



ECOWAS COMMISSION  
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO  
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

# **ECOWAS Social Protection Framework and Operational Plan**

**November 2023**

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## FOREWORD

**The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has a fundamental responsibility of ensuring that the well-being of citizens in their Member States is safeguarded in a holistic manner.** The multi-faceted socio-political and economic challenges are not region-specific, as they are also observed in other regions of the world. Individuals, families, and communities are affected by idiosyncratic and covariate shocks and risks in varying degrees at various stages of their lives. It is therefore a fundamental human right of citizens to access and benefit from social protection measures to address such lifecycle shocks, risks and hazards. The failure of states to provide adequate social protection benefits may manifest in the widespread adoption of negative coping mechanisms, leading to increased conflict and insecurity, as well as to spikes in poverty and unemployment rates across the region. The absence of adequate social protection measures can also create a breeding ground for various forms of human rights violations, such as forced child labour, human trafficking, and gender-based violence.

**It is within this context that the ECOWAS region recognizes the importance of prioritizing the provision of a set of social protection interventions whose objectives are to reduce social and economic risks and vulnerabilities vis-à-vis extreme poverty and deprivation.** However, despite the recognition of the potential of social protection to advance the well-being and security of their citizens, the ECOWAS region is marked by a high degree of heterogeneity and low levels of coverage especially for workers in the informal sector who are the most vulnerable to social risks and shocks. Hence, the extension of social protection to workers in the informal economy is one of the most pressing issues that ECOWAS Member States need to address.

**The development of a Social Protection Framework for West Africa provides a broad set of guidelines and principles to ECOWAS and the Member States in the design and delivery of social protection interventions.** This effort is driven by the principle that the provision of comprehensive and adequate social protection would contribute to the improvement in the quality of life of the citizenry. In light of the region's exposure to a wide range of covariate

shocks and common cross-border socio-economic challenges, the Framework aims at fostering higher levels of regional collaboration to broaden existing social protection systems and programs through a more coherent and effective approach to poverty reduction (SDG 1) and food and nutrition insecurity eradication (SDG 2).

**The ECOWAS Commission and the Member States recognize the potential role that social protection can play in accelerating progress in the social, economic and political spheres of development.** In this respect, the framework will serve as a starting point for the ECOWAS Commission, the Member States, and partners to enhance synergies in addressing the challenging tasks of improving the wellbeing and livelihoods of vulnerable and ‘at risk’ groups in West Africa. Finally, the ECOWAS Commission and the Member States welcome the opportunity to work with technical and financial partners to apply the Social Protection Framework and maximize the impacts of interventions aimed at driving human development.

## GLOSSARY

**Adaptive Social Protection:** Set of Policies, programs and instruments aiming to support the resilience of poor and vulnerable households by investing in their capacity to prepare for, cope with, and adapt to shocks<sup>1</sup>.

**Adequacy of benefits:** Benefits, whether in cash or in kind, that are adequate in amount and duration in order that everyone may realize his or her rights to family protection and assistance, an adequate standard of living and adequate access to health care<sup>2</sup>.

**Cash transfer programme:** A non-contributory social protection scheme, which can be conditional or unconditional, that encompasses the provision of cash benefits to individuals or to households in order to support consumption and reduce poverty.

**Covariate shocks:** Extreme events affecting a wide number of households in a given geographic area, such as natural disasters (droughts, floods, etc), pandemics, and conflict.

**Idiosyncratic shocks:** These are unexpected events or circumstances that affect individuals or households differently, rather than having a uniform impact on an entire community or population. These shocks are characterized by their individualized nature, meaning that they are specific to certain individuals or households and are not necessarily linked to broader economic or social trends.

**Human rights-based approach to social protection:** A conceptual framework that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights.<sup>3</sup> It is used to analyse obligations, inequalities and vulnerabilities, and to tackle discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that undercut human rights.

**Lifecycle approach:** Social protection programs that provide a number of benefits and services tailored to the various age groups throughout an individual's lifecycle.

**Means-tested mechanisms:** Social protection eligibility mechanism that determines the provision of benefits to a targeted category of persons or households upon proof of need or based on a certain level of income.

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<sup>1</sup> The World Bank. 2020. Adaptive Social Protection. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/7ab2af13-08ca-5b10-b08b-268e6519eb15/content>.

<sup>2</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (articles 10, 11 and 12).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Group. (n.d.). Human Rights-Based Approach. <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>

**Non-contributory mechanism:** Social protection provision that does not require contribution from beneficiaries to receive benefits.

**Social Assistance:** Non-contributory social transfers funded from government revenue, which encompass cash or in-kind assistance to individuals and families who lack the means to fulfill their basic needs.

**Social Insurance:** A contributory form of social security designed to protect income earners and their dependants against a reduction or loss of income, as a result of exposure to risks. Benefits provided by social insurance mostly include maternity protection, pension for old age, sickness, medical care, work related injury and others.

**Social Protection:** Public and private measures designed to protect individuals against life-cycle crises that curtail their capacity to meet their needs. It includes all forms of social security, and strategies and programmes aimed at supporting and ensuring a minimum standard of life and access to essential social services and care for all people.

**Social Protection Floors:** Nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees that should ensure, as a minimum that, over the lifecycle, all people have access to essential health care and to basic income security, which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level (ILO definition).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization. (n.d.). Social protection floor (SOCPRO). Retrieved September 24, 2023, from <https://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/policy-development-and-applied-research/social-protection-floor/lang--en/index.htm>

## ACRONYMS

AUC	African Union Commission
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
COVID-19	Coronavirus Infectious Disease 2019
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICESCR	International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NHIS	National Health Insurance Scheme
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SP	Social Protection
SRM	Social Risk Management
TSP	Transformative Social Protection
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Rationale

**The Article 4 of the Multilateral Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)<sup>5</sup> guarantees the fundamental principle of human rights** through the “*recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples’ rights in accordance with the provision of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.*” The Article 60 of the same Treaty calls on Member States (MS) to “*co-operate in the full development and utilisation of their human resources*” by taking measures to “*strengthen co-operation among themselves in the field of education, training and employment; and to harmonise and co-ordinate their policies and programmes in these areas.*” Furthermore, the Article 61, enjoins the Member States to work with the ECOWAS Commission “[to mobilize] the various sections of the population to ensure their effective integration and involvement in the social development of the region [and to] harmonise their labour laws and social security legislations.

**In line with the aspirations of the ECOWAS Vision 2050, regional economic integration is considered to be the most viable and appropriate tool to accelerate socio-economic development across West African countries.** The ECOWAS Vision 2050 sets a clear direction and goal to significantly raise the standard of living of people through conscious and inclusive policies and programmes that will guarantee a bright future for West Africa by shaping the socio-economic trajectory of the region. It is within the framework of regional economic integration that social protection systems and schemes can act as vectors for inclusive socio-economic development in the region and thus contribute to a wide range of SDG targets.

**Worldwide evidence suggests that social protection contributes significantly to the reduction of poverty, exclusion, and inequality, while at the same time enhancing political stability and social cohesion<sup>6,7</sup>.** There is also evidence that social protection delivery systems play a pivotal role in both crisis and “normal” times: during the Covid-19 pandemic, pre-existing instruments such as social registries, national safety net program able to timely scale-up, payment platforms were key to implement timely and efficient response at scale. Adaptive social protection provides a useful conceptual approach to build efficient system that could support ECOWAS MS in responding to future large covariate shocks such those induced by climate change<sup>8</sup>. Additionally, social protection facilitates economic growth by supporting household income and, invariably also domestic consumption. For such reasons, several continent-wide deliberations continue to emphasise the need for Africa to implement government-owned social protection schemes. Accordingly, the African Union Commission

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<sup>5</sup> The multilateral treaty was initially concluded at Lagos on 28 May 1975, later revised 1993 and reprinted in 2010 in Abuja.

<sup>6</sup> Nguyen, Q. A; Sanusi, A; and da Cunha (2019). How to extend social protection to workers in informal employment in the ASEAN region. (Geneva: ILO)

<sup>7</sup> Norton, A; Conway, T.; and Foster, M. (2001). Social protection concepts and approaches: implications for policy and practice in international development (London, U.K: Overseas Development Institute).

<sup>8</sup> Gentilini, Ugo. 2022. Cash Transfers in Pandemic Times: Evidence, Practices, and Implications from the Largest Scale Up in History. © Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/37700>

has urged the Member states to ratify the Social Protection Protocol<sup>9</sup>, which seeks to “improve the standard of living of individuals and address the needs of vulnerable groups” through the provision of social protection benefits. In addition, the African Union Commission further urges the Member States to address the low coverage of social safety nets, especially in light of the high levels of vulnerability to covariate shocks, which are increasing in magnitude and frequency as the result of climate change.

**Relevant Social Protection-related declarations include the *African Common Position on Human and Social Development in Africa in 1994; the Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action in 2004 on the Declaration on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa; and the Social Policy Framework for Africa***, ratified by African Heads of Government in 2009, which set out a vision for African societies based on social solidarity, equity of choice, and freedom from discrimination and poverty. Other declarations include the *Yaoundé Tripartite Declaration on the Implementation of the Social Protection Floor* of October 2010; the *Social Ministers’ Khartoum Declaration on Social Policy Action* in 2010; the *Addis Ababa Declaration on Social Protection for Inclusive Development* of April 2015, and the 2019 Abidjan Declaration - Advancing Social Justice: shaping the future of work in Africa, which was adopted by Ministers of Employment and Labour as well as senior representatives of employers and workers in Africa, called for progressively extending sustainable social protection coverage.

**Recent developments provide strong opportunities and global rallying points to accelerate social protection and leave no one behind.** These include the Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social protection adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2021 and the announcement of the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection by the UN Secretary General in September 2021 whose objective, among others, is to extend social protection to the people currently not covered by any social protection measure, about 4 billion, by 2030.

**Within the region, Member States’ responses to reduce poverty, vulnerability and inequality are diverse and varied.** While a number of countries have developed social protection programmes and policies tailored to their priorities and needs, the coverage of such initiatives, as well as their effectiveness in reducing poverty and fostering inclusiveness generally need to be strengthened. This Social Protection Framework aims at promoting the adherence to a set of minimum standards, as well as enhancing accountability and peer learning for the development of robust social protection systems. Currently, a number of Member States are reviewing and updating their policies and strategies, while large-scale cash transfers and safety nets programmes are being developed and implemented, although often thanks to external financing. In addition, universal health care schemes are also being

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<sup>9</sup> The full name is the “Protocol to the African Charter on human and peoples’ rights on the rights of the citizens to social protection and social security” (AU, 2022)

launched in different countries in the region. Most systems in the region are affected by management, policy, and financing constraints associated with donor-driven implementing approaches.

**This Framework contributes to the achievement of a number of social protection-related SDGs targets**, especially SDG target 1.3, which seeks to *implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors*, and SDG target 8.5: *by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable and with regard to their full engagement in productive employment and decent work* (SDG target 8.5).

**It is within this over-arching context that the ECOWAS Commission engaged the Member States and development partners to develop a Social Protection Framework supported by an Operational Plan** that will serve as a roadmap for Member States in extending and strengthening their respective social protection policies and programmes.

**It is expected that such a document can guide Member States in their efforts to advance their respective national social protection agendas.** To this effect, the Framework can enhance standardization and coordination, establishing common principles, guidelines, and best practices around social protection programming, hence promoting cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and cross-learning among countries in the region. Additionally, the Framework can serve as a foundation for enhancing collaborative efforts in mobilizing resources for the sector, showcasing the dedication of Member States to eliminate poverty and expedite human development.

## **1.2 The Process**

**In 2017, the ECOWAS Commission approached UNICEF for support in developing a Framework on Social Protection (SP) for West Africa.** During the development of the first draft of the SP Framework in 2018, a series of consultations were held with Member States, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and development partners, including ILO, FAO, UNICEF, and the World Bank to gather data and insights to inform the content of the SP Framework. In addition, in November 2019 the ECOWAS Commission hosted a workshop for Social Protection Experts of the ECOWAS Member States to validate the study report on social protection in the ECOWAS Region and to review the proposed pillars of the ECOWAS draft framework on Social Protection.

