

Secretary-General's  
Policy Brief  
**Investing in Jobs and  
Social Protection for  
Poverty Eradication and  
a Sustainable Recovery**

28 SEPTEMBER 2021

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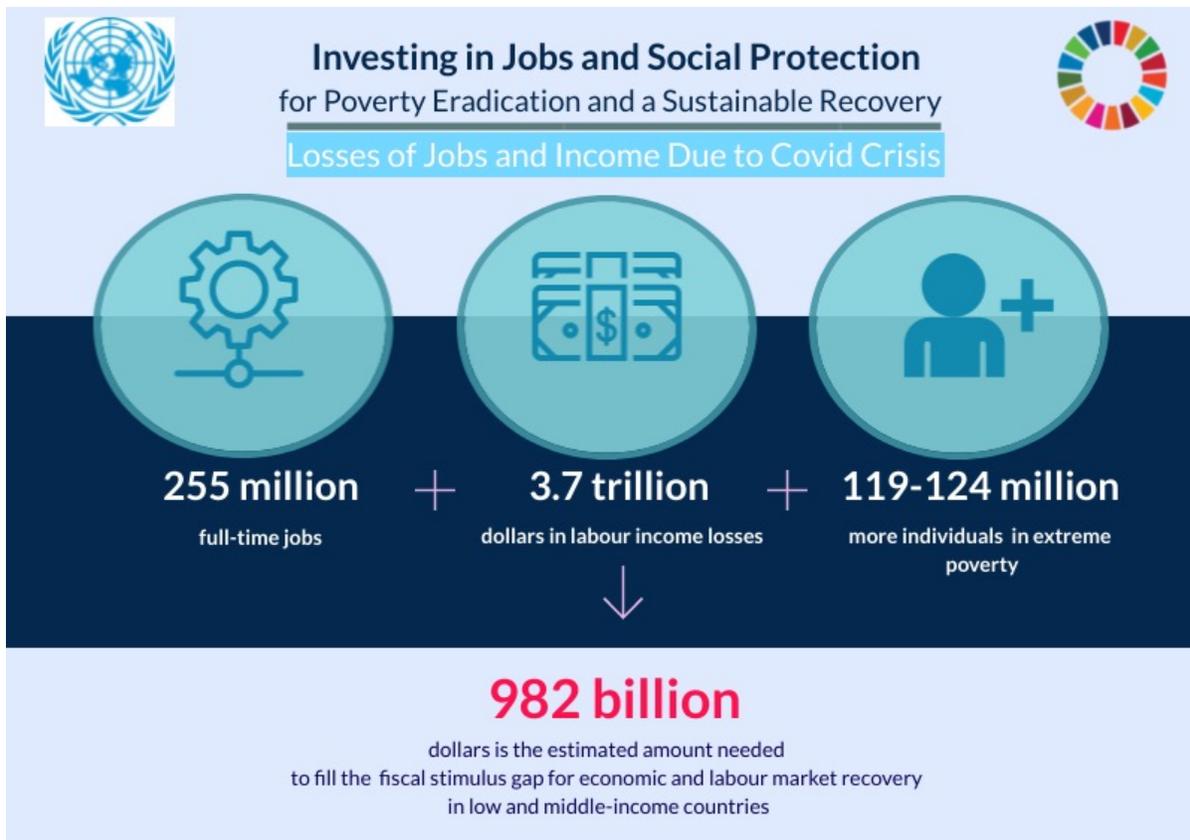
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# I. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is the most serious global public health and socioeconomic crisis the world has faced in the past century, exacerbating pre-existing and systemic inequalities and threatening the long-term livelihoods and well-being of hundreds of millions, if not billions, of people. Recovery trends between advanced and developing economies are deeply uneven, spurred by vast differences in access to vaccines, the fiscal capacity and ability of governments to respond, supply chain failures, a growing digital divide, the impacts of the growing complexity of conflict and displacement, and the threat of a looming debt

crisis. This two-track recovery is now creating a great divergence, which, if not corrected, will undermine trust and solidarity and fuel conflict and forced migration, and make the world more vulnerable to future crises, including climate change.

**In 2020, an estimated 8.8 per cent of total working hours, equivalent to the hours worked in one year by 255 million full-time workers, were lost. This corresponds to a loss of US\$ 3.7 trillion in labour income before government support.** The crisis-induced jobs shortfall relative to pre-crisis trends is estimated to be 75 million in



2021 and 23 million in 2022.<sup>1</sup> While the wealth of billionaires increased by over US\$ 3.9 trillion between March and December 2020, the impact of the pandemic on the world of work, among other factors, increased the number of extremely poor by between 119 and 124 million people – the first increase in poverty in over 21 years.<sup>2</sup>

**The impacts of the pandemic on the world of work also disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable, especially women in the informal economy.** Workers in the informal economy have been three times more likely to lose their jobs than those in formal employment arrangements, and have suffered from disproportionate decline in their income. **Women’s employment declined by 5 per cent in 2020, compared with 3.9 per cent for men.** Additionally, 90 per cent of women who lost their jobs in 2020 exited the labour force, often due to intensified care responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> Around 435 million women and girls will be living on less than US\$ 1.90 a day – including 47 million pushed into poverty as a result of COVID-19 by 2021.<sup>4</sup>

**Children were also particularly impacted.** As a result of COVID-19, the number of children living under a multidimensional measure of poverty soared to approximately 1.2 billion. This represents a 15 per cent increase in the number of children living in deprivation in low and middle-income countries, or an additional 150 million children since the start of the pandemic. Child labour, which was already on the rise before COVID-19, is projected to increase by an additional 9 million to a total of 169 million children by the end of 2022, if current trends are not reversed.<sup>5</sup> Children

in fragile and humanitarian contexts, as well as those experiencing exclusion and discrimination due to gender, ethnicity, race, migration status or geographic location, suffer greater deprivation.

In response to these impacts, governments across the world have marshalled social protection programmes and labour market crisis response and stimulus packages to protect people’s health, jobs and incomes, and to ensure social stability. **There has been an unprecedented roll-out of approximately 1,700 social protection and labour market measures. But while these measures acted as important shock absorbers, they remained insufficient to mitigate the full impact of the crisis and were mostly implemented in advanced economies, leaving 53.1 per cent of the global population unprotected.** Despite the blow that the crisis has dealt to women’s jobs and incomes, only 13 per cent of these measures were aimed at strengthening women’s economic security and only 11 per cent provided support in the face of rising unpaid care demands.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, in many countries, social protection measures, including income support, have been temporary or ad-hoc in nature, and now risk being rolled-back despite their positive impact on poverty mitigation.<sup>7</sup>

**The pandemic caused the financing gap for social protection to widen by approximately 30 per cent.** To guarantee at least a basic level of social security through nationally defined social protection floors,<sup>8</sup> lower-middle-income countries would need to invest an additional US\$ 362.9 billion annually, and upper-middle-income countries a further US\$ 750.8 billion annually, equivalent

1 International Labour Organization (ILO), World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2021, May 2021

2 World Bank, [Global Economic Prospects](#), June 2021

3 ILO, [World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2021](#), May 2021; Women, [Whose time to care? Unpaid care and domestic work during COVID-19](#), 2020

4 UN-Women, [From Insight to Action: Gender Equality in the Wake of COVID-19](#), 2020

5 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), [Press Release](#), 17 September 2020. The basis of the calculation is explained in a [Technical Note](#); ILO and UNICEF, [Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward, 2021](#)

6 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN-Women, [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker Factsheet](#), March 2021

7 UNDP, [Mitigating Poverty: Global Estimates of the Impact of Income Support during the Pandemic, 2021](#); ILO, [World Social Protection Report 2020-22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – in Pursuit of a Better Future](#), 2021

8 As defined in the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)



# INVESTING IN JOBS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

for Poverty Eradication and a Sustainable Recovery



**Investing in systems to achieve universal social protection has never been more urgent to avert long-term impacts of the COVID-19 crisis**

## Coverage Gaps IN SOCIAL PROTECTION

**4.14  
BILLION**

Individuals  
are unprotected by any social protection  
measures

this amounts  
to

**53.1%**

of the global  
population



**The unprecedented expansion of social protection measures during the crisis demonstrates their critical role in promoting a swift and inclusive recovery**

**1700**

New Social Protection  
Measures

in response to the COVID crisis...



however many measures are  
temporary, and most are  
concentrated in high or upper-  
middle income countries.

