including contributory schemes; focus on systems and inclusion of basic social services.
- SG COVID-19 response MPTF: Funding mechanism for the Report, 2 billion for 2 years:
 - 3 indicators: Transmission rates, people living in poverty, SDG progress;
 - 3 windows: suppress transmission of virus, socio-economic response, recover better;
 - 1st call already out for 1st and 2nd window
- Joint SDG Fund: First window was on social protection, 36 countries, multi-partner approach, much is already well-focused and countries can now make adjustments to re-purpose up to 20% of the budget to COVID-19 measures.

Interventions during the discussion

- Valerie Schmitt (ILO):
 - SPIAC-B statement calls for more efforts to fill the financing gap for the immediate response and the establishment of social protection systems including social protection floors in the long term. This requires (1) millions for technical assistance and (2) billions to support transfers – ILO estimates prior to crisis: a financing gap of USD 27 billion in 28 low-income countries, but these financing gaps will increase due to crisis (with increased needs for SP and reduced national resources) so the question of how to close this gap becomes more burning.
 - In addition to securing sufficient financing, the allocation of resources needs to be discussed through social dialogue; delivery mechanisms need to be accountable and this cannot only rely on technology. Allocations should take into account the principles adopted through international social security standards and agreed through USP2030: Universality, sustainability, solidarity.
 - Need for more collaboration on policy design, delivery, and financing social protection; coordination should be guided by G20, L20, C20, could be operationalised as part of

USP2030, SPIAC-B, other global partnership; but should also take place at country level (as already suggested by IMF and the World Bank).

- Leo Baunach (ITUC):
 - Use SPIAC-B for real interagency cooperation beyond information sharing; use meeting today to have a framework on financing social protection floors; enormous urgency to act.
 - Current resource re-programming is not enough, but a Global Fund is needed, particularly in low-income countries as well as a discussion on international taxation and supporting countries to improve domestic revenue generation.

SESSION 2 – Working Group Updates: ISPA, Gender, Digital SP (chair: Michal Rutkowski, WB)

ISPA Tools (Adea Kryeziu, WB, and Veronika Wodsak, ILO)

- Progress on tools:
 - The Food Security and Nutrition Tools has been finalized and it being edited
 - Work on Social Protection Policy Options tool, Social Assistance Information Systems and Social Assistance Cash Transfer is advancing well
 - Work on the tool to assess Fiscal Space for Social Protection and on mainstreaming disability and gender into the tools is starting
- Tool application (completed and in progress):
 - Instruments: CODI (18); PWP (4), Payments (18); ID (2); SPOTT (2); FSN (3).
 - Regions: Africa (22); LAC (11); Asia (7); MENA (6); Europe (1)
- ISPA review and discussion:
 - Feedback: Great appreciation of technical quality and analytical depth; very useful to facilitate policy dialogue processes and improve coordination; need to increase (inter-agency) usage, and accessibility of results.
 - Tool revision and development: make tools more user-friendly without losing analytical depth (better guidance, re-organise content; use technology); shift focus to dissemination and application of tools; add certain elements (gender, shock responsiveness) instead of developing new tools.
 - Tool curation: improve communication; better tracking of use of tools; to the extent possible, make results publicly available.
 - Improve take up of tools: Increase user-friendliness; more dissemination efforts; resource mobilization to carry out agreed actions and support country applications; explore joint programmes.

Gender (Claire McCrum, DFID)

- Vision: encourage a step change in social protection practices globally, influencing our own and other agencies and national governments to scale up gender-responsive social protection.
- Purpose: work together to achieve this vision, to act as a coalition to drive change in social protection design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and financing.
- Social protection and gender equality: a roadmap to 2030:
 - Finalised in November 2019.
 - Sets out a vision and required actions to promote gender-responsive social protection.
 - Galvanises the working group around 4 priority action areas:
 - Advancing policy and systems, strengthening capacity and institutions;
 - Increasing visibility in policy narratives, improving coherence and national and global level and between them;
 - Building political and public demand, engaging effectively politically and strengthening incentives;
 - Improving knowledge, evidence and learning on what works and translating evidence and better data into practice.