**Due to the onset of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, it became necessary to revisit the work on the Social Protection Framework in 2022, and FAO was requested to support revision of the framework to ensure it addressed emerging priorities and issues underscored by the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic in the region.** In addition, it became important to align the SP Framework with the AU Agenda 2063, which encompasses a Strategic Framework for the socio-economic transformation of Africa in the next fifty years. The AU Agenda pursues the goals of a “high standard of living, quality of life and well-being for all citizens,” through the

priorities of affordable social security and protection for all. The agenda does in fact recognize social protection as both an economic and social necessity to promote inclusive and people-driven sustainable development, which will ultimately end poverty, reduce inequality, and build resilience vis-à-vis potential future shocks.<sup>10</sup>

This document builds on a number of regional and international policies and instruments that are relevant to social protection:

- ECOWAS Protocol A/P.1/5/79 relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, 1979
- ECOWAS Protocol A/P.3/5/82 relating to the definition of Community Citizen, 1982
- ECOWAS Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance, 2001
- ECOWAS Gender Policy, 2004
- ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration, 2008
- ECOWAS Labour and Employment Policy, 2009
- ECOWAS Child Policy, 2019-2023
- ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security, 2012
- ECOWAS Regional Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour, especially the Worst Forms, 2012
- ECOWAS Support Procedures and Standards for the Protection and Reintegration of Vulnerable Children on the Move and Young Migrants, 2016
- ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to Prevent and to Respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa, 2017.
- ECOWAS Decent Work Regional Programme (EDWRP) 2021-2026
- ECOWAS Regional Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour (2021– 2030)

*The ECOWAS Social Protection Framework can therefore be considered as a key starting point between Member States and partners to intensify efforts and investments around social protection as a means to reduce poverty and inequality in the region.*

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<sup>10</sup> AU, draft Social Agenda 2062, Version 3, 20 November 2018, section 63.

### 1.3 Document Structure

Following this introductory chapter, the document is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents a theoretical overview of social protection.
- Chapter 3 provides a brief assessment of the current state of social protection.
- Chapter 4 introduces the vision, objectives, and principles that underpin the social protection framework. It also includes a comprehensive operational Plan aligned with the framework's objectives.
- Chapter 5 outlines the Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms associated with the framework.
- Chapter 6 delineates the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in relation to the Social Protection Framework.
- Chapter 7 offers concluding remarks and outlines future directions.

Furthermore, this document is supplemented by several annexes covering key topics that could not be accommodated within the main body of the document. Readers are encouraged to refer to these annexes for a more in-depth understanding of many of the topics discussed.

## 2. SOCIAL PROTECTION – A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Defining Social Protection

There are currently several definitions of social protection among member countries of ECOWAS, as illustrated in Box 1. The term social protection carries a wide range of connotations in the existing literature. For instance, whereas the term can narrowly refer to *social welfare* programmes for the poor and truly disadvantaged, including orphans, widows, elderly and persons living with disabilities, others may refer to social protection as *social safety nets* or temporary compensatory measures to cushion the poor from production and consumption shocks (for example, food aid for drought affected farmers), as well as social insurance and active labour market policies.<sup>11</sup>

*Box 1 Definitions from selected ECOWAS Member States*

**Cote d'Ivoire** “System by which ‘society...provide help to the poorest, the sick and those victims of shocks, catastrophes and violations of rights, especially through mechanisms for redistribution through taxation and public finances.”<sup>12</sup>

**Gambia** “transformative policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and population vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing individuals’ exposure to risk, and equipping people with the means to protect themselves from hazards and the interruption of income.”<sup>13</sup>

**Ghana:** “A range of actions carried out by the state and other parties in response to vulnerability and poverty, which seek to guarantee relief for those sections of the population who for any reason are not able to provide for themselves”.<sup>14</sup>

**Nigeria:** “a mix of policies and programmes designed for individuals and households throughout the life cycle to prevent and reduce poverty and socio-economic shocks by promoting and enhancing livelihoods and a life of dignity”.<sup>15</sup>

**Senegal** “a set of measures aimed at protecting populations against the emergence of social risks. It brings together the public social security systems as well as private or community systems, with three objectives: assistance, insurance covering premiums, and empowerment of social categories”.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Devereux, S. and Sabates-Wheeler (2004). Transformative social protections. IDS Working Paper 232 (Brighton, Sussex: Institute of Development Studies).

**In line with the AU Protocol of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection, adopted by the African Heads of State in February 2022, Social Protection is defined as:** *"public and private, or to mixed public and private measures designed to protect individuals against life-cycle crises that curtail their capacity to meet their needs, and includes all forms of social security, and strategies and programmes aimed at supporting and ensuring a minimum standard of livelihood and access to essential social services and care for all people".*

## 2.2 Social Protection for vulnerable groups

The Pillar 5 of the ECOWAS Vision 2050 places emphasis on the vulnerable groups to ensure social inclusion and to achieve sustainable development. Member States shall ensure that the Framework applies to all citizens and non-citizens, including certain migrant groups. In line with AU Protocols, social protection in the region shall therefore be provided to the following groups, ensuring that no one is left behind:

- Young women and girls
- Families, including children and adolescents.
- Older persons.
- Persons Living with Disabilities (PLWD)
- Persons living with HIV/AIDS and other chronic illnesses.
- Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)
- Refugees and asylum seekers; and
- Migrant and rural workers

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<sup>12</sup> National Social Protection Strategy of Côte d'Ivoire, provisional version, 14 February 2013, p. 20

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/gambia/media/606/file/The-Gambia-National-Social-Protection-Policy-2015-2025.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. (2015). Ghana National Social Protection Policy. Retrieved from <https://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/mdocs-posts/ghana-national-social-protection-policy/>

<sup>15</sup> National Social Protection Coordinating Office. (2020). Update on National Social Protection Policy for Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://nationalplanning.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Update-on-National-Social-Protection-Policy-For-Nigeria.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> World Bank. (2017). Republic of Senegal Social Protection public expenditure review 2010-2015 Summary and key recommendations [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/134641510809408479/pdf/121420-v1-REVISED-Senegal-PER-Social-protection-summary-and-key-recommendations-ENG-FI.pdf>

### 3. THE STATE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE ECOWAS REGION

#### 3.1 The Socio-Economic Context, Poverty and Vulnerabilities in the Region

The West African region has a high level of poverty based on GDP per capita. The high level of informality among the working population reflects the high level of self-employment, precariousness and vulnerability. With the exception of Cape Verde, where self-employment rates amount to 38.9 percent, the self-employment rates in the region range from 65.5 percent in Senegal to 94.3 percent in Niger.

The infant and maternal mortality rates are both relatively high in the countries. Regarding infant mortality, Cape Verde records 13.5 deaths per 1000 live births, while the figure for all countries in the Western and Central Africa region ranges from 79.1 to 110.8<sup>17</sup>, according to the latest available data from the UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME)<sup>18</sup>. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) (number of maternal deaths per 100 000 live births) underscores the poverty of the region. In 2020, Cape Verde had a relatively low MMR of 42, While the regional MMR average for Western and Central Africa stood at 724<sup>19</sup>.

#### 3.2 ECOWAS Commitments Towards Social Protection

**To advance social protection, ECOWAS has made strong commitments to strengthen social protection through the ratification of various social and human rights international protocols and instruments and through the adoption of regional frameworks.** The overarching commitment to social protection is first and foremost the Revised Treaty. Additionally, the ECOWAS commitment to social protection is not only in policy but in the institutional and financial frameworks. Further impetus for a Regional Social Protection Framework is provided through the programme of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, the Regional Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, the ECOWAS Agriculture Policy (ECOWAP) and the Community Development Programme (CDP).

#### 3.3 Coverage

**According to the World Social Protection Report 2020–22, the average coverage<sup>20</sup> of the population of social protection among ECOWAS Member States amounts to 12.3 percent**

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<sup>17</sup> The lower bound and upper bound of 90% uncertainty intervals

<sup>18</sup> The UN IGME seeks to compile all available national-level data on child mortality, including data from vital registration systems, population censuses, household surveys and sample registration systems. To estimate the under-five mortality trend series for each country, a statistical model is fitted to data points that meet quality standards established by IGME and then used to predict a trend line that is extrapolated to a defined common reference year.

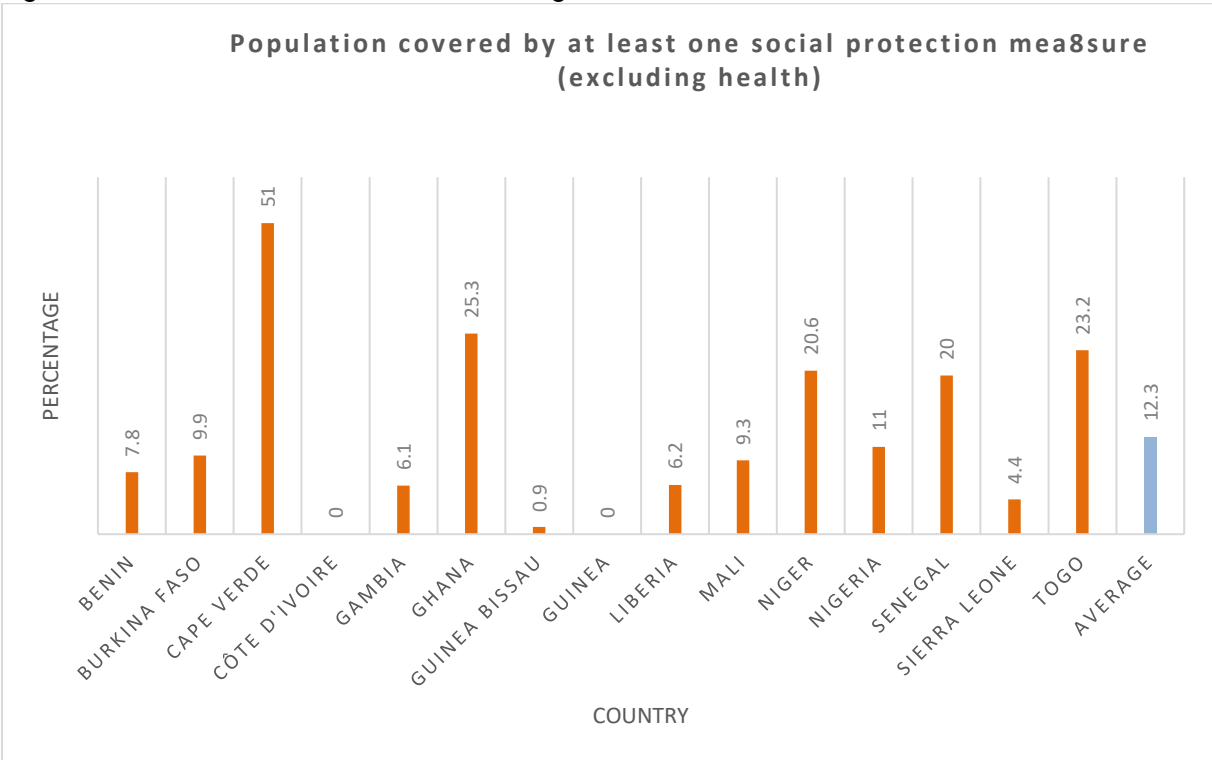
<sup>19</sup> The country and regional MMR data comes from the latest round of estimates developed by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division. Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/maternal-health/maternal-mortality/notes>.

<sup>20</sup> covered by at least one social protection benefit.

but varies considerably from one country to another (see figure 1), as well as between rural and urban populations across the countries.

**Due to the high rates of informality, social insurance in West Africa is marked by alarmingly low levels of coverage (Perin et al, 2022).** Only a minor segment of the population in the region is covered by social insurance, and it is usually not within the bottom two quintiles of the population. Except for Ghana (due to its health insurance scheme), social insurance mechanisms cover no more than 10 per cent of the population in any country in the region, as shown in Figure 1 (Perin et al., 2022). Social insurance coverage is higher in the urban areas due to the relatively lower rates of informality.

Figure 1. Social Protection effective coverage



Source: ILO World Social Protection Report 2020-2022

**These figures underscore the huge gaps and inadequacies of social protection mechanisms in the West African sub-region.** The COVID 19 pandemic underscored the gaps and inadequacies of the existing social protection mechanisms, especially with respect to coverage and benefit adequacy, with only 17.4 percent of the population in Africa receiving at least one social protection benefit<sup>21</sup>. Renewed social protection commitments arising from the pandemic, combined with the growing consensus around the demonstrated effectiveness of

<sup>21</sup> World Social Protection Report 2020–22. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_protect/@soc\\_sec/documents/publication/wcms\\_849597.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_849597.pdf).

social protection in poverty reduction amid the ECOWAS Member States, serve as apt conditions for addressing such gaps.