**Investment in social protection systems will help reduce poverty and strengthen resilience to future crises**

**1.2 Trillion**

dollars are needed, annually, to  
expand social protection floors for 145  
low and middle-income countries

Such investments would provide a basic level  
of income security to

- 726.5 million children aged 0-5,
- 133.6 million new mothers,
- 192.2 million persons with severe disabilities,
- 497 million older persons

Additionally, it will provide 6.6 billion persons with  
access to essential health care services

to 5.1 and 3.1 per cent of their GDP, respectively. Low-income countries would need to invest an additional US\$ 77.9 billion annually, equivalent to 15.9 per cent of their GDP.<sup>9</sup> The **fiscal stimulus gap for economic and labour market recovery is also estimated at around US\$ 982 billion in low-income and lower-middle-income countries** (US\$ 45 billion and US\$ 937 billion, respectively). This gap represents the resources that these countries need to match the average level of stimulus relative to working-hour losses in high-income countries.<sup>10</sup>

The persistent and growing financing gap has been further exacerbated by uneven levels of private investments and declining trade within and between countries. Medium-sized, small and micro-enterprises were 50 per cent more likely to be affected by the crisis than their larger counterparts.<sup>11</sup> Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) declined by 42 per cent, remittances by 7 per cent<sup>12</sup> and global trade by approximately 9 per cent in 2020, with trade in services decreasing a staggering 16.5 per cent.<sup>13</sup>

These trends have placed even greater pressure on the fiscal capacity of developing countries, many already burdened by crippling debt, to roll out stimulus response measures. While the global fiscal response to the crisis amounted to US\$ 16 trillion between March 2020 and March 2021<sup>14</sup>, the distribution of this support has largely occurred in advanced economies with deep pockets, which were able to mobilize their social protection systems and labour market policies to support lives and livelihoods. Many developing countries, however, who found themselves

constrained by plunging revenues and rising debt burdens, were unable to mount a similar stimulus response. **About 88 per cent of global government spending to mitigate the effects of the crisis during the early phase of the pandemic has been in advanced economies.**<sup>15</sup> The average stimulus per capita spending in developed countries was US\$ 10.000 compared to US\$ 20 per capita in LDCs in 2020.<sup>16</sup>

Climate change is likely to further compound these risks and intensify the instability of financial systems, as natural disasters wipe out years of development progress, undermine global employment, and add to national debt burdens. In addition to COVID, conflict and climate were the main drivers of increases in extreme poverty worldwide, including child poverty.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, **an estimated 1.2 billion jobs depend on the environment – the equivalent of 40 per cent of the global labour force.**<sup>18</sup>

**To protect livelihoods and our planet, it is essential that climate action and decent work are pursued in tandem, by supporting a just transition** that can help the world reach the 1.5-degree target pledged at the Paris Climate Summit, while creating millions of new and decent jobs in the growing net-zero economy. Further, to avoid the reproduction of gender segregation and inequalities in the world of work, social protection and labour market measures must be devised to ensure that women benefit from new green jobs.<sup>19</sup>

9 ILO, [World Social Protection Report 2020-22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – in Pursuit of a Better Future](#), 2021

10 ILO Monitor, [COVID-19 and the World of Work](#), 6th Edition, September 2020

11 ILO, [World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2021](#), May 2021

12 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), [Investment Trends Monitor](#), Jan 2021

13 UNCTAD, [Global Trade Update](#), Feb 2021

14 IMF: [Fiscal Monitor](#), April 2021

15 ILO Monitor, [COVID-19 and the World of Work](#), 5th Edition, June 2020

16 UNCTAD, [Global Trade Update](#), Feb 2021; UNCTAD, [Investment Trends Monitor](#), Jan 2021

17 World Bank, [Poverty and Shared Prosperity – Reversals of Fortunes](#), 2020

18 ILO, [World Employment Social Outlook 2018: Greening with jobs](#)

19 UN-Women, [Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice](#), Sep 2021

It is time to tackle these unprecedented challenges in solidarity to reverse our current trajectory. The Secretary-General's call for a **renewed Social Contract needs to be followed by action, built on trust, inclusion, protection and participation. It is important that we measure and value what matters to people and the planet, while bolstering the world's resilience to future shocks.**

To achieve this, investments are needed that can create co-benefits while enhancing preparedness including in universal social protection, decent and green jobs and gender equal societies. **Indeed, estimates suggest that investments in governance, social protection, the green economy, and digitalization could lift 146 million people, including 74 million women and girls, out of poverty by 2030.**<sup>20</sup> These areas of priority require committed financing from all sources for the short, medium and long term.

In May 2020, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, and the Secretary-General convened the **Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond Initiative (FfDI)** to enable discussions on concrete financing solutions to the COVID-19 health and development emergency, as well as options to recover better and invest in a more sustainable and inclusive future. In previous Policy Briefs related to this Initiative, the Secretary-General called for action to ease the debt burden for developing countries, to create the necessary fiscal space to address the socioeconomic impact of the climate crisis, and to transform extractive industries for sustainable development. Many of the recommendations in this Policy Brief build on those that have preceded, while firmly bringing the complex dynamics of the financial and real economy together.

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<sup>20</sup> Secretary-General's report "Our Common Agenda" (un.org)

## II. A rights-based approach to recovery

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**The recommendations of this Policy Brief are grounded in human rights obligations, including international labour standards, and based on experiences from countries.**<sup>21</sup> Implementation of these norms, standards and obligations would ensure decent work and effective access to social protection and social services for all and contribute to the economic advancement of all people, including children and their families, persons of working age and older persons, women, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees and others in vulnerable situations. **Social dialogue is an important mechanism to build consensus on the ratification and implementation of these international standards,** in particular as they relate to employment, social protection and a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies at national levels. International standards can also guide in the design and implementation of national recovery policies, and the monitoring of the impact of

financial and economic decisions on people at the local level.

Member States should ratify and implement international conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and international labour standards and guidelines, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All, which provides a policy framework and operational tools for policy alignment on ambitious climate action with decent work creation and a just transition for all countries. Institutional investors and the private sector should also ensure that all operations are based on a human-rights based approach, including by adopting the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

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<sup>21</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), [COVID-19 and its human rights dimensions, 2020](#); ILO, [ILO Standards and COVID-19](#), version 2.1

# III. National strategies for a job-rich recovery, just transition and universal social protection

A human-centred recovery from the crisis requires that **employment and social protection policies work in tandem, not only to improve people's living standards and reduce inequalities but also**

**to empower people to navigate the challenges imposed by a rapidly changing world of work, and by the green and just transition required to meet the goal of net zero emissions by 2050.**

## Four guarantees:

## Possible mechanisms:

Social Protection Floors



All residents have access to **essential health care**, including maternity care

Social health insurance, free access to health and maternal care



All **children** enjoy basic **income security**, providing access to nutrition, education, care, and any other necessary goods and services

Universal child benefits, family allowances, scholarships, school feeding programmes, free or subsidized access to child care centres



All persons in **working age** who cannot earn sufficient income, enjoy **basic income security**, particularly in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity, disability

Unemployment insurance, public employment schemes, cash transfers, employment injury insurance, sickness benefits, disability pensions, maternity insurance + Linkages with job placement and skills development services



All **older persons** have basic **income security**

Old age pensions, long term care services

Tackling economic insecurity and deep-rooted inequalities, including gender inequalities, as well as those further enhanced by poverty, climate and conflict, is indispensable to enable people and societies to adapt to change and strengthen their resilience to future shocks. Such an approach not only provides higher incomes for individuals, families and communities; it also contributes to productive employment, sustainable enterprises and increased national revenues, and is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This requires **greater policy coherence at national and global levels, including sound macroeconomic, fiscal, and industrial policies that aim at investing in people, a just transition and sustainable development.**

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## ACCELERATING PROGRESS TOWARDS UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

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**Currently, only 46.9 per cent of the global population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit**, while the remaining 53.1 per cent – as many as 4.14 billion people – are left unprotected.<sup>22</sup> The crisis has also put a spotlight on the fragility of care arrangements, including their over-reliance on women’s and migrants’ unpaid and underpaid labour, and the weakness of care services, including health, child and long-term care.

