



Union Aid Abroad APHEDA
The global justice organisation of the Australian union movement



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Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



Senator the Hon. Marise Payne
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Via email: foreign.minister@dfat.gov.au

4 June 2020

Global Social Protection Fund

Dear Minister

We write to you to express our concern about the impact of COVID-19 on the people of the poorest countries around the world. As Australia prepares to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis, it is vital we do what we can to support the world's poorest countries to deal with the health, economic, and social consequences of the pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 on countries that lack the foundation of adequate health services and income support will be profound, and the leaders of wealthier countries and international institutions must take immediate and decisive action to address this looming crisis.

Social protection is one of the most powerful tools that governments have to reduce poverty, inequality, and vulnerability to shocks. It is fundamental to addressing the humanitarian and recovery needs of the most disadvantaged countries, yet the majority of the world's people have no social protection: 55% have no access to social protection, and a further 20% have little coverage of essential services or income measures.¹

It is essential that the Australian government pushes for urgent action at the international level to create a Global Social Protection Fund to address the social protection gaps in the world's poorest countries. A Global Social Protection Fund is a pooling of resources at the global level by the richest countries in order to address the recovery needs of the most disadvantaged countries. This fund is an important aspect of the assistance that is required by wealthy nations to address this crisis and would secure much-needed relief now and assist countries in building resilience over time to address future shocks. Given the interconnectedness of the global economy, it is also in our national interest to support countries to become resilient to crises.

Around US\$35 billion would secure 5-year funding for the poorest 28 countries in the world to provide emergency relief now and build resilience over time to weather the next crisis. An additional US\$100 billion would address social protection coverage gaps in lower to middle income countries. With total global spending on the COVID-19 crisis projected to reach US\$10 trillion or more, these amounts are affordable.²

A Global Social Protection Fund would enable the governments of the poorest countries to guarantee social protection floors of basic income security in the form of social transfers such as pensions, child benefits, income support benefits

¹ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_601903/lang--en/index.htm

² https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/g20_labor_and_employment_ministers_meeting_on_covid-19.pdf



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and services for the unemployed; and universal access to essential and affordable social services such as health, education, food security, sanitation and housing.

The demand for a Global Social Protection Fund is not new. There is already global agreement on the need for social protection floors, through the 2012 ILO Recommendation 202 on Social Protection Floors³, and UN Sustainable Development Goal 1⁴ which aims to achieve social protection floors for all and substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable by 2030.

Such a fund already has the support of some governments which spoke to it during the G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting on 23 April.⁵ We urge the Australian government to join with these other governments and support the call for a Global Social Protection Fund.

We look forward to hearing the position of your government on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Australian Council of Trade Unions

Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network

Oxfam Australia

Jubilee Australia

ActionAid Australia

Aid/Watch

Uniting Church in Australia – Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

³ https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R202

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg1>

⁵ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_742571.pdf