### **Social Protection programmes among ECOWAS Member States**

**The key social assistance programmes across Member States comprise unconditional cash transfers, conditional cash transfers, social pensions, food and in-kind transfers, school feeding, public works programs, and fee waivers.** The primary social assistance programs in the area mainly involve targeted cash-based transfers, which can be either conditional or non-conditional. Public works programmes are the second most prominent social assistance instrument in the region targeting vulnerable but able-bodied household members often comprising unemployed or uneducated youth (aged 18–35 on average). Some examples of public works programs include the Labour-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) program in Ghana, the Youth Employment and Skills Development Project in Côte d'Ivoire and the Project d'Inclusion and the des Jeunes (PRODIJ) in Benin (Perin et al, 2022). School feeding programmes are also popular in the region, targeting school-aged children, and often relying on the local food supply chain. Yet, national governments in Western Africa are currently reaching only 16 percent of all 136 million school-aged children in the region; 56 million of them are out of school<sup>22</sup>.

**Across ECOWAS member states, important investments have been made to make social protection programmes more shock-responsive and adaptive.** For example, in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal, traditional cash transfers are a core component of the social protection systems. However, policy makers have also complemented these programs to improve the ability of recipient households to become more productive and by extension more resilient to climatic shocks. Other examples include, for instance, the development of social and farmers registries to better identify those most vulnerable to shocks<sup>23</sup>.

**Undoubtedly, many ECOWAS countries have improved their universal health coverage.** In fact, with the notable exception of Benin, Burkina Faso, and Guinea Bissau, nearly all Member States can count on over 30 percent of their populations being covered by health insurance. Similarly, there are advancements in old-age pension coverage among ECOWAS Member States, with Cape Verde approaching an astonishing 85 percent coverage in 2020. The second tier of countries includes Senegal (29.9 percent), Togo (19 percent), Ghana (18 percent), Gambia (17 percent) Benin (11 percent) and Nigeria (11 percent); all the remaining countries have old-age pension coverage rates below 10 percent. At the lower end of the life cycle— e.g. child or family cash benefits—ECOWAS countries seem to have greater room for improvement,

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<sup>22</sup> WFP 2022. Safeguarding school feeding in Western Africa in times of the global food crisis [https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000143760/download/?\\_ga=2.211763797.1586563904.1699958422-795666993.1698656690](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000143760/download/?_ga=2.211763797.1586563904.1699958422-795666993.1698656690).

<sup>23</sup> World Social Protection Report 2020–22. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_protect/@soc\\_sec/documents/publication/wcms\\_849597.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_849597.pdf)

at least relative to the rates of old-age pension benefits. It is only in Togo (49 percent), Cape Verde (37.9 percent), and Ghana (25.9 percent) that coverage amounts to over 25 percent of the population.

**According to the ILO and ITC (2019), despite efforts made by some countries through the establishment of national health insurance systems or universal access to health care programmes, many of the ECOWAS citizens do not have access to health care.** Except for Ghana and Cape Verde with a coverage gap respectively of 26 percent and 35 percent of their population, all the remaining ECOWAS Member States have a big coverage gap on legal health coverage. Only 20 percent of the population is covered in Senegal, 9 percent in Benin, less than 3 percent in most countries (Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo (ILO and ITC, 2019). This situation impacts the lives of millions of people in the region, especially children, women, older persons, people living with disabilities and workers in the informal economy and rural areas.

### 3.4 Common Challenges of Social Protection Systems in the ECOWAS Region

**The region is affected by a number of various challenges that inhibit the development of robust social protection systems.** The challenges range from low coverage to poor monitoring mechanisms, as listed in Box 2.

*Box 2. Challenges on the development and implementation of Social Protection interventions in ECOWAS Region*

- **Limited coverage and scope of social insurance**, particularly for workers in the informal economy, rural workers, domestic workers and migrant workers. It is estimated that 90 percent of the workforce in West Africa is in the informal economy and the rural areas. Many social insurance schemes are limited in scope in relation to the nine contingencies outlined in ILO Convention 102.
- **Insufficient development of social assistance schemes**, especially those targeting rural population, those in informal work and particular vulnerable population such as children, women and youth. Social assistance programmes in the region tend to be short-term and emergency oriented, while long-term cash transfers enshrined in national legislation are weak. Social assistance programmes also tend to be low in coverage relative to the level of need (often remaining in a pilot phase) and means-tested (with associated targeting errors).
- **Limited access to healthcare programmes and schemes.** Most of the ECOWAS citizens do not have access to healthcare. Out of pocket expenditures are a burden on people’s savings and thus their economic welfare.

- **Institutional framework characterized by inadequate coordination of social protection interventions.** Social protection interventions are commonly fragmented, with responsibility for service delivery dispersed across different ministries and agencies, and weak coordination. Further, interventions of Development Partners are not coordinated. This results in duplication of activities and lack of harmonization of implementation, such as different targeting modalities to identify the poor and vulnerable households for cash and non-cash transfers, development of uncoordinated registries and delivery channels, leading to inefficiency and fragmentation of interventions.
- **Insufficient development of programmes on resilience to climate shocks and humanitarian issues.** ECOWAS member states are facing increasing climate related shocks, such as droughts, and floods, while there is an over-exploitation of natural resources. While ECOWAS member states have made important progress on building shock-responsive and adaptive social protection systems<sup>24</sup>, the Ebola outbreak and the COVID 19 pandemic, for example, have revealed that further efforts are needed. Especially as the health systems in West Africa also are underfunded and compounded by poor access to basic services, such as water, sanitation, health care and social protection.
- **Inadequate funding of social protection programmes.** Limited funding for social protection in national budgets and donor dependence on financing social protection underpins many of the issues described above. Expenditure on social protection (including health) across Africa stands at 5.9 percent of GDP, which is lower than other major regions of the world.
- **Weakness of the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) mechanisms.** Many countries do not have integrated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems that includes accountability and learning. Lack of coordination between the government and other institutions implementing social protection programmes, insufficient or lack of data and performance measurements and weak involvement of the civil society and other stakeholders has led to weak transparency and accountability of the social protection interventions and difficulty to measure outcomes and impact of social protection programmes.

**Source:** Adapted from ILO Regional Office for Africa and International Training Center (2019) Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers in the ECOWAS Region: A Capacity Building Toolkit on the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security.

<sup>24</sup> World Bank 2020. Adaptive Social Protection. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/7ab2af13-08ca-5b10-b08b-268e6519eb15/content>

## 4. A SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK FOR ECOWAS

### 4.1 Vision

Developing inclusive social protection systems in the region can contribute to a more integrated regional community, enabling it to fulfill its aspirations for socio-economic development, as stated in both the AU Social Agenda 2063 and the ECOWAS Vision 2050.

### 4.2 Mission

**In line with Vision 2050, the mission of the ECOWAS Social Protection Framework is to promote the implementation of robust social protection systems and its key principles and guidelines among Member States across the ECOWAS region.** This effort can contribute to accelerating efforts towards intensified investments around social protection and human development in the region.

**It is expected that the development and endorsement of the ECOWAS Social Protection Framework can pave the way for a more collaborative agenda between Member States and partners in support of social protection efforts.** Such a Framework can indeed help Member States address a vast array of cross-border challenges related to social protection, such as migration, food insecurity, and natural disasters. Adopting a regional approach can help tackle such challenges more effectively, as well as promoting collaborative efforts such as advocacy and joint resource mobilization for the sector.

### 4.3 Guiding Principles

**The ECOWAS Social Protection Framework is aligned with the fundamental principles of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Citizen to Social Protection and Social Security, the 1975 ECOWAS Treaty, the 1993 Revised Treaty, and the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security, 2012.** Accordingly, the guiding principles for the Framework are:

1. **Promote good governance and strengthen coordination** among institutions responsible for the delivery of social protection for higher levels of accountability and transparency.
2. **Protect the rights of individuals to human dignity and** special rights of children to survival, development and protection, and other vulnerable groups.
3. **Develop legislation, policies, and programmes** that improve the standard of life of individuals and address the needs of vulnerable groups, including but not limited to

children, persons with disabilities, women and older persons. Legislation is key to ensure the government's obligation to the fulfillment of the right to universal social protection for all citizens and ensure appropriate budgetary allocation.

4. Ensure that social protection is **human rights-based**, follows a lifecycle approach, addresses vulnerability and inequality, and is inclusive, leaving no one behind.
5. Ensure continual progress in the **realization of the rights, obligations and commitments of ECOWAS Member States to social protection**.
6. Adhere to the principle of **non-discrimination**; every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights recognized and guaranteed in this Framework without distinction of any kind such as age, disability, race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status.
7. Develop an **integrated and comprehensive** social protection system, which:
  - (a) Ensures meaningful coverage in terms of, among others, social insurance schemes, social assistance measures and enhance access to social services.
  - (b) Protects against special and collective risks, including political conflict, climate change and natural disasters.
  - (c) Prevents poverty, deprivation and livelihood loss.
  - (d) Integrates and, when necessary, reintegrates persons, including workers into the labour force.
  - (e) Includes a Grievance Redress System that stimulates the participation of the citizenry and social protection beneficiaries, enhances transparency and accountability as well and promotes strengthened referral systems.

#### 4.4 Key Priorities

**Taking due cognizance of the provisions of Article 3 of the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security*, Member States are encouraged to consider the following eight priorities** in developing national social protection programmes. A comprehensive set of specific recommendations linked to these key priorities can be found in Annex A of this document.

- I. Firstly, Member States should provide **inclusive national social protection floors** through a minimum package of essential social protection provisions, which should at least cover the basic socio-economic needs of all citizens.
- II. Secondly, they should endeavor to **establish and maintain a national system of social protection capable of timely scale-up in case of a large covariate shock**; and in so doing, maintain and expand an appropriate regulatory, institutional, financial and operational framework for the provision of social protection and **ensure good governance of social protection schemes**.

- III. Thirdly, ECOWAS Member States should **progressively increase their coverage of social protection to the informal sector**. To accomplish this, they are to encourage and regulate private and public sector participation, with regard to the provision and management of social protection.
- IV. Fourthly, Member States should **provide and guarantee the rights of citizens to social protection and social security**.
- V. Fifthly, **Member States should expand the fiscal space for social protection**.
- VI. Sixthly, Member States should seek to **manage climate change-related risks through social protection measures**.
- VII. Seventhly, **position social protection within the humanitarian context**; and transition humanitarian caseload into government national social protection system when relevant and possible.
- VIII. Lastly, Member States should endeavor to **build strong governance and coordination structures** established on robust institutional arrangements that take into account the multidimensional and multisectoral nature of social protection, as well as linkages to complementary services.

#### 4.5 Objectives

**The overarching objective of the ECOWAS Social Protection Framework is to provide ECOWAS Member States with insights on the design, implementation, and evaluation of social protection interventions.** The Framework takes due cognizance of existing national policies, programmes and legislative environments and should be adjusted for relevance across the various contexts. The framework also takes into consideration the best practices and innovations implemented in ECOWAS member states.

**The Framework provides a range of options and insights with respect to social protection guidelines and minimum standards that ECOWAS Member States can utilize to inform their respective social protection policies and overall efforts.** The Framework is supported by seven specific objectives, and an operational Plan to track social protection-related progress across the various countries in the region.

The specific objectives of the framework are listed below:

- I. To assist the ECOWAS Commission and Member States to enhance understanding of concepts, theories, emerging issues, and trends in social protection while guiding them to develop and strengthen capacity for inclusive national social protection systems;
- II. Increase coverage and adequacy of social protection to the informal economy and vulnerable group including women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as extending social protection to workers in the informal sector.

- III. Improve policies and identify strategies to reduce the impact of crisis and build resilience, particularly on the informal economy.
- IV. Improve fiscal space and increase financing for inclusive social protection.
- V. Strengthen the capacity of Member States to build resilience against impacts of climate change and other shocks.
- VI. Understand and strengthen the linkages between social protection and the humanitarian development and peace nexus.
- VII. Strengthen social protection systems – governance, coordination, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning (MEAL).