The unprecedented expansion of social protection measures over the last year demonstrates

their critical role in protecting health, lives and livelihoods, and promoting a swift and inclusive recovery. In countries with strong pre-existing social protection systems, statutory schemes automatically fulfilled their protective function, further reinforced through additional resources channelled largely through existing schemes, including social insurance and tax-financed schemes. In countries with weak social protection systems, governments faced greater challenges in mounting a commensurate response to extend protection to those who were most affected, including migrants, and workers in the informal economy.<sup>23</sup> **Overall, virtually all countries and territories took action and implemented or announced in total nearly 1,700 measures between March 2020 and May 2021, including measures to ensure that people could access quality health care and were able to quarantine themselves, thereby protecting their own health and the health of others.**<sup>24</sup>

Yet in many countries, measures adopted have been temporary (one-time or short-term support for few weeks or months), ad-hoc and often gender blind.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, an overwhelming majority of these social protection measures were implemented in high-income countries. While these measures were essential, the initial response has already petered out, highlighting the need to invest in social protection systems and ensure that those measures are not rolled-back. Such efforts need to address underlying challenges and long-standing constraints: limited fiscal space, political considerations impacting tax and budget reforms, and weak administrative capacity. According to spending plans reported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), many governments have already started cutting back their

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22 SDG indicator 1.3.1, and ILO, [World Social Protection Report 2020-22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – in Pursuit of a Better Future](#), 2021

23 ILO, [Social protection responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries: Strengthening resilience by building universal social protection](#), 2020; ILO, [Extending social protection to informal workers in the COVID-19 crisis: country responses and policy considerations](#), 2021

24 ILO data for 2021: [Social Protection Monitor: Social Protection Responses to the COVID19 Crisis around the World](#)

25 UNDP and UN-Women, [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker Factsheet](#), March 2021;

fiscal expenditures in 2021,<sup>26</sup> raising concerns about possible cuts in social protection measures.

Comprehensive social protection systems will facilitate a **green and just transition**, as they can improve the resilience of people and countries affected by climate hazards, while promoting the ecological structural transition needed to mitigate the scale of global warming. They can also address critical drivers of conflict and displacement, enhance social cohesion and creating more equal and resilient societies.

**Today, countries stand at a crossroad, facing a choice over the future of their social protection strategies.**<sup>27</sup> Based on the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 crisis, many countries have taken the first step towards a 'high road' in support of a human-centred and resilient recovery by investing in universal, comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection systems, in line with human rights principles and international social security standards. Without adequate financing and political will, however, governments could fall back on a 'low-road' turn, marked by minimal benefits and yawning coverage gaps. Moreover, COVID-19 also presents a critical opportunity to ensure that social protection strategies are inclusive, leave no one behind, and have the capacity to respond to multiple and compounding crisis effectively and swiftly. **The policy window for embarking on a high-road strategy in support of robust social protection systems will not remain open indefinitely. Governments must seize upon the momentum created by the current crisis to make rapid progress towards universal social protection systems while preparing themselves for present and future challenges.**

Building universal social protection systems requires first and foremost **a nationally defined social protection floor that guarantees at least**

**access to health care and to a basic level of income security**, but it should not stop at the floor level.<sup>28</sup> **Universal social protection can be achieved through a mix of mechanisms such as inclusive social insurance schemes, tax-financed non-contributory schemes or a combination of both.** Depending on country circumstances, such public social protection systems, including floors, can include universal child benefits, health protection, maternity and parental leave benefits, unemployment insurance, social pensions, and variants of a universal basic income (UBI). They should be complemented by effective access to health care, employment services, skills development and care services, including childcare and long-term care services. Such a combination of mechanisms can facilitate flexibility, labour mobility and decent work for people in all types of employment, as they provide for portability, broad risk-sharing, and sustainable and equitable financing of social protection systems. **Without systematically transforming emergency measures into elements of rights-based social protection systems that are gender-, age- and disability-responsive, societies will not have the conditions that are needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and will be at risk of an equally if not worse dire situation when the next crisis hits.**

During the COVID-19 crisis, social protection has been high on the governments' agenda, with unprecedented political support. Within a few weeks, many countries managed to overcome administrative and financial barriers and to reach those previously unprotected, including in the informal economy. The crisis has certainly shown that with political will and adequate allocation of resources, achieving universal social protection can become a reality.

<sup>26</sup> IMF, Fiscal Monitor, April 2021

<sup>27</sup> ILO, [World Social Protection Report 2020-22: Social Protection at the Crossroads – in Pursuit of a Better Future](#), 2021

<sup>28</sup> ILO, [Recommendation R202 – Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012](#) (No. 202)

**No advanced economy has achieved economic and social progress without investing in social protection systems and quality public services that provide people with the necessary support to navigate the vicissitudes of their lives.**

To guarantee at least a basic level of income security and access to health care for all (a social protection floor), low-income countries alone would need to invest an additional US\$ 77.9 billion, or 15.9 per cent of their GDP per annum.<sup>29</sup> Together with an additional US\$ 362.9 billion for lower-middle-income countries (5.1 per cent of their GDP) and US\$ 750.8 for upper-middle income countries, (3.1 per cent of their GDP), investment to guarantee a social protection floor in 145 low- and middle-income countries is estimated at US\$ 1'191.6 billion per year.<sup>30</sup> Such an investment would provide 726.5 million children aged 0-5, 133.6 million new mothers, 192.9 million persons with severe disabilities and 497.0 million older persons in these countries with at least a basic level of income security, and 6.6 billion persons with access to essential health care.<sup>31</sup> Taking into account the increase in global poverty spurred by the COVID-19-crisis, especially in low and middle-income countries,<sup>32</sup> building a social protection floor has never been more urgent to avert significant long-term poverty impacts and

a global failure of meeting the SDGs. This can be facilitated by addressing the various barriers they face, tailored to their specific circumstances, including by harnessing digital technologies while working to close the digital divide.

The evidence is also clear on the critical contribution of non-contributory benefits, such as **cash transfers on a broad range of outcomes linked to human capital, including health, education, nutrition, as well as enhancing economic capacity of poor families.** In addition, when properly designed, social protection systems can contribute to risk management and effectively respond to emergency and crisis situations, including displacement.<sup>33</sup>

The COVID-19 crisis also highlighted the extent to which **digital infrastructure can facilitate the expansion of social protection,** including through well-targeted cash programs. Digital technologies can facilitate registration and access to benefits, yet careful consideration needs to be given to ensure the full protection of personal data and privacy, adequate accountability mechanisms, closing of the digital divide and ensuring that no one is left behind.<sup>34</sup>

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29 ILO, [Financing gaps in social protection: Global estimates and strategies for developing countries in light of the COVID-19 crisis and beyond](#), 2020

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid. Access to essential health care as estimated by the WHO, (Stenberg, et al.), [Financing Transformative Health Systems towards Achievement of the Health Sustainable Development Goals: A Model for Projected Resource Needs in 67 Low-Income and Middle-Income Countries](#), *Lancet Global Health* 5(9): e875-e887). Although these estimates provide an important approximation of resource needs, they cannot replace detailed costing studies of national social protection floors, which should be defined through an inclusive national dialogue.