- **Workplan:**
 - Finalised in January 2020, key areas of work:
 - Strengthen tools and guidance, integrate gender equality into training programmes, identify strengths and weaknesses in social protection programmes (e.g. integration into ISPA (paused), developing checklists for operational teams, UN Women and UNICEF portfolio analysis);
 - Integrate gender equality into social protection frameworks and into global and regional meetings, ensure coordination and collaboration in country (e.g. UNICEF social protection framework, ILO Social Protection week);
 - Research and evidence on gender-responsive social protection, lesson learning and improved data (e.g. GRASSP, new ISPA tool on information systems, relaunch of the Gender-Responsive Online Community).
- **Next steps: Working together to integrate gender into the social protection response to COVID-19:**
 - Raising awareness (planned webinar series on specific gender and social protection issues such as care work, girls' education and child marriage);
 - Identifying and sharing lessons from past epidemics;
 - Sharing information and guidance, and where possible working together to minimise duplication and maximise inter-agency cooperation;
 - Advocating for stronger attention to gender in the global response and within agencies.

Digital Social Protection (Ralf Radermacher, GIZ)

- **Objectives:** promote convergence on concepts, guidelines and standards; explore and develop global goods; promote and assess innovation.
- **Ways of working – working group and workstreams:**
 - Encourage cooperation on studies and events to enhance dialog and thus convergence
 - Various workstreams according to the objectives (arious leads from among the members)
 - Virtual WG meetings every 6 weeks
 - Alternating western timezone and eastern timezone
 - Updates on the status of various workstreams
 - Discuss the creation on new workstreams
 - Brief introductions of new strategic developments in digital social protection
 - Physical meetings once a year (around SPIAC meeting or other big events)
- **Key workstreams – status and next steps:**
 - Reinforcement Digital Principles & adopting Donor Investment Principles for SP (DIAL supported) (status: pending; next: discussion in virtual meeting, table recommendation to SPIAC-B)
 - Enhancing conceptual convergence on digital social protection
 - DFID-GIZ paper (DFID/GIZ lead) (status: published; next: mini-course with socialprotection.org in development).
 - Link to ISPA work on social assistance information systems (WB lead) (status: draft; next: field testing).
 - Definition of interoperability standards (ISSA lead) (status: collection of good practices and definition of interoperability scenarios; next: virtual workshop).
 - Definition of minimum data protection standards (status: draft “issue brief” available; next: virtual workshop (May/June) to define guidelines).
 - Explorative studies (e.g. on AI).

Discussion/announcements:

- ISPA public works group would like to constitute SPIAC-B working group; guided by ILO and inviting experts in employment, infrastructure, etc (team covering at least 2 sectors from each institution).

- ISPA disability working group announced that they would also like to constitute a SPIAC-B working group.
- ITUC (Alison Tate) emphasised the practical importance of the tools and principles in coming months; e.g. mechanism for immediate payments are very relevant in the context of shut downs, as well as recovery and rebuilding of global supply chains.

Closing session – Michal Rutkowski (WB) and Shahra Razavi (ILO)

- Michal Rutkowski (WB)
 - Challenge: Turn adversity into opportunity. COVID-19 exacerbates gaps in our social protection systems, particularly the unprotected missing middle (as highlighted in recent WB White Paper) that is hit most severely by the crisis.
 - How can we rapidly close these gaps?
 - Resources mobilisation (e.g. 160 billion of WB);
 - Going beyond information sharing.
 - How can we vastly improve coordination at country level? There is a dissonance between global cooperation and cooperation at the country level. Michal Rutkowski will do his part to talk country directors and field staff to coordinate with other partners.
 - Adjustment during crisis: Usually targeting in order to prioritise social protection for the poorest and most vulnerable, but the crisis has shown the limitation of this approach as many who were not considered poor are now hit hard and do not have any social protection; there is a great need to reach large numbers of people quickly.
 - COVID-19 thus shows the need for reaching universal social protection in order to be prepared to respond to crises.
- Shahra Razavi (ILO)
 - Agreement with the World Bank that the crisis has shown the deficiencies of very narrowly targeted safety nets; re-emphasizing the importance of building universal social protection systems – not only for the poorest, but also for the missing middle that is not far away from falling into poverty in the case of shocks.
 - Importance of the work at the country level, for instance involving all partners when investments are discussed.
 - Need to be careful about the kind of austerity measure that might be put in place once the crisis is over, as countries will need fiscal space to build social protection systems before the next crisis hits. Spending on social protection is a huge investment and not an expense.