*These seven objectives are supported by the operational plan in the below section.*

## 4.6 Operational Plan for the ECOWAS Social Protection Framework

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE ONE

*To assist the ECOWAS Commission and Member States to enhance understanding of concepts, theories, emerging issues and trends in social protection while guiding them to develop and strengthen capacity for inclusive national social protection systems.*

Strategic Output	Activities	Indicators	Annual targets					Responsible Institution (Lead & Partner)
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
a) Implementation of training programmes for capacity strengthening in the ECOWAS region facilitated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop Guidelines for Capacity Assessment at Regional and Member States level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No of capacity Assessment Guidelines developed and available.</li> </ul>	X	X				<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Member States, Development Partners

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake Regional Capacity Needs Assessment.</li> </ul>	<p>Regional Capacity Needs Assessment undertaken for the ECOWAS Commission</p> <p>Proportion of MS that have undertaken capacity needs assessment.</p>	X					<p>ECOWAS Commission, Development Partners</p> <p>Member States, Development Partners</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and institutionalize a common training package for SP Practitioners in the Region;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of a common training package for social protection practitioners in the region</li> </ul>		X	X			<p><b>ECOWAS Commission,</b></p> <p>Member States</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate training for social protection practitioners in the ECOWAS Commission and Member states</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of MS trained</li> <li>No of trainings conducted</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	
b) Development of advocacy and communication materials based on emerging issues and trends supported	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and update existing regional SP Information, Education and Communication materials;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of SP Information, Education and Communication materials reviewed and updated;</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission, Member States Development Partners</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create and/or strengthen regional platforms for information sharing on Social Protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of a Regional SP platforms for information sharing</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission, Development Partners</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a specific advocacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existence of an advocacy program for</li> </ul>		X				<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b>

	program for the ECOWAS senior management, Parliament, Court, on Social Protection in the region	ECOWAS senior management, parliament, and court on Social Protection in the region						Development Partners, CSOs
c) Comprehensive and inclusive social protection systems promoted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop an advocacy plan for the inclusion of vulnerable groups in Social Protection programmes and programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocacy Plan available</li> </ul>			X			<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE TWO

*Increase coverage and adequacy of social protection to the informal economy and vulnerable group including women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as extending social protection to workers in the informal sector.*

Strategic output	Activities	Output indicators	Annual targets					Responsible Institution (Lead & Partner)
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
a) Existing Social Protection programmes strengthened and expanded to increase coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize Sensitization programmes for Member States on the need to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Citizens to Social</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of countries that have been sensitized</li> <li>No of countries that have ratified the Protocol to the African charter on human and people's rights on the rights of citizens to Social Protection and Social Security</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States

	Protection and Social Security							
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish an ECOWAS Social protection dashboard</li> <li>▪ Organize periodic dialogues on social protection coverage in the ECOWAS Region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Existence of an ECOWAS Social Protection Dashboard</li> <li>▪ No of Dialogues held</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development partners, Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advocate for extension of social protection to workers in the informal economy through evidence generation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No of diagnostic study/Situation analysis on the informal economy undertaken.</li> <li>▪ Number of Member States extending social security to informal economy workers</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthen the capacity of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of Member States extending</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b>

	existing social security institutions to expand their coverage to workers in the informal economy	social security to informal economy workers.						Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate and promote the adoption of a rights-based life cycle approach in social protection systems in the Region.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of Member of States adopting a rights-based life cycle approach in their social protection system</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
b. Enabling policy/legal environment for Social Protection created or strengthened	Review the legal framework for social protection existing in Member States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of MS who have enacted or revised laws on Social Protection</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE THREE

*Improve policies and identify strategies to reduce the impact of crisis and build resilience, particularly on the informal economy.*

Strategic Output	Activities	Output indicators	Annual targets					Responsible Institution (Lead & Partner)
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
a) Best policy and legislative practices on crisis management and resilience building identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct an analysis to identify best policy and legislative practices on social protection and crisis management for the informal economy</li> </ul>	No of studies on policies/legislation related to vulnerable groups conducted		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
b) Formulation and review of policies and legislation related to Social Protection in collaboration with MS initiated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate the formulation of policy/legislation in MS where it does not exist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of Policies /legislation formulated in MS.</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support MS to review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of Member States supported</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b>

	policies/legislation to strengthen the Social Protection systems.	to review policies/legislation						Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Member States amend legislation to enhance the effectiveness of the Social Protection systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No of Member states that have amended their Legislation to enhance the effectiveness of Social Protection systems</li> </ul>			X	X	X	
c) Minimum standards and guidelines for Social Protection systems adopted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote the adoption of minimum standards and guidelines to enhance the effectiveness of Social Protection systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No of Member States that have adopted the minimum standards and guidelines</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE FOUR

*Improve fiscal space and increase financing for inclusive social protection.*

Strategic Output	Activities	Output indicators	Annual targets					Responsible Institution (Lead & Partner)
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
a) Public investment in Social Protection increased.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for increased domestic investment in social protection systems among Member States</li> </ul>	No of Member States with increased budgetary allocation in Social Protection Systems		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for increased international investment in social protection systems in support of government</li> </ul>	No of member states with increased international investments in Social Protection Systems of Member States		X	X	X	X	
	Conduct a regional study of the fiscal	No of Regional studies on the fiscal space		X				<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b>

	space to identify potential sources of funding for Social Protection systems								Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
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### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE FIVE

*Strengthen the capacity of Member States to build resilience against impacts of climate change and other shocks*

Strategic Output	Activities	Output indicators	Annual targets					Responsible Institution (Lead & Partner)
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
a) Policies and legislation on climate change and disaster risk reduction in social protection integrated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate the review of Member states policies and legislation integrating climate change and other shocks in social protection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of Member States Policies /legislation reviewed</li> </ul>		X				<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate learning and exchange among Member states on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of learning and exchange events amongst Member States</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development

	framework(s) to strengthen coordination and best practices on adaptive Social Protection, climate changes and disaster risk reduction							Partners, CSOs and Member States
b) Adaptive social protection promoted and operationalized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create awareness and understanding of adaptive Social Protection principles and benefits.</li> <li>▪ Facilitate capacity building of Member States on adaptive and shock-responsive Social Protection systems.</li> <li>▪ Facilitate exchange of best practices on integrated management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No of awareness raising events among Member States</li> <li>▪ No of trainings conducted for Member States</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
				X	X	X	X	

	information systems (including social registries) among Member States.	No of exchange and learning events and studies undertaken							
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### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE SIX

*Understand and strengthen the linkages between social protection and the humanitarian development and peace nexus.*

Strategic Outputs	Activities	Output indicators	Annual targets					Responsible Institution (Lead & Partner)
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
a) Humanitarian Development and Peace Nexus approach integrated in social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate regional coordination among humanitarian partners and Member States on integration of HDP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of High-level regional coordination meetings conducted</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States

protection systems.	in social protection systems.							
b) Understanding on interlinkages between development, Peace, Security, and Human Rights enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Undertake studies to highlight the situation of internally displaced persons, migrants and refugees</li> <li>▪ Support Member states with dissemination of findings of studies to enhance linkages between social protection and humanitarian development and peace nexus.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No of Studies conducted</li> <li>▪ No of Member States supported to disseminate study findings</li> </ul>		X				<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conduct advocacy meetings to extend Social Protection to migrants and forcibly displaced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No of advocacy meetings held</li> </ul>		X				

	persons in the Member States							
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train Member States on the ILO Capacity Building Toolkit on the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of trainings held for Member States</li> </ul>			X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE SEVEN

*Strengthen social protection systems – governance, coordination, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Learning (MEAL).*

Strategic Outputs	Activities	Output indicators	Annual targets					Responsible Institution (Lead & Partner)
			2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
a) Human rights-based governance and coordination of social protection systems in Member States enhanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist Member States to create and enhance mechanisms to ensure accountability, and transparency.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of Member States supported</li> </ul>		X				<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Member States to strengthen accountability in service delivery to citizens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of Member States supported</li> </ul>		X				<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
b) Capacity building of Member States on Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning (MEAL) facilitated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate Training of Trainers (TOT) for Member States on MEAL to enhance the capacity on service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of TOTs held</li> </ul>		X	X	X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
c) Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Protection among key stakeholders enhanced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Social Protection M&amp;E Framework for the Region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional Social Protection M&amp;E Framework available</li> </ul>		X				<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate the development of M&amp;E Framework for Member States</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of M&amp;E Frameworks developed</li> </ul>			X			<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide annual reports on the level of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No of Member States that submit annual</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	ECOWAS Commission, Member States

	implementation of the ECOWAS Social Protection Framework	reports to the ECOWAS Commission						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitate among Member States Grievance Redress System (GRM) to improve accountability, referrals, citizen participation and transparency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No of Member of States with Grievance Redress System</li> </ul>				X	X	<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Designation of focal points in MS to collect data on the implementation of activities and establishment of a National Steering Committee to monitor activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No of steering committees established</li> <li>▪ No. of Member States with M&amp;E focal points</li> </ul>	X	X				<b>ECOWAS Commission,</b> Development Partners, CSOs and Member States

## 5.FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM FOR IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

**In accordance with the objectives outlined in Section 1.2, ECOWAS Member States are encouraged to use this Framework as a roadmap and source of information in designing and implementing their social protection interventions.** Member States need to ensure that existing programmes are regularly monitored to measure their progress with respect to pre-set outcomes and benchmarks. The active involvement of key stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process is crucial, as it is through active stakeholder participation that transparency and accountability in social protection can be ensured.

**The ECOWAS Commission, on its part, shall exercise its convening power to advocate, monitor, and supervise compliance by Member States vis-à-vis this Framework,** and to help build consensus on social protection principles at the regional level. It is also expected that Member States will undertake periodic reviews, monitoring, and evaluation of their social protection systems. Civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders shall monitor the implementation of social protection policies and programmes in compliance with the Framework at the national level.

**In due course, the ECOWAS Commission shall develop guidelines for compliance reporting to be adopted by Member States.** The ECOWAS Commission may demand additional information from Member States. The ECOWAS Commission can submit such reports to development partners and other ECOWAS Institutions, such as the ECOWAS Parliament.

### 5.1 Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

**The following are specific recommendations to Member States, regarding the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of their social protection policies and programmes:**

- Member States to establish reliable political and administrative mechanisms to facilitate the effective and efficient implementation and monitoring of their social protection programmes;
- Member States to establish a high level inter-Ministerial Committee(s), entailing all relevant Ministries, to ensure a political-level coordination and monitoring of the entire social protection system.
- Member States to ensure the presence of technical committees and Working Groups on major thematic areas to facilitate the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of social protection policies and programmes. To promote transparency and accountability, there should be a regular impact assessment and evaluation of existing social protection programmes.

- Member States to establish an effective Social Protection Information Management System, capable of providing complete, accurate, non-ambiguous, standardized, and relevant information on social protection programmes.
- Technical experts and researchers need to be recruited to undertake regular data collection and research and to develop timely reports of social protection interventions to enable policy makers, academics and the general public to know how these programmes are working on ground.

## 6. KEY STAKEHOLDERS – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**To operationalize the vision and mission of the ECOWAS Framework, multiple actors are required to work together and contribute towards the collective goals.** Social protection is multi-sectoral as it involves a myriad of stakeholders and actors from various sectors across society. In this case, integrated social protection adopts a multidimensional approach to address both social and economic vulnerabilities and their interactions (UNICEF, 2012[7]).

**ECOWAS recognizes the importance of the integration agenda, which stems back to the 1993 ECOWAS Treaty,** whereby Member States are urged to make efforts to integrate social protection systems into their broader socio-economic development goals. The main stakeholders are the ECOWAS Commission, Member States, African Union, International Development Partners, and Civil Society Organizations shown below.

### 6.1 ECOWAS

The roles of ECOWAS Institutions and the ECOWAS Parliament include the following:

- Monitoring and evaluation of social protection policies and programmes.
- Advocating for adequate funding to be allocated by Member States for social protection programmes.
- Enhance regional learning and promote cross-learning opportunities.

### 6.2 Member States

- Member States are expected to undertake periodic reviews, monitoring and evaluation of their social protection systems.
- Use the Framework as a guide to update or develop a National Social Protection Policy that outlines the objectives, milestones, roles, and responsibilities of all stakeholders, as well as procedures for resource mobilization.
- Ensure that national statistical offices collect relevant data to inform the design and implementation of evidence-based social protection policies and programmes.
- Share good practices, experiences, and models with other ECOWAS Member States to encourage cross learning.
- Progressively reduce and eventually eradicate the gender gap in relation to all social protection measures and schemes. Establish a coordination mechanism to promote inter-sectoral coordination and effective implementation of the Framework. Prepare and submit progress reports on the implementation of the national social protection policy and programme(s) to the ECOWAS Commission.

### **6.3 African Union**

- Provide overall strategic guidance on the direction of social protection on the continent.
- Support the Member States in their design and implementation of social protection.
- Monitor and evaluate outcomes of social protection programming across ECOWAS.
- Facilitate cross learning opportunities and ensure accountability.