32 Kharas and Dooley (2021) [Long-run impacts of COVID-19 on extreme poverty](#) (brookings.edu)

33 UNICEF, [Programme Guidance: Strengthening Shock Responsive Social Protection Systems](#), 2019

34 OHCHR, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights: Digital technology, social protection and human rights](#), 2020

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## CREATING JOBS AND PROMOTING A JUST TRANSITION TOWARDS EQUITABLE, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES

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**Fiscal stimulus packages implemented in response to COVID-19, particularly job support measures, have played a crucial role in protecting households and businesses and boosting aggregate demand. This must be maintained in the coming years to halt the trend of growing inequalities.** Private investment, spurred by public finances, is also crucial to rebuilding economies and creating jobs. Certain sectors not only have the potential to produce more jobs, but also better jobs, while at the same time helping economies to move towards more inclusive, resilient and sustainable models of growth. These include a better paid care sector, as well as sectors and industries that contribute to greening economies. Investments into these sectors are vital to mitigate the negative impact of climate change and its related extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and desertification that are already aggravating structural inequalities and negatively affecting the most marginalized.

**A green and just transition holds massive potential for all countries, particularly least developing countries, rich in the resources needed for the renewables and sustainable revolution to capitalize on these trends by investing revenue in more sustainable and diversified economies, as well as opportunities for all countries to create new and decent jobs and redress issues around equity and social justice.**<sup>35</sup>

Such investments are also crucial for rural economies which account for more than two in five of the world's workers, who often live in poverty and work informally.<sup>36</sup> Expanding green infrastructure in these economies would help small-scale farmers to have access to renewable energies and enhance productivity and sustainability, which are key to decent-job creation and poverty reduction. Combined with better access to digital technology, these investments will also facilitate transition to formal employment.

**To benefit from these opportunities, the transition to renewable energy-based economies will require comprehensive packages of support for countries and regions that rely heavily on revenues and jobs generated by the fossil fuel industry.** The financing needs are significant; annual energy-related investments would need to increase by US\$ 3 trillion globally, mostly in developing countries, to be aligned with a 1.5 degrees world. But these investments would also yield enormous returns in the long-term, adding 4 per cent to Global Domestic Product (GDP) by 2030, while bringing other socioeconomic, health, and environmental benefits.

**The transition to renewable energy and the circular economy can also potentially generate over 100 million jobs by 2030, helping to reduce poverty and inequality.**<sup>37</sup> Yet close to 80 million jobs could also be lost over the same timeframe. Jobs in the renewables sector, for instance, reached 11.5 million globally in 2019, and are only expected to grow as the momentum behind the green transition accelerates. With women accounting for 32 per cent of the renewable energy workforce compared with 22 per cent for the overall energy sector, the transition could also contribute significantly to closing the gender

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<sup>35</sup> For more information on the green transition in relation to Extractive Industries, see the Secretary-General's [Policy Brief on Extractive Industries](#), May 2021

<sup>36</sup> ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work, [Work for a Brighter Future](#), 2019

<sup>37</sup> ILO, [Skills for a greener future: A global view](#), 2019. The study is based on two global scenarios: energy sustainability – a phasing out of fossil fuel energy generation and move to renewable sources – and a “circular economy” that mostly effects manufacturing, production and service sectors and embraces the recycling, repair, reuse, remanufacture and longer durability of goods.



## Investing in Jobs and Social Protection for Poverty Eradication and a Sustainable Recovery



### Green Jobs



Greening economies is required to reach the goals pledged in the Paris Agreement.



Green investments are crucial for rural economies which account for more than **2 in 5** of the world's workers, often in poverty and informality



Jobs in the renewables sector, for instance, reached **11.5 million** globally in 2019, and are only expected to grow



As women account for **32 percent** of the renewable energy workforce, green transition can contribute to closing the **gender employment gap**

**Public investments for a just transition to a climate neutral and circular economy can potentially generate over**

**100 million**  
new jobs by 2030

employment gap if well-designed policies and targeted funding are put in place.<sup>38</sup>

A just transition is thus necessary to seize the benefits of this transition, while effectively managing its risks. Investing in social protection, job growth, re-skilling and up-skilling programmes in support of the green economy will be essential to achieve a just transition from fossil to renewable-based systems, and protect populations at increased risk of climate-related hardship.

**Similarly, public investments in the care economy can yield a “triple dividend” for recovery: supporting women’s (re)entry into the labour market,** reducing vulnerability among children and the elderly and creating more jobs than commensurate investments in other sectors, such as construction. Six hundred and forty-seven million persons of working age are outside the labour force due to family responsibilities. Unpaid care work constitutes the main barrier to women’s participation in labour markets, especially when looked at against the gender pay gap, while a

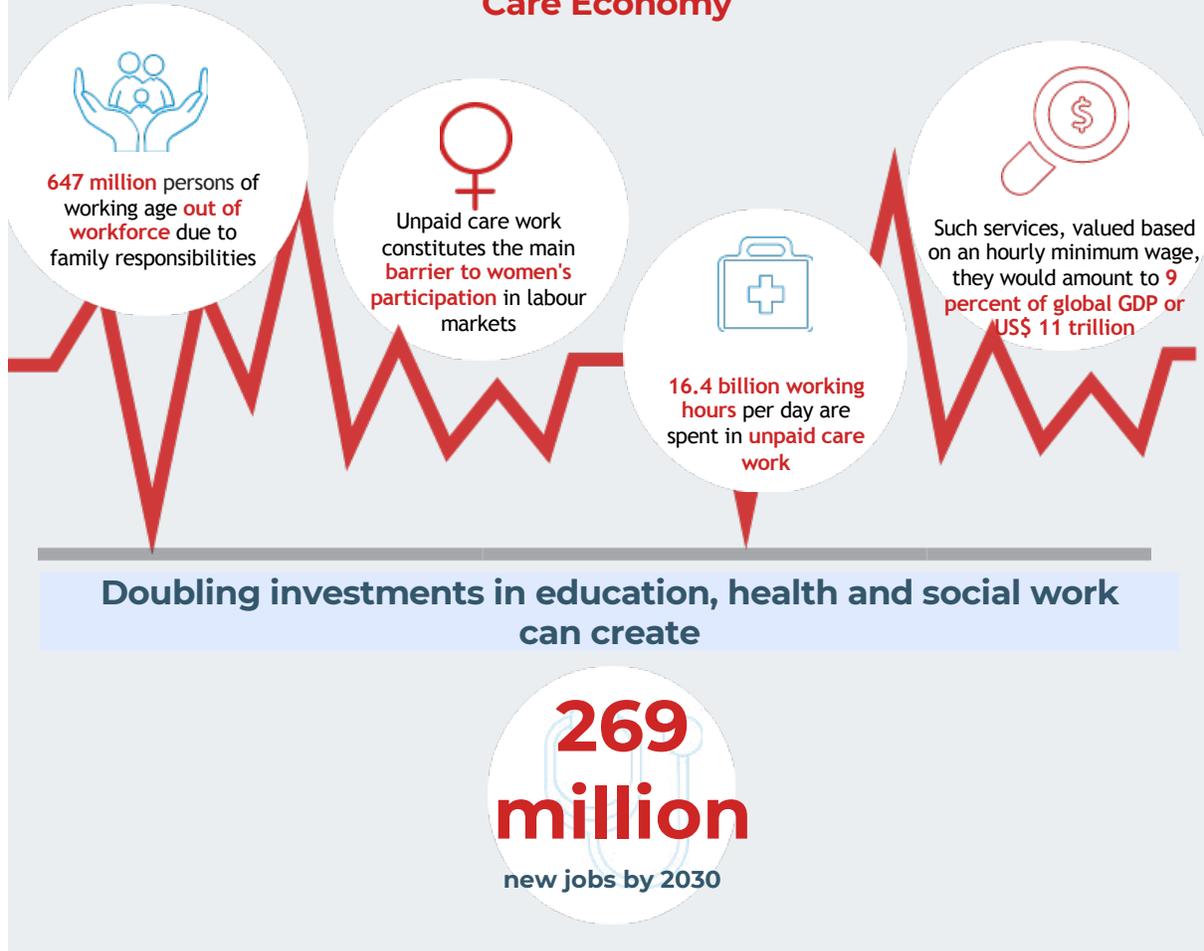
<sup>38</sup> International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), *Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective*, 2019



## Investing in Jobs and Social Protection for Poverty Eradication and a Sustainable Recovery



### Care Economy



more equal sharing of unpaid care work between men and women is associated with higher levels of women's labour force participation.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, 2.1 billion people remain in need of care, including 1.9 billion children under 15 and 200 million older persons. By 2030, this number is expected to reach 2.3 billion, driven by an additional 200 million older persons and children. Moreover, 16.4 billion working hours per day are spent in unpaid care work – the equivalent to 2

billion people working eight hours per day with no remuneration. **Were such services to be valued based on an hourly minimum wage, they would amount to 9 per cent of global GDP or US\$ 11 trillion.**<sup>40</sup> To avert a looming global care crisis, investments in the care economy need to be significantly scaled-up. Around 269 million new jobs could be created by 2030 if investments in education, health and social work were doubled.

<sup>39</sup> ILO, *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work*, 2018  
<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Tools and methodologies already exist to guide public investments in the care sector at national levels, and their practical applications will be critical to building a more inclusive economy.<sup>41</sup> For example, gender-responsive budgeting supports the assessment of policies and budgets and allocation of public resources to the care economy, as well as other priority sectors for inclusive recovery.<sup>42</sup>

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## INVESTING IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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**As a result of the pandemic, school doors closed on about 1.5 billion students worldwide** as of 30 March 2020 (83 per cent of enrollees in 167 countries). By the end of July 2021, nearly 15 million students still faced some disruption to their education.<sup>43</sup> One hundred and eighty countries report that 17 million children are at risk of dropping out or not enrolling in education institutions.<sup>44</sup> Adolescent girls are more at risk than are boys of not returning to school in low and lower-middle-income countries; whereas boys are more likely to be out of school in upper-middle and high-income countries. While many children in developing and developed countries shifted at least partially to distance learning, an estimated 100 million additional children fell below minimum proficiency in reading owing to the pandemic.<sup>45</sup> In addition, many Technical and Vocational Education Training Centres (TVET)

were either completely or partially closed during the pandemic.<sup>46</sup>

**Investments in education and vocational training systems are key to building a sustainable recovery from the pandemic and ensuring people are well-prepared for evolving challenges in the world of work, including in light of the green transition and digital revolution.** Adapting national TVET centres should be guided by a tripartite governance system<sup>47</sup> as a guarantee for market relevant training, diversified sources of funding and results-based allocations for impactful financing, a comprehensive quality assurance system that contributes to the trust of the private sector in training providers, and a framework for bridging the digital divide in education and skills development.

**Investment in disadvantaged learners is critical to avoid growing inequalities.** Measures include providing remedial education and second chance programmes, pre-vocational training to access TVET or quality apprenticeships. Investments also need to promote gender equality, sustainability, reduce occupational gender segregation, and address socio-cultural factors that make it more difficult for women to balance education, training and other responsibilities.

**Active labour market policies and social protection to promote skills development in these areas will help workers upskill and re-skill to keep or change their job, adapt to the green and digital transitions and find ways out of poverty.** These include grants, vouchers, subsidies, tax rebates or other equity measures for individuals,

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41 UN-Women and ILO, [A guide to public investments in the care economy. Policy support tool for estimating care deficits, investment costs and economic return](#), March 2021

42 UN-Women, [COVID-19 and fiscal policy: applying gender-responsive budgeting in support and recovery](#), 2021

43 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics (UNESCO UIS), [Global Monitoring of School Closures Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), 2021

44 UNESCO (forthcoming), [2021 Update: Millions are Coming Returning to School, but Recoveries Are Not Equal](#)

45 UNESCO Institute for Statistics (Gustafsson, M.), [Pandemic-Related Disruptions to Schooling and Impacts on Learning Proficiency Indicators: A Focus on the Early Grades](#), 2021

46 World Bank, UNESCO and ILO, [Skills development in the time of COVID-19: tacking stock of the initial responses in technical and vocational education and training](#), 2021

47 Consisting of representative workers' and employers' organizations and government

enterprises, or training providers. It also includes accessible and affordable childcare services that enable working parents to seize employment opportunities and gain access to better jobs in the formal economy. Learning entitlements, also coupled with social protection, are instruments with growing international uptake to promote lifelong learning and improve access to education and training for all.

Strategic investments in education and skills training should be embedded in a comprehensive approach to finance social infrastructure for children and families, in particular health, nutrition, early childhood development, water and sanitation. They provide the foundation for children and youth to prosper and to start productive working lives.<sup>48</sup>

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## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES FOR A JOB-RICH RECOVERY

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The digitalization of economies, and the expansion of fixed and mobile broadband networks, along with other forms of digitally-enabled employment, offer much potential for promoting decent and highly productive jobs, particularly for younger people. At the same time, precarious employment arrangements associated with digital labour platforms, compounded by persistent digital divides, also need to be addressed.<sup>49</sup>

**Digital data mapping of community infrastructure needs with Geographical Information Systems (GIS) can help visualize accessibility constraints, identify employment creation potential, and can inform policy makers of priority areas and critical infrastructure assets that require investments.** Digital technologies have also been widely used to offer safer and transparent electronic wage payment systems for workers resulting in financial inclusion, distance

learning through online platforms or Virtual Reality software for skills development, mobile road survey applications for effective monitoring and Information Technology to systematize apprenticeship programmes for efficient sequencing.

**Job formalization through public investments with digital technologies requires particular attention, not only for job creation purposes, but also for a transition to the formal economy.**

In this context, the use of e-formality is a new and innovative way to include informal workers into the labour market. E-formalization includes measures to improve access to financial, business services such as e-trading, online finance, mobile payments for and e-procurement. It also enables access and social services, as well as social protection schemes and other forms of social security while also contributing to enabling compliance with formal obligations such as taxes. Digital ID, as a form of identification, is a basic step to help people benefit from formal public services.

**The positive role of technology to strengthen active labour market policies became clear during the COVID-19 crisis.** E-formalization has been revealed as an innovative way of supporting the formalization of informal workers and informal productive units. Public Employment Services (PES) that had invested in technology for service delivery prior to this crisis and those with a clear digital transformation strategy were able to rely on remote delivery channels to ensure service continuity during full or partial lockdown. In addition to technology-based delivery of PES, flexibility in reorganizing operations and partnerships has contributed substantially to boosting the capacity of PES to cope with both the sudden surge in demand for critical services and the disruptions associated with measures to control the pandemic. Critical services maintained in local labour markets have included the

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<sup>48</sup> UNICEF, [Financing an inclusive recovery for children. A call to action](#), Jul 2021

<sup>49</sup> ILO, [The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work](#), 2021

processing of unemployment insurance claims, referrals to welfare support, and enhanced matching services to sectors still actively recruiting amid the pandemic.<sup>50</sup>

**Digital infrastructure can also facilitate and scale-up the use of well-targeted cash programs,** which was successfully illustrated in several countries during the COVID-19 crisis. **In 2022, utilizing and scaling-up country-level digital infrastructures to efficiently target social protection and strengthen decent employment, including through emergency-based cash transfers, will be a key priority of the United Nations.** Fast action on this front will be critical in putting the necessary technology and digital infrastructure in place in countries to drive SDG achievement.