### **6.4 Civil Society Organizations**

One of the critical roles of civil society is to compliment government efforts and to hold governments to account. Their role will include:

- Lobby and advocate for adequate funding for the enforcement of legislation, evidence-based studies, budget analysis, and mapping for social protection programmes.
- Support to sensitize the population on existing social protection instruments and conditions such as eligibility criteria, transfer levels and exit and graduation.

### **6.5 Development Partners**

The roles of International Development Partners include the following:

- Align development aid with ECOWAS Member States' social protection policies and strategies.
- Support member states in harmonization and coordination efforts.
- Provide general and sectoral budget support.
- Offer policy advice to governments in the ECOWAS Region.
- Assist Member States to achieve the SDGs.
- Undertake operational research and further institutional strengthening in the form of capacity-building, technical assistance, equipment, and training.
- Collaborate with the Member States on the establishment, management, and piloting of non-contributory programmes.

## 7. CONCLUSION

**The ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Member States unanimously recognize the importance of social protection in reducing poverty, vulnerability, and inequality in the region.** The establishment and implementation of comprehensive social protection programmes will undoubtedly contribute to economic growth and stability in the region, and this framework can serve as a roadmap to track progress and share best practices among Member States.

**The principles and priorities of social protection presented in this Framework should be integrated to facilitate the development of inclusive national social protection floors;** extension of contributory social insurance mechanisms; enhancement of protection for climate-related risks; and the improvement of humanitarian responses.

Member States, with support from the ECOWAS Commission, are, therefore, urged to:

- **Create** an enabling legal and policy framework and an accountability structure for their social protection system with clear roles and responsibilities for all actors involved.
- **Develop** rights-based national social protection floors based on each country's priority areas and facilitate access to healthcare.
- **Allocate** adequate funding for social protection programmes, relying primarily on domestic funding sources to ensure viability and sustainability.
- **Provide** social protection to the most vulnerable individuals and households to ensure that negative coping mechanisms do not adversely affect vulnerable categories, especially children.
- **Develop** a viable monitoring and evaluation framework linked to the operational Plan in this document to assess and support the implementation of social protection programmes.
- **Collect** data and generate evidence on the implementation of social protection programmes to inspire policymakers and practitioners to effectively contribute towards the achievement of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Successful social protection system development and implementation are contingent on the level of robustness of existing institutional frameworks. Sound institutional frameworks can help achieve objectives, especially thanks to the clear articulation of the roles and responsibility of governments, and other stakeholders with respect to both humanitarian and social protection interventions. To this effect, the Social Protection Framework for ECOWAS lays the foundation for the development of sound institutional arrangements and partnerships around social protection, which could help promote the adherence to programmatic and policy standards, as well as leading to the portability of such benefits across borders within the region.

**By endorsing this Framework, the ECOWAS Member States pledge to adopt a regional approach to the advancement of the social protection agenda in their countries.** Through the provision of a common framework, higher levels of shared responsibility and mutual accountability are promoted vis-à-vis the many socio-economic issues that affect the region. The adoption of a coherent approach to addressing such issues can undoubtedly facilitate the prioritization of social protection on the various national development agendas and favor an adequate allocation of domestic and external resources for the sector.

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## ANNEXES

### ANNEX A: RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADVANCE THE SP AGENDA IN THE REGION

#### i). **Setting Inclusive National Social Protection Floors**

The provision of adequate benefits (i.e., cash and non-cash, nutrition and education support etc.) to poor households, children, people living with disability and those affected with pandemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS and COVID-19, as well as ensuring income security and access to healthcare throughout the life cycle should be established by the Member States. Interventions aimed at establishing social protection floors should include cash transfers, in-kind transfers, nutrition programmes, early childhood support programmes, maternity protection benefits, child support to access health and education, universal health care systems, according to national contexts.

#### **Key challenges:**

- i. The coverage of basic social protection in the region is very low, and the existing programmes are mostly fragmented and means-tested due to funding challenges.
- ii. Access to basic and quality healthcare is another big challenge facing ECOWAS citizens, with serious impacts on their health, in general, and their reproductive health, in particular.

The demography of West Africa is characterized by growing populations and high fertility rates in many ECOWAS countries. The 0 - 19 years age group now represents more than 50 per cent of the population<sup>25</sup>, which might hinder poverty reduction efforts, and lead to future increases in malnutrition and food insecurity. However, this can also offer a demographic dividend, which could be an opportunity through the development of an intensive and productive human capital with investments in the health and education sectors as well as in basic socio-economic infrastructure.

#### **Recommendations:**

To develop a robust and extensive Social Protection Floors among ECOWAS countries, five general recommendations are proposed:

- i. As a matter of urgency, Member States should develop rights-based national social protection floors based on the country's priority areas.
- ii. Access to basic healthcare and income security for children, mothers with new-born, persons living with disability, female or child-headed households, and affected with some pandemic should be among the priorities for any national social protection floor.

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<sup>25</sup> ILO World Social Protection Report, 2017-19: Figure 7.5 Distribution of population by age group based on estimates and projections, 1950–2050 (percentage)

- iii. Conduct operationalized cost estimation of national social protection floors and explore innovative financing mechanisms.
- iv. Member States' social protection policies should be mindful of the potential demographic dividend and should offer access to family planning for women and households.
- v. Member States should increase investments in the fields of health, education, child protection, and basic socio-economic infrastructure.

### A. Components of a Judicious Social Protection Floor

According to the ILO R202, social protection floors should, at the very least, comprise access to health care for all, as well as social support systems targeting people in the three main phases of the life cycle, including childhood, the working age, and old age. Thus, a meaningful social protection floor should have the following four elements or components:

**Health care for all:** This component is usually the broadest, and entails access to essential health care, including maternity care, that meets the criteria of accessibility, availability, and quality for all members of society.

**Floor for children:** This component provides basic income security for children. It usually includes access to nutrition, education, care and other necessary goods and services targeting children.

**Floor for working-age people:** This component provides basic income security—at least at a nationally defined minimum level—for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, due to sickness, unemployment, maternity, and disability.

**Floor for the elderly:** This component provides basic income security for the elderly. Given the population structure of ECOWAS countries, this component is expected to cover the least share of the national population, relative to those covered in the preceding 3 components.

### B. Guiding Principles

In addition to the preceding four basic components, Member States should, to the extent possible, abide by the following principles while developing their social protection floors:

**Legal or legislative backing:** Member States should set their social protection floors in national laws and regulations. Also, Member States should stipulate the conditions and benefits that are guaranteed by the floors in ways that make them impartial, transparent, and accessible, together with realistic mechanisms for filing complaints and appeals when need be.

**Avoid a one-size fits all approach:** For it to be meaningful, the floor must be tailored to the socioeconomic, cultural, political, and geographic context of Member State. Thus, there is no one-size-fits-all method. There are multiplicity of approaches and programmes that can be

drawn from, depending on the context, resources, and capabilities of individual Member States. The admixture of benefits may include child and family benefits; health care and sickness benefits; maternity benefits; disability benefits; old-age benefits; survivors' benefits; unemployment benefits, employment guarantees; employment injury benefits; and social benefits, either in-kind or in-cash.

**Combine protective, preventive, promotive and transformative measures:** Following Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004), this Framework encompasses social protection as a set of *protective, preventive, promotive, and transformation* measures. Accordingly, in developing the floors, ECOWAS countries should try incorporating all these four components, with the aim of using their floors to make lasting and transformative changes that are sensitive to issues of equity and social justice.

**Particular emphasis on the informal sector:** Arguably, no other major region of the world has proportionately more informal workers than Sub-Saharan Africa, to which ECOWAS Member States belong. And with social protection floors often built on contributory programmes that are set in the formal sector, it is unsurprising that ECOWAS countries generally have the least coverage when it comes to social protection. To ameliorate this situation, efforts should be made to extend social protection floors to workers in the informal economy. This is not going to be easy, and Member States must be creative in combining traditional social contribution systems (e.g., the *susu* micro-finance system) with formal systems (e.g., pay-roll taxes) to create and to sustain new social protections floor to improve the human condition in ECOWAS countries. The extension of social protection floors to cover more people in the informal section remains one of the most pressing issues that Member States must address.

**Migrant workers and the portability of social protection:** With Article 59 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty of 1993, ECOWAS citizens have the right of entry, residence, and establishment in countries other than their own. With the ECOWAS protocol on migration easing intra-regional movement, many are those who are now moving across borders within the ECOWAS region for recreation, business, and residence, and this has increased the vulnerability of migrant workers and families regarding access to social protection at both ends of the migration cycle. Eligibility of social protection is often restricted to citizens or permanent residents, and since migrants are usually non-citizens and, on the move, they are often ineligible for social protection. Indeed, some transnational migrants are often ineligible for social protection in their own country of nativity or citizenship, due to stringent residency requirements.

**Special attention to climate-related shocks and vulnerabilities:** Given the increased risk of climate-induced covariate shocks in the region, the need for social protection programmes is of paramount importance. Establishing social protection floors supported by effective

emergency response systems to cushion the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable populations in the region from the negative impacts of shock is an urgent priority to be addressed.

**Coordination:** With so many moving parts in any effort to develop a suitable social protection floor, the need for proper coordination to weed out redundancies and overlaps cannot be overemphasized. Also, efforts should be made to integrate social support systems into the broader socioeconomic development goals of Member States to improve the living conditions of all citizens.

**Strengthen institutional capacity:** To develop and manage meaningful social protection floors, Member States must have robust institutional structures. Unfortunately, such structures are lacking in many ECOWAS countries, and this undermines their ability not only to monitor and evaluate their existing programmes, but also their efforts to scale them up. Behind this institutional weakness is the perennial problem of financial constraints, as well as the inability to prevent corruption, fraud, tax evasion, and the non-payment of contributions in many countries.

**Mobilizing funds:** For social protection floors to be sustainable, Member States must use different methods to mobilize public and private resources to ensure the financial viability of their programmes, with due attention to the contributory capacity of different segments of their population. While short-term and emergency external support should be entertained, Member States should avoid extensive reliance on such support, given the potentiality, if not the reality, of engendering a dependency syndrome.

**Promote productive economic activity:** To the extent that the viability of any social protection floor is contingent on funding, Member States should ensure that social protection programmes do not undermine economic productivity and, thus, peoples' ability to contribute to the programmes. To be sustainable, social protection programmes should not be a disincentive for labour force participation and economic productivity; otherwise, these programmes will sow the seed of their demise. Accordingly, these programmes should promote education, vocational and job-training, and general employability, as much as possible.

**Data collection:** To have a robust social protection floor, Member States need to have a reliable socioeconomic and demographic database. Not only will this help authorities to develop and manage the social protection floors, but it will also facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of extant programmes to gauge their usefulness and viability. Some of these data could be derived from the national census, while others could be procured through designated surveys and protocols.

**Regular review, monitoring and evaluation:** A robust social protection floor should have a built-in mechanism for regular reviews, monitoring and evaluation. With regular reviews, the floor could be updated to make its conditions and benefits reflect the changing needs of citizens. Similarly, with regular monitoring and evaluation, the success or otherwise of the floor could be ascertained in time to affect the necessary correction and adjustment.

**Aspire to extend and expand the established floor:** Implicit in the term “social protection floor” is the idea of a starting point. Consequently, after establishing the floor, Member States should endeavor, through various consultative mechanisms, to extend and expand their programmes. The floor should not be the endpoint, but the foundation upon which higher level programmes should be developed.<sup>26</sup>

## ii) Extending Contributory Schemes

Contributory social insurance mechanisms should be extended to workers in the informal economy (which represents more than 90%<sup>27</sup> of the workforce in the region) and to migrant workers. Extending social insurance, which provides crucial benefits such as coverage for work-related injuries, maternity protection, and old-age pensions, plays a vital role in enhancing labor productivity, ensuring the sustainability of insurance risk pooling, and promoting the formalization of the economy.

### Key challenges:

- i. Contributory insurance mechanisms of social protection are not fully effective in the ECOWAS region.
- ii. Legislation is not fully enforced as many employers are not compelled to register their salaried workers.
- iii. Schemes cover less than 10 per cent of the workforce in respective countries, leaving behind the majority of the workers in rural areas, informal economy, independent workers in most cases. Moreover, migrant workers’ rights to access social security and portability of their accumulated rights are not always guaranteed, despite the adoption of the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security.