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## SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISES FOR AN INCLUSIVE RECOVERY AND JUST TRANSITION

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Sustainable micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), as well as cooperatives and the social and solidarity economy, create more than two thirds of all jobs globally, but most of these jobs are in the form of informal employment. They are often the backbone for local development, especially in rural areas of developing countries. These enterprises, though, are extremely vulnerable to external shocks and poor business environments, as was evident during the COVID-19 crisis.

In the short run, it was crucial to keep MSMEs afloat, allowing them to restart operations as soon as favourable conditions returned. Measures implemented during the COVID-19 crisis to support MSMEs included **targeted subsidies, sectoral policy support, credit mediation/re-financing**

**to overcome liquidity constraints, as well as business development and business-related e-formalization and local development plans for recovery.** As governments will likely find themselves faced with revenue base declines, spending will need to be targeted and carefully evaluated. They should also be tied to greening operations and addressing entrenched biases and inequalities, capacity building on sustainability and broader SDG-related business opportunities.

**Strategic public-private partnerships may be an important avenue to ensuring a job-rich recovery.** MSMEs in agriculture, food services, entertainment and transportation may reactivate relatively quickly once lockdowns end, but those in trade and manufacturing will need some support as the value chains are likely to be disrupted. MSMEs in the tourism sector will likely take longer to recover. The childcare service sector has also been negatively impacted. In some countries, critical capacity has been permanently lost as providers went out of business.<sup>51</sup> Important elements of an inclusive recovery include access to financial services and market recovery measures, with targeted support for MSMEs and enterprises owned and operated by women, restoring supply chains and creating a conducive business environment that enables especially MSMEs and own-account workers to recover from the economic crisis.

An inclusive, human-centred and green approach to enterprise development, which aligns enterprise growth and the creation of productive and decent employment with sustainable development objectives, will be key. Such an approach builds on three mutually reinforcing pillars: i) creating an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises and employment that encourages investment and social and green entrepreneurship; ii) helping entrepreneurs to start and build

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50 ILO, [COVID-19: Public Employment Services and COVID-19](#), 2020

51 UN-Women, [Beyond COVID-19: A Feminist Plan for Sustainability and Social Justice](#), Sep 2021

successful enterprises; and iii) linking productivity improvements to better working conditions, good industrial relations and good environmental practices. Moreover, **measures that have supported enterprises and workers in the informal economy can be an opportune foundation for a recovery that includes coherent long-term and cross-cutting policy frameworks to support pathways to formalization.**<sup>52</sup> All measures taken should strengthen MSME resilience to improve preparedness for future or recurring shocks.

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## MULTILATERAL COOPERATION AND PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENTS

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**At the national level, the action required for an inclusive, job-rich and green recovery requires a well-resourced public sector, and private actors who understand themselves to be contributing to and benefitting from the delivery of global public goods.** Over the past two years, governments have made use of monetary and fiscal policies to respond to the emergency, to stimulate a job-rich recovery and to extend social protection measures. Yet, vastly divergent fiscal capacities to respond between countries has led to an uneven global response, the long-term effects of which could leave developing countries even more vulnerable to future crises, including climate change. Additionally, one year on from the pandemic, recovery spending has fallen short of nations' commitments to build back more sustainable and inclusive. For example, of the total spending by leading economies, **only 18 per cent of announced recovery spending can be considered "green."**<sup>53</sup> The most comprehensive analysis of COVID 19-related fiscal revenue and

recovery efforts by 50 leading economies so far, also reveals that only US\$ 368 billion of US\$ 14.6 trillion COVID-induced spending in 2020 was green, which was mostly accounted for a small group of high-income countries. This is clearly insufficient to fill the gap needed for adaptation measures in lower-income countries, which cost an estimated US\$ 70 billion a year, and could double by 2030 and reach up to US\$ 500 billion by 2050.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, **while 85 per cent of countries reported at least one gender-responsive measure as part of their recovery plans, only 11 per cent of measures implemented addressed unpaid care work, exacerbating an already-severe care crisis.**<sup>55</sup>

To dramatically bolster a global recovery, **leaders should mobilize around the need for a public-spending driven growth strategy, to ensure that up-front investments are made in strategic areas that will yield long-term savings and benefits.** According to an IMF Staff note from May 2021,<sup>56</sup> for instance, the cost-benefit analysis of vaccinating most of the world are clear. While it is estimated to cost US\$ 50 billion in vaccine at least 40 per cent of the world by the end of 2021, and at least 60 per cent by the first half of 2022, the potential benefits of bringing a faster end to the pandemic are estimated to be US\$ 9 trillion, while advanced economies would benefit from US\$ 1 trillion in additional revenues. A similar kind of narrative to encourage a public-spending growth strategy is also needed to mobilize and channel funds to be invested in social protection and decent and green jobs, including in the care and green economies. To create additional fiscal space and ensure all countries have the capacity to invest in the SDGs, including in jobs and social protection, however, bold measures to address high and unsustainable levels of debt and to

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52 ILO, Extending social protection to informal workers in the COVID-19 crisis: country responses and policy considerations, 2021

53 United Nation Environment Programme (UNEP), *Are we building back better? Evidence from 2020 and Pathways for Inclusive and Green Recovery Spending*, 2021

54 UNEP, *Adaptation Gap Report*, 2020

55 UN-Women and UNDP, *COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker*, Feb 2021

56 *A Proposal to End the COVID-19 Pandemic* (imf.org)

avoid austerity measures, which are inimical to investing in human capabilities and advancing human rights, are needed.

In the Secretary-General's Policy Brief entitled *Liquidity and Debt Solutions to Invest in the SDGs: The Time to Act is now*, the international community was asked to take decisive action to ensure that countries can invest not only in a recovery, but also in climate action and the sustainable development goals (SDGs). In this regard, the Brief proposed several recommendations to ease liquidity constraints and provide fresh financing, including by bolstering ODA commitments, a new allocation of and re-channelling of Special Drawing Rights (SDR) to countries in need, the expansion of debt relief programmes, such as the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and Common Framework on Debt Treatment (CF) to include vulnerable middle-income countries, and a reformed international debt architecture to prevent debt build-ups and future lost decades of development.

Since then, **there has been significant but insufficient progress at the international level in providing a breathing room for developing countries and supporting the most vulnerable.** In a positive development, members of the United Nations have adopted resolutions calling for enhanced international cooperation and solidarity to create the fiscal space for an inclusive and green recovery.<sup>57</sup> Members of the G20 also agreed on a global minimum corporate tax rate to create a level playing field, and the International Monetary Fund agreed to a new SDR allocation of US\$ 650 billion – the largest in the history of the Fund – which became effective on 23 August 2021.