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<sup>26</sup> ILO (2012). Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 [No. 202]. (Geneva: ILO)  
[https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_INSTRUMENT\\_ID:3065524](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:3065524)

<sup>27</sup> Social Protection Overview in West Africa: draws on the World Social Protection Report (WSPR) 2017-19, especially references to chapter showcasing trends in progress in social protection in Africa and statistical database

### **Recommendations:**

- i. Member States should make all efforts necessary to adapt their regulations related to social insurance in order to facilitate registration of workers in the informal sector and rural areas mostly characterized by low and irregular income and weak capacity of contribution.
- ii. Take all measures including the use of innovative registration mechanisms, to enforce the legislation for effective registration by employers of all employees.
- iii. Implement the ECOWAS General Convention on Social Security at the national level.

### **iii) Extending Social Protection to the Informal Sector**

#### **Background and Key Challenges**

To the extent that the vast majority of workers in ECOWAS countries are in the informal sector, the success of social protection in the region is contingent on its extension to those in this sector. The acute dearth of social protection to informal workers continues to exacerbate the level of poverty and vulnerability in the region. In addition, given that the formal sector is often dominated by males and the informal sector by females, gender dynamics are implicated in the extant deficiency.

For the most part, workers in the informal sector in many ECOWAS countries are beyond the reach of the government, especially when it comes to legislation, regulation, and registrations of any kind. Indeed, the very idea of informality connotes this basic fact of effectively being outside formal systems of documentation, and this makes it difficult to extend social protection to workers in the informal sector.

Moreover, from the standpoint of informal sector workers, there is the problem of low and unstable income and the lack of awareness of their social security and basic human rights, all of which are reflective of, and attributable to, the low level of education among many in this sector. Add to this, the complexities in policies and procedures for registration and uptake, as well as inadequacies in services, and the lack of coverage among workers in the informal sector becomes somewhat explicable. Indeed, government procedures tend to be too cumbersome and time-consuming for informal workers who can hardly afford to leave their work to follow-up, if not to chase, social protection registration and documentation processes. It bears noting that many informal workers are in the rural and farming communities that are farther away from government documentation centres.

Additionally, many informal workers are tied to the extractive and agricultural sectors, which are often seasonal in nature and thus have income cycles that do not chime well with the existing social protection contribution systems in many ECOWAS countries.

Furthermore, without social protection portability agreements between Member States, international migrant workers, most of whom are in the informal sector, often do not qualify for social protection in the destination country, and some who qualify may not even have the

requisite document (e.g., birth certificate, business registration and basic identity card) to register.

### **Recommendations: Practical Guide/Suggestions for Extending Social Protection to the Informal Sector**

1. **Expanding or Adapting Social Protection Schemes:** Starting from the assumption that there is an existing social protection system which needs to be extended to those in the informal sector, one prudent approach is to be incremental, with a gradual extension strategy moving from one category of workers who are easy to cover (i.e., “the low-hanging fruits”) to the next. The category of jobs that are usually easy to cover tend to have characteristics that are closer to the formal sector in terms of its registration and coverage.
2. **Reducing Legal Barriers to Enrolment:** A judicious approach in this regard is to loosen up the minimum threshold for the size of private enterprises. Similarly, one can modify the eligibility requirements regarding the minimum period of employment or hours to qualify.
3. **Introducing Financial Incentives:** A good approach here is to offer some subsidy to low-income workers in the informal sector and self-employed workers to bring them into the system. Indeed, the government can make coverage mandatory, while at the same time subsidizing the coverage through means-tested mechanisms. This approach is used in the Philippines, Uruguay, and Thailand.
4. **Public Educational Campaigns:** Unless informal workers are aware of the existing social protection programmes for which they qualify and the contribution they are expected to make to enrol, together with the corresponding benefits, one cannot realistically expect them to join. Accordingly, there should be an extensive public education campaign targeting informal workers in both rural and urban areas of the country.
5. **Dialoguing with Informal Workers on the Design and Implementation of the Expansion:** The government should also make conscious efforts to bring the informal sector workers into the design and implementation of social protection programmes. This way, the programmes can be adjusted and fine-tuned to reflect the peculiarities of the informal sector.
6. **Promoting Trust among Informal Workers:** Efforts should be made to nurture trust in the social protection system, in general, and among informal workers, in particular, given the latter’s palpable lack of familiarity with formal systems and their associated documentations. Administrative procedures should be simple, yet efficient, without imposing too much cost, in terms of time and money, to join. The delivery of services and benefits should be as efficient as they are predictable, if enrollees are to have confidence in the programme.

7. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Finally, as with all successful social interventions, there is the need to monitor and evaluate the expansion process to measure the progression of coverage and uptake as well as benefit levels, and their expenditure, to determine whether systems are performing or not.

#### **iv). Financing and Expanding the Fiscal Space for Social Protection**

##### **Financing Social Protection**

The development of social protection systems in the region calls for increased investment in the sector, especially considering the fast-growing population and social protection needs of children. National social protection programmes require a sustainable financing framework in the medium and long term, which combines contributory and non-contributory modalities to ensure sufficient funding for social protection programmes.

##### **Recommendations on Financing Social Protection in ECOWAS region:**

- i. Regular studies to estimate the cost of the overall implementation of social protection policies and programmes
- ii. Integration of funds dedicated to social protection programmes into the countries' planning and budgeting systems.
- iii. Adequate funding of social protection systems, mainly with domestic funding to ensure sustainability (for example, commitment to progressively allocate a minimum percentage of public resources to social protection expenditure).
- iv. Use of national budgets as the primary source of funding for social protection in the medium and long-term. Thus, it is useful for ministries responsible for social protection to work in synergy with ministries with oversight for national budgets and planning to ensure social protection considerations are built early into national planning processes.
- v. Integrate demographic dividend projections into social protection financing for sustaining benefits related to child rights issues, such as education, nutrition, food security, and for general long-term social protection sustainability.
- vi. Coordination of International Development Partners' support for sustainable financing of social protection; progressively develop a "Delivery as one" system for the International Development Partners for a cost-effective support system that avoids duplication.
- vii. Mitigate excessive administrative costs, fraud, tax evasion, non-payment of contributions and misuse of social protection funds by promoting efficient and transparent systems.

##### **Strategies for Expanding the Fiscal Space for Social Protection**

Coined by Peter Heller in 2005, the concept fiscal space connotes "the availability of budgetary room that allows a government to provide resources for the desired purposes without any prejudice to the sustainability of the government's financial position" (Heller, 2005, p.3). Put

differently, fiscal space refers to the resources that are made available to a government as a result of “active exploration and utilization of all possible revenue sources” (ILO, UNICEF and UNWOMEN, 2019, p9). Thus, a simple question elicited by concerns about fiscal space is whether or not the government has money or would be able to ascertain the money for a particular social protection intervention. Does the government have the requisite “room” or space in its budget to afford the programme in question? How is the government going to pay for it? What do we have to give up, or shift around, as a government or as a people, to get the obligatory revenue for the intervention in question, without undermining the fiscal sustainability of the economy? Efforts to address these questions speak to the need to deal squarely with issues of fiscal space in the design and implementation of any social protection programme. With insight from multiple sources, the ILO recently identified eight specific guidelines for the expansion of fiscal space for social protection in a recent handbook for assessing fiscal options (2019). These eight options are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Fiscal Space Options.

<b>Options #</b>	<b>Options for Expanding Fiscal Space for Social Protection</b>
<b>1</b>	Expand social security coverage and contributory revenue
<b>2</b>	Increase tax revenue
<b>3</b>	Eliminate illicit financial flows
<b>4</b>	Improve efficiency and reallocate public expenditures
<b>5</b>	Tap into fiscal and foreign exchange reserves
<b>6</b>	Manage debt: borrow or restructure sovereign debt
<b>7</b>	Adopt a more accommodative macroeconomic framework, and
<b>8</b>	Increase aid and transfers

UN Women, ILO 1919-2019: Fiscal Space for Social Protection: A Handbook for Assessing Financial Options.

**Fiscal Space Options in the Context of ECOWAS Member States**

**Expanding social security coverage and contributory revenues:**

As the ILO notes in its Handbook, this option is to increase revenue by growing the number of enrollees or by increasing the contribution rate. In the context of ECOWAS, perhaps the best approach in this regard is to extend social protection to the informal sector to expand the existing fiscal space. Of course, by enrolling more people there will be more revenue, just as the absolute cost of benefits will increase. However, since social protection is generally a form of social insurance, there is a built-in mechanism for risk-pooling, which ends up making the

system financially cheaper and sustainable with more enrollees. With this risk-pooling, the system becomes more robust to withstand external shocks.

### **Increasing tax revenue**

This is a common avenue for opening up fiscal space in many countries. Among the options suggested by the ILO here are value-added tax (VAT), income tax, corporate tax, financial tax, and tax on resource extraction. While most of these could be used in ECOWAS Member States in different ways and permutations, one should be mindful of taxes, such as VAT, that are regressive and put greater burden, in proportionate terms, on low-income people, compared to their high-income counterparts. Instead, preference should be given to progressive tax, such as income tax, which turns things around and places more burden on high-income people. Other taxes that ECOWAS countries may want to explore include property tax and the so-called “sin tax,” both of which are under-utilized in many ECOWAS countries. As the name suggests, a “sin tax” is a tax that targets unhealthy and socially undesirable products such as alcohol and tobacco. Another area where ECOWAS countries can realistically expand their fiscal space for social protection has to do with the taxing of resource extraction. Endowed with a wide-range of renewable and non-renewable resources, including oil and gas in Nigeria; phosphate in Senegal and Guinea-Bissau; gold, diamond, and manganese in Ghana and Cote D’Ivoire, and uranium and molybdenum in Niger and many more, ECOWAS Member States can increase their royalties and extraction-related taxes and fees to boost the fiscal space for social protection. It bears stressing that it would be virtually impossible to expand the fiscal space for social protection without a stringent and accountable tax collection regime to weed out the prevalent corruption and tax evasion in many ECOWAS Member States, as in many other African countries.

### **Eliminating illicit financial flows**

This option entails cracking down on money laundering, bribery, mis-invoicing, and other illicit activities surrounding the flow of money not only within a particular country, but also between people in different countries in the sub-region. The porosity of banking and financing systems, and international border crossing and regulations have made money laundering commonplace across ECOWAS countries. While some countries, such as Ghana and Senegal, have some restrictions on how much one can transfer at once via phone, wire (or the SWIFT electronic systems) for instance, they are generally easy to evade, just as many other countries have no or very weak such regulations. Moreover, criminal enterprises such those of the “Sakawa boys” in Ghana and the 419 fraudsters in Nigeria have taken advantage of the laxities in the financial sector to launder money across ECOWAS with relative ease. Add to this the acute lack of reliable national personal identification systems, such as National ID card or national Social Security Number in many Member States, and one can readily appreciate why financial irregularities are prevalent in sub-region. There are also instances where the police and other law enforcement personnel are implicated or complacent in these illegalities, and thus fostering the financial leakages that end up subverting efforts to expand the fiscal space

for social protection. Meanwhile, one would be utterly mistaken to focus exclusively on street level financial crimes, often perpetrated by the youth, to the virtual neglect of the so-called white-collar financial crimes of the elite and powerful in top financial and governmental institutions.

### **Re-allocating public expenditures**

The idea of this option is to assess the extant pattern and types of public expenditure to replace high-cost, low-impact expenses, investments, and interventions with low-cost, high-impact ones. Additionally, the option calls for the elimination of corruption and inefficiencies in government spending to help expand the fiscal space for social protection interventions. As with many parts of the world, corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies remain endemic in ECOWAS Member States, and this needs to be confronted head-on if Member States are going to succeed in the attempts to expand their fiscal space for social protection. The orthodoxy in local and national administration and service provision is such that many in positions of power are able to use government resources—including paid time, vehicles, and supplies—for their personal gains with no discernible and consequential checks-and-balances. Arguably, it is in this area, in particular, that ECOWAS Member States can make headway in their efforts to expand the fiscal space for social protection; mind you, this is also where corrective endeavours are likely to meet their greatest resistance from vested interest.

### **Using fiscal and central bank foreign exchange reserves**

The option entails the drawing down or pooling of resources from government reserve funds and savings to be used for social protection. Clearly then, this option would be opened to mainly Member States with reserve funds or “rainy-day” savings, especially in hard foreign currencies. With that in mind, countries without reserves should seriously consider initiating plans for such savings. A good starting point among many ECOWAS Member States would be to allocate a percentage of resource extraction fees, royalties and taxes, however small it may be, to start this sovereign reserve fund. Indeed, it is not far-fetched to encourage wealthy citizens within the country or in the diaspora, for instance, to donate money for such reserve funds. This suggestion is markedly context-specific, and each Member State should study its particular socioeconomic dynamics to know the best way to start or add to its sovereign reserve fund.