**There is now a window of opportunity to channel SDRs towards creating a virtuous cycle of investments in jobs and social protection to support a just transition and gender equality while providing the basis for increasing household incomes and national public revenues in the longer run.** Enhancing partnerships with multilateral development banks will be critical to leverage the finance needed at scale for that purpose. Out of a US\$ 650 SDR allocation, only US\$ 275 billion is currently set to go to emerging and developing countries, while low-income countries will receive US\$ 21 billion. While this amount alone will provide a 10 per cent boost to the international reserves of emerging and developing countries, **greater efforts are needed to ensure that advanced economies re-channel surplus SDRs to vulnerable countries in need, including middle-income countries, and invest in strategic sectors, including social protection and decent jobs, particularly in the green and care economies.**

**Considering that social protection currently accounts for less than 2 per cent of total ODA, additional efforts are also needed to increase ODA funding for the development and strengthening of national social protection systems, including complementing at least temporarily national social protection budgets.** Official Development Assistance (ODA) helps countries, such as least developed countries, without sufficient domestic capacity in the set-up and design of social protection systems, and to create an enabling environment for job-rich growth, sustainable enterprises and green transition. ODA can help crowd in private finances, leverage domestic resources and play an important catalytic role. Global Partnerships, such as the **Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals**

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57 United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution on Financing for Development, April 2021; ILO: Global Call to Action for a Human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis that is inclusive, sustainable and resilient, 109th Session of the International Labour Conference, June 2021

**(USP2030)<sup>58</sup> and the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative should be scaled up by including all relevant stakeholders at national and global levels.**

Global leadership on investments in sustainable and equitable social protection systems in support of a job-rich inclusive recovery and green transition, however, is not only the responsibility of political leaders, but also needs to be matched by action among major corporations and institutional investors. The private sector has an important role to play in several dimensions: enterprises contribute to the social insurance of their workforce as employers and pay taxes, and private investments are critical to improve infrastructure and services, complementing public financing. In this regard, there is a need for greater international cooperation on tax matters, such as the important initiative to stop the bleeding of ever-increasing tax base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS) – estimates suggest that BEPS practices costs countries every year US\$ 100-240 billion in lost revenue – or proposals for a unitary tax system (which would treat multinational companies as a single entity for taxation purposes).<sup>59</sup> Encouragingly, there has been a growing regulatory push for businesses to report on the Environmental, Sustainability, and Governance (ESG) indicators, as reflected in the surge of signatories to the United Nations Principles for Sustainable Investing, which now includes over 3,000 investment firms, together investing at least \$100 billion, publicly pledging to make net-zero carbon decisions in the next few years. Despite this progress, however, **greater efforts are needed to establish transparent global standards to evaluate investors' and companies' contributions to a job-rich, green, and inclusive recovery from COVID-19, including in support of a just transition.**

Lastly, the private sector can contribute to a sustainable recovery by assessing and costing the environmental and social impact of investment activity and by implementing human rights, including international labour standards, at the enterprise level and in supply chains. The United Nations Global Compact provides a framework for sustainable business action, with principles related to the environment, human rights, labour rights and anti-corruption.

Additional financial assistance - such as in the form of budget support - could also complement and support domestic resource mobilization efforts, at least during a temporary period. This includes support by international financial institutions for more accommodating macroeconomic frameworks and prioritizing social expenditure at the country level. **Governments should also develop and mobilize finances for integrated national recovery strategies and prioritize a job-rich, socially inclusive and green recovery in their national budgets, including by aligning them with international human rights norms and the SDGs,** extending labour protection, gender equality, child protection, and disability inclusion, and ensuring that social protection, and decent jobs and gender analysis are included in Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs). INFFs should also be used as a mechanism to ensure policy coherence and a whole of government approach, in consultation with social partners, the private sector and civil society. In this regard, the United Nations welcomes the recent work of the IMF on SDG-costing,<sup>60</sup> and encourages even greater integration of SDG costing into national budgets with support of international and other institutional actors, with a particular focus on supporting a job-rich recovery and bolstering social protection, in support of a just transition.

58 USP2030 regroups governments, social partners, civil society and international development and financial institutions that are committed to achieving universal and comprehensive social protection coverage, through sustainable and nationally owned systems, based on participation and social dialogue.

59 Base erosion and profit shifting – OECD BEPS

60 Such strategies could build on the IMF's [Strategy for IMF Engagement on Social Spending](#), 2019

To expand social protection floors to guarantee at least a basic level of income security and health care, low-income countries should invest 15.9 per cent, lower-middle-income countries 5.1 per cent and upper-middle income countries 3.1 of their GDP annually. Given the high ratio of required spending for low-income countries, national commitments towards the expansion of social protection floors needs to receive international assistance as a matter of priority.

Building social protection systems, stimulating job growth, and facilitating a just transition do not happen automatically. This requires a

broad set of technical capacities to ensure well-designed policies, sustainable financing, good governance and an effective administration, meaning that financial support must be combined with technical support. Additional technical assistance is needed to support countries, as required, in setting social protection priorities, assessing financing needs, finding solutions for increased domestic resource mobilization, and building universal, robust and gender-responsive social protection systems, combined with jobs and a just transition.

# IV. The Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection

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To enhance multilateral cooperation to achieve these goals, a Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection will be launched led by the ILO, in close collaboration with other United Nations entities, governments, social partners, the private sector, and civil society. It is not a new institution; rather, it is an initiative to enhance multilateral cooperation in the social sphere, in line with the Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda*. The Accelerator will build upon pre-existing initiatives and bring stakeholders together to create a new era of universal social protection, green and job-rich growth, and put the world back on track to reach SDG 1, SDG 8, and related goals.

The Accelerator will aim to create at least **400 million jobs, primarily in the green and care economies, and extend social protection floors to the people currently not covered by any social protection measure (about 4 billion men, women and children) by 2030**, with a focus on low- middle-income countries, small island developing states, and countries in fragile situations. This would require:

- > **US\$ 982 billion in fiscal stimulus measures** to respond to the immediate labour market shocks of the crisis and to support a just transition and building systems, when needed; and
- > **US\$ 1.2 trillion annually for social protection floors in low- and middle-income countries.** These resources should come from a combination of national

and international finances, including from the MDBs financing and SDRs.

In addition, the Accelerator would have a **technical support facility**, which would bring together expertise of the UN system, and build on or complement the work of the Joint SDG Fund. This Facility would require **US\$ 600 million in ODA funding** over the next 4 to 5 years to support data collection, build national capacity and monitor the impact of policies. **This will have to be complemented by additional ODA allocations for countries in special situations, including to support the transition from humanitarian financing towards sustainable social protection systems, just transition and jobs recovery strategies in fragile contexts.** The Facility would also play a critical role in crowding in expertise and resources of the private sector and creating synergies with humanitarian funding, especially in fragile situations.

**A high-ambition coalition of countries, represented by Ministers from relevant fields - finance, planning, labour – designed to promote sustainable and digital economy job creation, and to accelerate the transition from informal to formal sectors, with the participation of women and girls, will also be created to support the work of the Global Accelerator.** These Ministers will be selected from a critical mass of countries whose labour markets and workforce will expand most rapidly over the next decade, as called for in the Secretary-General's report entitled *Our Common Agenda*.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Secretary-General's report "Our Common Agenda", p. 38 (un.org)



# Investing in Jobs and Social Protection

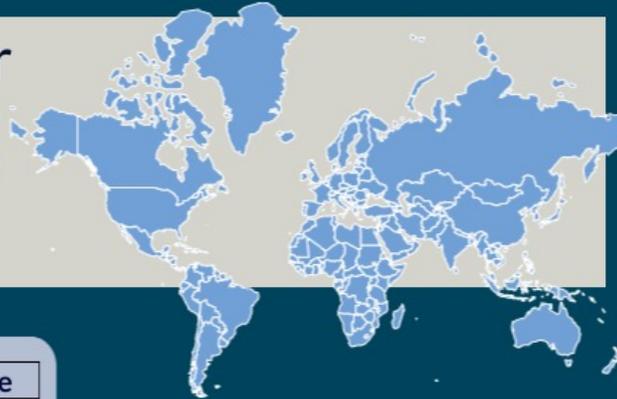
## for Poverty Eradication and a Sustainable Recovery



### Global Accelerator

for Jobs and Social Protection

to close the social protection coverage and jobs gap and facilitate a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies.



#### The Accelerator would stimulate

##### Investment in Social Protection



leading to a healthier, better educated and better protected population

##### Investment in Jobs



focusing on the care and green economies to promote gender equality and greater resilience

for the creation of  
400 million decent jobs  
and  
close the social protection  
coverage gaps,  
primarily in low- and middle-  
income countries, by 2030.