### **Managing debt—borrowing or restructuring sovereign debt**

With this option governments are to evaluate their domestic and foreign borrowing strategies and avenues with an eye towards the reduction of the associated cost of debt servicing and payment to open up fiscal space for social protection initiatives. There are indications that the level of sovereign debt across ECOWAS countries has increased considerably in recent years to a point where their basic sustainability is seriously in doubt. Using World Bank data, Douglasson Omoto (2021) of the West African Institute for Financial and Economic Management recently estimated that “the average outstanding external debt to GNI ratio rose from 26.77% in 2013

to 32.94% in 2015, and to 36.62% in 2017. According to Omoto (2021), Cape Verde had the highest debt to GNI ratio in 2018, which stood at a whopping 92%, followed by Senegal (52.5%) and Sierra Leone (45.65). Evidently, we have reached a point where some ECOWAS countries have to spend about half of their Gross National Income on debt payment. Unless ECOWAS countries find ways to renegotiate this debt for lower or concessional interest rates, it will be difficult to find the necessary fiscal space for social protection and other development programmes. Clearly, the idea of borrowing for national development, especially for social protection, has to be curtailed as much as possible, given its potential to shrink the fiscal space for other national development programmes. Indeed, we have to think outside the proverbial box, getting beyond the orthodoxy of “development-via-borrowing” to unorthodox ideas such as “development-via-barter”, for instance, by which ECOWAS countries trade and swap commodities and services among themselves (within the sub-region). Similarly, the governments should embark on wide-ranging indigenization programme to reduce the need for borrowing and importing goods and services from outside. As part of this effort, the government can encourage its workers to wear African clothing for work, for instance. With such encouragement, backed by incentives, there could be a gradual shift in taste in clothing, which can also diffuse to other realms, such as home furnishing and decorations and even culinary and dietary preferences.

### **Adopting a more accommodating macroeconomic framework**

This option is to ensure that the overarching economic environment in Member States is conducive for growth, without which unemployment would be high together with the cost of living, and thus undermining efforts to expand fiscal space for social protection. Indeed, without conducive macroeconomic framework, existing social protection programmes would be over-burdened to their breaking point and thereby eliciting even greater fiscal space for corrective action. Implicitly, then, many of the preceding positions cannot work when the macroeconomic situation in a country is shaky. For instance, when the government is overburdened with sovereign debt or run-away inflation, there is little room to manoeuvre, and attempts to expand the fiscal space for social protection are likely to stall.

### **Increasing foreign aid and transfers**

As presented by the ILO Handbook, this option prompts governments to seek foreign aid and official development assistance (ODA) in their efforts to expand the fiscal space for social protection. Given the increase in sovereign debt among ECOWAS Member States, as we just saw, it is only prudent that governments in the sub-region pursue foreign aid with considerable care. In fact, the idea of designing and implementing social protection programme on the basis of foreign aid should not be entertained. However, to the extent that foreign aid does not necessarily have to come from the global North, ECOWAS countries can explore avenues of intra-regional aid. After all, ECOWAS Member States exhibit uneven development, and the possibility exists for the relatively better-endowed and better-off countries, such as Nigeria, to help the poorer ones with monetary or in-kind support. For the sake of national sovereignty

and dignity, solicitations of foreign aid, especially from outside Africa itself, have to be curbed. There is nothing wrong with seeking foreign aid in times of emergency or natural disaster, but one cannot realistically plan the budget of a social protection intervention based on foreign aid, which at best should be used only sparingly to address short-term emergency situations and not for a long-term programme such as social protection. Indeed, in addition to undermining the sovereignty and dignity of countries, reliance on foreign aid undermines the accountability of politicians and government officials who then become mainly answerable to donors, instead of citizens.

### **Expanding Fiscal Space: Options, Timing, Feasibility, and Potential Extent**

Another important insight offered by the *ILO Handbook* concerns the timing, feasibility, and potential size of the eight suggested options for expanding the fiscal space for social protection (Table 1). As the ILO rightly notes, the execution time for the options varies. For instance, whereas one can quickly implement a change in contribution rate, once it is approved, the same cannot be said of efforts to expand coverage to workers in the informal sector. Similarly, once the government has decided to introduce or increase taxes such as VAT, income tax, or corporate tax, it can be implemented in no time. At the same time, the national dialogue and negotiations involved in such a decision are never easy, as the ongoing tensions surrounding the planned introduction of a fee on electronic transfer of money (E-Levy) in Ghana clearly show. Options such as the curtailment of illicit financial flows, the improvement of efficiency in public spending, and restructuring of public debt take longer time to implement, even in the best of time and place.

As with the execution time, the political feasibility of these options invariably varies; thus, while some may be easy to implement, others may elicit contestations, mostly due the vested interest of stakeholders. For instance, whereas it may be easy to expand the coverage of social protection to other groups of workers, such as informal traders, any attempt to increase the contribution rate is bound to be controversial. Similarly, whereas the feasibility of improving efficiency in public spending is likely to be high, the reverse is usually the case when it comes to reprioritizing public spending, given the prevalence of powerful vested interest in this area. Ultimately though, the feasibility or otherwise of any option is somewhat context-specific, varying on the basis of national socioeconomic and culture conditions, as well as the capabilities and expectations of the citizenry.

Finally, just as the execution time and feasibility of the eight options differ from each other, so is the potential size or extent of fiscal space that could be generated. As the *ILO Handbook* suggests, whereas the fiscal space engendered by foreign aid or even by improvements in efficiency may be limited, the fiscal space to be gained through the expansion of the number of enrollees, increase in contribution rates, and the introduction of taxes—e.g., VAT, income and corporate taxes—is likely to be significant.

## **v). Addressing Climate-Related Risks through Social Protection**

Manifestations of climate change include drought and floods and changes in rainfall patterns.

### **Key challenges**

- i. Long spells of food insecurity in many countries, especially during the lean season.
- ii. Displacement of populations in cases of droughts or floods; loss of assets including agricultural material, and livelihood disruptions.
- iii. Malnutrition and undernutrition, especially of children.
- iv. Widespread poverty and lack of access to basic social and productive services such as micro-credit.

### **Recommendations**

- i. Develop comprehensive and integrated approaches to social protection in the context of agriculture, nutrition, and migration.
- ii. Develop mitigation measures to protect populations at risk facing climate change such as small farmers. Measures can include transfers (cash and in kind) and support to access to micro-credit and food security during the lean season).

## **vi). Humanitarian Context of Social Protection**

Linking humanitarian efforts to existing social protection schemes is an important priority to be addressed in many countries of the region. Transitioning humanitarian caseloads into government-owned systems requires active capacity and systems development efforts.

### **Key challenges**

The West Africa region is characterized by:

- Weaknesses in the regional and national surveillance for identifying and rapidly neutralizing major humanitarian risks and pandemics.
- Weakness of the national health systems, poor access to (and poor quality of) basic services such as water, sanitation, healthcare.
- Weak capacity to manage and coordinate data in the relevant institutions in Member States to better prevent humanitarian risks and pandemics and guide policy makers.
- Delays in responses from governments and regional institutions.
- Early warning systems of the ECOWAS region and among individual ECOWAS Member States are not fully developed as they do not effectively prevent loss of life or contribute to reducing economic and material impact of disasters.
- Weakness of preventive mechanisms and lack of linkages with social protection programmes and schemes.

### **Recommendations:**

- Coordinate and build synergy between emergency and humanitarian interventions and social protection institutions to strengthen the capacities of the technical staff of institutions in charge of producing humanitarian and pandemic-associated indicators to provide reliable and timely emergency and humanitarian information.
- Establish effective early warning mechanisms and allocate adequate human resources and funding in this critical area.
- Develop responses through the existing social protection systems by adapting and revamping them to respond quickly to humanitarian and crisis needs; and develop early warning mechanisms for Member States and increase advocacy and capacities for community involvement.

### **vii). Social Protection Governance**

Good governance is central to improving service delivery and outcomes of social protection and strengthening the accountability of services to citizens.

Recommendations for Member States:

- A rights-based legal framework that will guarantee access to benefits and sustainability of the social protection system.
- Mechanisms, including incentives, for improved enforcement of the social security legislation.
- Changes in legislation, parameters and implementation mechanisms to extend social insurance to those working in the rural and informal economy and in self-employment.
- Improved delivery mechanisms and quality of services, including innovative mechanisms such as a single computerized registration platform to provide integrated oversight of social protection programmes, with links to national registration database; and the use of new technology to ensure that registration, criteria for eligibility, delivery and payment systems are efficient and effective. Transparency, accountability, monitoring and evaluation must also improve.
- Establishment of early warning and coordination systems for more effective responses to climate related risks and humanitarian crisis.
- Effective participation of stakeholders, including social partners and civil society organizations, in social protection policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation is also critical.

### **ECOWAS: Gender and Social Protection**

#### **Gender Gaps in Social Protection**

To the extent that patriarchy is endemic in ECOWAS Member States, as in many other parts of the world, it is only prudent to expect gender difference in access to, and coverage of, social

protection programmes. Accordingly, conscious efforts should be made to mainstream the inclusion of women in all facets of social protection programmes. As in many parts of the world, women in the ECOWAS Region have lower levels of social protection coverage and receive less benefits, relative to their male counterparts. In turn, these gender differences vary within and between Member States, as they are contingent on the local labour markets and existing social security systems. Without adequate social protection floors, then, many women in the ECOWAS Region are left with no formal social support systems of any kind. There are several reasons why women, in general, and women in the ECOWAS region, in particular, have low social protection coverage not the least of which are tied to their limited participation in the labour market; their preponderance in the informal sector of the economy; their longer life expectancy; and the fact that they are usually overburdened by the care-giving responsibilities of many households. Of course, gender relations do not concern only women, neither do they always work to the disadvantage of women. At the same time, there is no denying that women are at a substantially greater risk of poverty than men, and the need to address the special challenges of women in the design and implementation of social protection interventions cannot be overemphasized.

Given the persistent male-female power differentials, it is unsurprising that most social protection schemes, including those in many ECOWAS Member States, are designed around the male breadwinner model, which assumes that enrollees have a long-term, full-time employment in the formal sector. This invariably puts women in a disadvantaged position, since they often work part-time or temporarily, taking various leaves to handle their reproductive and care-giving roles, which are often culturally imposed. In the context of such androcentric social protection systems, women end up having lower accumulated contributions almost by default. Additionally, we know that the informal sector—where contribution-based social protection programmes are lacking—is dominated by women as petty traders, service providers, food sellers, caregivers, etc. Compounding these problems is the fact that women tend to be underpaid, relative to men, for performing work of equal value. This gender pay gap undermines women's ability to contribute to social protection programmes and, thus, end up getting less benefits. Clearly, in the absence of complementary non-contributory social protection programmes or floors, women are often short-changed when it comes social protection coverage and benefits. The situation is even grimmer, since women generally outlive men, and often have to do so under straitened economic circumstances.

The inequities faced by women in accessing social protection programmes emanate not only from gender-based incongruence in the labour market, but also from how such interventions are designed in the first place. For instance, as one can readily deduce from the preceding discussion, when benefits are closely tied to one's contribution, they undermine women's interest, since they tend to have lower levels of contribution. Similarly, women are short-changed when households are used as the unit of enrolment in non-contributory social protection systems, without addressing the fact that women and girls often receive fewer resources than men and boys in many households. Additionally, in these days of neoliberal cutbacks, women tend to suffer the most when social benefits—notably, survivors' benefits

and maternity benefits—are retrenched. The question that flows naturally from the preceding analysis is: How do we design social protection programmes to address women’s gender-specific challenges and vulnerabilities?

### Policy and Design Suggestions

Perhaps there is no better way to address these gender inequities in social protection than by first acknowledging that access to, and impacts of, social protection programmes are not gender neutral. Without such an acknowledgment, no meaningful corrective action could be undertaken. Following this basic acknowledgement, Member States should design and implement social protection programmes that recognize the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women and develop initiatives that address women’s specific needs and concerns. As a corollary, Member States should conduct a gender mainstreaming exercise, by way of a comprehensive gender analysis, to assess the differential vulnerabilities, risks, and challenges of both men and women as beneficiaries of social protection interventions.