#### Keys to acceleration

##### I. Greater policy coherence

at national levels and between the UN and the IFIs that would combine job creation, green and just transitions and extension of social protection systems, tailored to the specific needs of countries

##### II. Enhanced multilateral cooperation

by building on USP2030 and the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative and strengthening engagement with key stakeholders.

##### III. Comprehensive financial architecture

to support national strategies and multilateral cooperation, based on a) domestic resources; b) international finances, including SDR allocations, MDB investments and ODA.

#### TECHNICAL SUPPORT FACILITY

- Support countries to assess jobs and social protection coverage gaps
- Identify and secure financial resources (domestic and international)
- Support implementation and monitoring to develop/strengthen social protection systems, linked to job creation and just transition (database)

This Facility would require US\$ 600 million in ODA funding over the next 4-5 years in order to support data collection, build national capacity and monitor the impact of policies.

# V. Call to action and recommendations

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This Policy Brief has outlined areas that would require significant public and private finances to reverse the trend of diverging recovery paths, and to ensure a gender equal and just transition towards environmentally sustainable and inclusive economies to advance poverty eradication and the achievement of the SDGs. With sufficient political will and imagination, these finances can be mobilized and channelled towards policies that would simultaneously expand fiscal space and increase national revenues. However, greater cooperation at all levels, including at the multilateral, regional, national, and local levels, will be needed to ensure that enhanced social protection, and decent job creation, especially in the care and green economies, are firmly kept on the agenda and provided with the necessary financing at scale to produce concrete results. Recommendations to build social protection systems and stimulate a job-rich and inclusive, green recovery are divided into three areas, addressing:

- I. Integrated and costed national policies and strategies** by combining job creation, green, gender equality, just transition and universal social protection systems, including social protection floors. This should be accompanied by technical assistance, as required, continuous learning and effective monitoring.
- II. Enhanced multilateral cooperation by creating a Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection**, and building on the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection

to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (USP2030) and the Secretary-General's Climate Action for Jobs Initiative.

- III. A comprehensive financial architecture** to support national strategies and global coordination, based on i) domestic resources; ii) international finances, including SDR allocations and channelling, MDB investments and ODA; and iii) measures to leverage investment from the private sector.

## INTEGRATED NATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

- 1. Develop integrated national and inclusive recovery strategies for decent job creation, especially in the care and green sectors, universal social protection, and a just transition, with the following action areas:**
  - Base, or align national budgets, policies, and plans with the SDGs, international human rights norms, and Paris Agreement for Climate Action, and ensure that gender-responsive social protection, decent job creation, and just transition policies are prioritized in these plans and national budgets.
  - Expand investment in Social Protection Floors as a percentage of GDP in national budgets. Include key national stakeholders, including social partners and civil society, in the consultation and follow-up and review process of national budgets and plans.

- Implement universal social protection systems, which guarantee at least access to essential health care and income security to all through a nationally-defined social protection floor, and progressively provide adequate protection through a combination of non-contributory and contributory mechanisms including social insurance.
  - Design gender-responsive and inclusive policy measures to expand social protection to the informal economy and foster the formalization of enterprises and employment, including in the care economy, with particular attention paid to women and young people, and ensure all systems are risk-informed and ready to respond to shocks, and adopt a gender, disability, and life course perspective.
  - Invest in sectors with strong decent job creation potential, including the care economy, the health sector, and the green economy, ensuring that women and men benefit equally from new decent jobs across sectors. This includes expanding green infrastructure in rural areas to help small-scale farmers access renewable energies and new, decent job opportunities.
  - Create active labour market policies to help workers upskill and re-skill to keep or change their job, adapt to the green and digital transitions, and find ways out of poverty, including by enabling children and youth to reach their full potential through education, skills, and life-long learning. These include grants, vouchers, subsidies, tax rebates or other equity measures for individuals, enterprises, or training providers.
  - Invest in and scale-up country-level digital infrastructures to efficiently target social protection and create decent jobs, including in the green economy, starting with emergency-based cash transfers in 2022.
- 2. Ensure national strategies and assessments for jobs, social protection, and a just transition are aligned with macro-economic and fiscal policies and underpinned by sound data, including to assess new categories of people left behind by the impacts of COVID-19:**
- Convene multi-stakeholder national dialogues, including to set priorities and build consensus, and strengthen the capacities of national statistical offices and social security institutions and fill data gaps with responsible, open, and inclusive data to inform national budgeting and planning.
  - Conduct national Leave No One Behind assessments, in recognition of the many new and myriad ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has left people behind and how they can be targeted through integrated national policies focused on social protection and job creation in the green and care sectors, and present these in Voluntary National Review (VNRs) at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2022.
- ENHANCED MULTILATERAL COOPERATION**
- 3. Launch a Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection, including by building on and scaling-up pre-existing initiatives such as the USP2030 and the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative at national levels, and promote a one-UN approach and greater collaboration with the IMF and with MDBs, and provide space for private sector, civil society and youth participation.**
- Create a high-ambition coalition of countries, represented by Ministers from relevant fields - finance, planning, labour – designed to promote sustainable and digital economy job creation, and to accelerate the

transition from informal to formal sectors, with the participation of women and girls, in a critical mass of countries, as a first phase of the Global Accelerator in 2022.

- Scale up the Climate Action for Jobs Initiative at national levels, and enlarge the Initiative by including large carbon emitters, and enhance collaboration between partners working on just transition and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).
- 4. Convene a multilateral forum for a human-centred recovery in 2022 to review progress and scale up commitments for financing a job-rich, green, gender-responsive and socially inclusive recovery and convene a World Social Summit in 2025, as outlined in Our Common Agenda.**

### **A COMPREHENSIVE FINANCIAL ARCHITECTURE**

- 5. Develop a sound financial architecture to mobilize investments for decent jobs, social protection, and a just transition, based on the following actions:**
- Channel Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) into, and ensure advanced economies re-channel SDRs to support national recovery strategies in developing countries, including middle-income countries, including by investing in economic sectors of strategic importance for a job-rich and inclusive, gender-responsive, and green growth and in universal social protection systems. Enhance partnerships with Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) to leverage finances for that purpose and support the channelling of SDRs through the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust.
  - Call on countries in the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to achieve the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) and increase the share

of their development assistance to social protection, to complement and support national domestic resource mobilization in low-income countries and systems' building efforts.

- Mobilize and leverage ODA of about US\$ 600 million for the Technical Support Facility under the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection, complemented by additional ODA funding to assist developing countries to implement social policies, job-rich and inclusive, green recovery strategies, including in fragile and humanitarian contexts.
  - Align international financial and technical assistance with the development of integrated national policies and recovery strategies, and ensure complementarity with domestic financing from the public and private sectors.
- 6. Create additional fiscal space and breathing room for vulnerable countries to invest in the SDGs, decent jobs, and social protection, including middle-income countries:**
- Expand existing debt relief programmes, including the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and Common Framework for Debt Treatment (CF) to vulnerable middle-income countries, including SIDS, conflict-affected, and other vulnerable countries that have been seriously affected by the crisis;
  - Reform the international debt architecture to eliminate systemic inequalities in the system and prevent future debt crises; and
  - Reform taxation systems to combat illicit financial flows and re-direct funds to job creation enterprises, including in the care and green economies, SMSEs, and social protection systems.

**7. Strengthen collaboration with the private sector to scale-up investments in strategic sectors, to promote entrepreneurship, effectively reaching women and women-owned enterprises in particular, to close the skills gap and to support national public social protection systems;**

- Establish global standards for evaluating the private sectors' contributions to a job-rich, green, and inclusive recovery in line with a just transition;
- Enhance accountability and the remedy of business-related human rights abuses;
- Increase private sector involvement in the development of public policies through tripartite and effective social dialogue;
- Restore global supply chains in a sustainable manner, with a focus on adding local value in supply chains and creating new jobs in the growing green economy, particularly for women and vulnerable groups.