Among the specific initiatives that can be undertaken to correct gender gap in coverage and access are the following:

- **Care Economy:** Member States should put adequate resources in the care economy to enhance the professionalization and formalization of care work in the Region. Public care facilities should be improved to lessen the burden of care which is disproportionately shouldered by women and girls in various households. Relatedly, paid family leave for both women and men should be instituted to help ease the burden of care. Indeed, providing workers with reasonable leaves to care for family members, without undue penalties, is the way to go. Also, ECOWAS Members should seriously consider crediting care providers for their contribution to social protection programmes to maintain the contribution levels of workers; this will be especially helpful for women who often have to take leave to care for family members. In the final analysis, we should ensure that social protection programmes respect the role of women as care givers without reinforcing existing stereotypes and patterns of discrimination. In this regard, efforts should be made to train service providers on culturally appropriate practices that cater for the specific needs of women.
- **Social Protection Floor:** Member States should develop social protection floors that cover basic pensions, minimum unemployment benefits, and universal health care. Women, in particular, tend to have lower coverage when it comes to contributory social protection schemes, and without such floors, they are bound to go with very little or, worse still, with no social protection whatsoever.
- **The Informal Sector:** Since women are over-represented in the informal sector in nearly all ECOWAS Member States, any effort to formalize work stands to improve women’s access to formal social protection programmes. These initiatives could include simplifying business registration processes and improving access to finance for small businesses, or simply by extending enrolment in formal protection programmes to workers in the informal sector.

**The Gender Pay Gap:** That women often get lower pay relative to their male counterparts, for performing jobs of equal value, underpins their lower access to social protection in most cases. While this gender pay gap is ubiquitous around the world, it is arguably more pervasive in countries of the global South including many in the ECOWAS Region. Since 2018, Icelandic companies with 25 employees or more are required to demonstrate that they do not engage in gender pay discrimination or risk government fines; such an approach is worth emulating among ECOWAS Member States. Additionally, Member States can reduce the gender pay gap by making employment remunerations more transparent than they are at the moment or simply by promoting gender equity issues in collective bargaining.

## ANNEX B: DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION BY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

**1: International Labour Organization (ILO):** “Social protection, or social security, is a human right and is defined as the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Social protection includes benefits for children and families, maternity, unemployment, employment injury, sickness, old age, disability, survivors, as well as health protection.”—**Source:** ILO 2017. World Social Protection Report-2017-209 (Geneva: ILO; p.194).

**2: World Bank Group:** “Social protections and labour systems, policies, and programmes help individuals and societies manage risk and volatility and protect them from poverty and destitution—through instruments that improve resilience, equity, and opportunity”—**Source:** World Bank, 2012. “Resilience, Equity, and Opportunity: The World Bank’s Social Protection and Labour Strategy 2012-2022” (Washington DC: The World Bank).

**3: UNICEF:** “[A] set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life-course, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups.”—**Source:** UNICEF. 2019. “Global Social Protection Programme Framework on-line resource.

**4: FAO:** “Social protection comprises a set of policies and programmes that addresses economic, environmental, and social vulnerabilities to food insecurity and poverty by protection and promoting livelihoods.”—**Source:** FAO 2017 “Social Protection Framework: Protecting rural development for all.” (Rome: FAO).

**5: UNDP:** “[A] set of nationally owned policies and instruments that provide income support and facilitates access to goods and services by all households and individuals at least at minimally accepted levels, to protect them from deprivation and **social exclusion**, particularly during periods of insufficient income, incapacity or inability to work.”—**Source:** UNDP (2016). “Leaving No One Behind: A Social Protection.”

## ANNEX C: COVERAGE OF DIFFERENT GROUPS IN THE REGION

Coverage of the various groups in the region is not homogeneous and varies from country to country and region to region. Even within gender there are marked differences. Table 2 below which was constructed based on multiple source documents gives a snapshot of social protection coverage of the various categories in the region.

**Table 2: Description of Coverage of the Different Groups in the Region**

S. No	Category of Beneficiary	Status
1	Children	In terms of children, only Togo (49%), Cape Verde (37.9%), and Ghana (25.9%) have rates of coverage more than 25 percent. The rest of the Member States are below 25 percent. 6 Member States have coverage of less than 10 percent (Sierra Leone, Senegal, Niger, Mali, Liberia, and Cote D'Ivoire).
2	Cross-Border Migrants, Refugees,	According to the UNHCR (2022), an estimated 103 million people globally are forcibly displaced, with 32.5 million refugees. The issue does not only end at global level but affects ECOWAS too. UNHCR reported that at the end of June 2021, Ghana hosted 14,273 refugees and asylum-seekers, with 70 percent of the population in protracted situations with most of them coming from the ECOWAS region.
3	Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	At the end of 2021, of the <b>89.3 million</b> forcibly displaced people, an estimated 36.5 million (41%) are children below 18 years of age. 53.2 million are internally displaced people. Short-term projections show that displacement caused by conflict and persecution in the Sahel is likely to increase to 8.9 million by the end of 2023, marking an increase of 1.4 million people compared to 2021. (Sahel Predictive Analytics Project, 2022).
4	Women and girls	According to the OECD 2016 fact sheet, seven West African countries rank among the top 20 countries in the world with the highest rate of child marriage [Niger (1), Chad (3), Mali (5), Guinea (6), Burkina Faso (8), Sierra Leone (13) and Nigeria (14)].
5	Youth	ECOWAS countries perform worse with regards to social protection in unemployment benefit. It is only in Nigeria, Cape Verde, and Togo that there are some 7 percent, 3 percent, and 0.7 percent reported ratio of recipients of unemployment cash benefits to the number of unemployed people, respectively; all the remaining Member States have absolutely zero coverage.
6	Family	Perin et. al. (2022), points out that in “West Africa, five countries do not have contributory family allowances or child benefits ( <b>The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone</b> ).”

7	Older persons	Cape Verde 85 percent coverage by 2020 while Senegal is at 29.9 percent, with Togo at 19 percent, Ghana 18 percent, Gambia at 17 percent, Benin 11 percent and Nigeria 11 percent; Other countries are below 10 percent.
8	People with HIV or other chronic illnesses	When individuals and communities are able to realize their rights - to education, social security, information and, most importantly, non-discrimination - the personal and societal impacts of HIV and AIDS and other chronic illnesses are reduced
9	People with disabilities	Huge data gaps exist regarding PWD with African average at 8.3 percent while West African situation may be lower than 1 percent in six of the countries with data, except Cape Verde which has 30.1 percent coverage (OTUWA, 2021)

**Source:** Author Construction based on the UNHCR (2022), Perin et. al. (2022), OTUWA, 2021)

## ANNEX D: ECOWAS: Overview of National Social Security Systems

COUNTRY / TERRITORY	Existence of a Statutory Programme							
	Child and Family	Maternity (cash)	Sickness (cash)	Unemployment	Employment Injury	Disability/Invalidity	Survivors	Old age
<b>ECOWAS MEMBER STATES</b>								
<b>BENIN</b>	☒	☒	☒	None	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>BURKINA FASO</b>	☒	☒	☒	None	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>CAPE VERDE</b>	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>COTE D'IVOIRE</b>	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>THE GAMBIA</b>	None	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>GHANA</b>	None	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>GUINEA</b>	☒	☒	☒	None	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>GUINEA BISSAU</b>	...	☒	...	None	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>LIBERIA</b>	None	None	None	None	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>MALI</b>	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>NIGER</b>	☒	☒	☒	None	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>NIGERIA</b>	None	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>SENEGAL</b>	☒	☒	☒	None	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>SIERRA LEONE</b>	None	☒	None	None	☒	☒	☒	☒
<b>TOGO</b>	☒	☒	☒	None	☒	☒	☒	☒

**Source:** ILO (2017). *World Social Protection Report—2017-19* (Geneva: ILO), Table B.2, pp.230-239.

### Symbols

- ☒ At least one programme anchored in national legislation, including employer-liability programmes based on mandatory risk pooling.
- ☒ Limited provision (e.g. labour code only).
- ☒ Only benefit in kind (e.g. medical benefit).

## **ANNEX E: SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS – THE CASE OF CAPE VERDE**

**Cape Verde's Social Protection** is one of the most well-organized and comprehensive in the ECOWAS region. No wonder, it has been profiled in a number of ILO reports including the Social Protection Floor for a Fair and Inclusive Globalization (2011), the Report of ILO Advisory Group Chaired by Michelle Bachelet. Of course, Cape Verde is atypical in the ECOWAS context, given the smallness of its population, which stands at a mere 562,000 in 2021. At the same time, bigger ECOWAS countries can draw useful insights from the Cape Verdean experience and scale them up to fit their own situation. Essentially, the Cape Verdean Social Protection floor spans all the major phases of the life cycle, from childhood through the working age to the retirement ages. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cape Verde relied on the institutional framework of existing social protection systems to provide temporary cash transfers to some 5,450 households from July to December of 2020, following which plans were made to reach 20,000 households between by June of 2021. Some 80% of these beneficiary households were expected to be female-headed households.

The key components of Cape Verde's national social protection floor comprise the following:

### 1: Floor for all Cape Verdeans: Access to Essential Health Care

- Social Health Insurance financed through contributions from employers and workers.
- Public Health system financed mainly through taxes.

### 2: Floor for Children: Children Income Security

- Family benefits offered through the National Social Security Institute (INPS)—only a small number of people are covered in the programme
- Adequate school provisions
- School meal support programmes
- Scholarship programmes
- Social assistance programme to support orphans

### 3: Floor for the Working Age: Social Assistance for the Unemployed and Working Poor

- The main programme here is the FAIMOs—Work Team employed by the State for construction and related work. It guarantees income for the poor and unemployed, especially in rural areas in times of seasonal slowdown in agricultural activity.

### 4: Floor for the Elderly and Disabled: Income Security for the Elderly and the Disabled

- A means-tested non-contributory unified social pension scheme for the elderly (those 60+) and the disabled. It is managed by the National Centre of Social Pensions (CNPS).
- A contributory pension managed by the National Social Insurance Institute (INPS).

*Sources:* The main source is ILO 2010 “Social protection floor initiative: SPF Country Brief Cape Verde (Geneva: ILO). Other secondary sources are ILO (2011), Social Protection Floor for a Fair and Inclusive Globalization” A Report of the Advisory Group chaired by Michelle Bachelet (Geneva: ILO and WHO); World Bank (2020) “Cape Verde’s Social Safety Net: Responding to COVID -19 crisis through temporary cash transfers to the poorest households” <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2021/04/13/cabo-verde-s-social-safety-net-responding-to-the-covid-19-crisis-through-temporary-cash-transfers-to-the-poorest-households> [Accessed July 24, 2021]

## ANNEX F: ECOWAS: Expenditure on Social Protection Systems Including Floors, by Broad Age Group

	Total expenditure on social protection (excluding health) <sup>1</sup>	Children	Working-age population	Old age	Domestic government expenditure (GGHE-D) WHO
Benin	1.3	...	...	0.4	0.5
B. Faso	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	2.4
C. Verde	6.4	0.0	5.5	3.6	3.2
C. D'Ivoire	1.2	...	0.1	1.1	1.2
Gambia	0.9	...	0.9	0.4	0.9
Ghana	1.7	0.4	0.4	0.8	1.4
Guinea	0.5	...	0.4	...	0.6
G. Bissau	...	...	...	...	...
Liberia	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2	1.7
Mali	2.2	0.1	0.6	1.6	1.1
Niger	1.4	0.0	0.6	0.7	2.4
Nigeria	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.6
Senegal	3.3	0.0	1.2	2.1	0.9
S. Leone	0.7	0.1	0.0	0.0	1.6
Togo	0.1	0.0	0.0	1.4	1.1

**Source:** ILO 2020. World Social Protection Report 2020-2022: Social Protection at the Crossroads—In Pursuits of a Better Future (Geneva: ILO), p. 279-280.

Note: Data not available

Total social protection expenditure (excluding health) does not always correspond to the sum of expenditures by age group, depending on data availability, sources and year, and on inclusion of non-age-group-specific expenditures.

## ANNEX G: ILO: International Labour Standards Relevant to Gender Equality and Social Protection.

ILO Convention/Standard	Recommendation
The Equal Remuneration Convention (100)	Calls for equity in pay.
The Social Security (Minimum Standards) Conventions (102)	Advocates for the rights of spouses and children of deceased workers to survivors' benefits.
The Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (156) [and its accompanying Recommendations (165)]	Advocates for the right of persons with family responsibilities to employment without discrimination; and the need for affordable childcare and home care services.
The Maternity Benefits Convention (C183)	Calls for cash benefits for women to help them maintain themselves and their children in proper conditions of health and with a suitable standard of living.
The Social Protection Floors Recommendation (202)	Calls for universal and gender-neutral access to essential health care and basic income security throughout the life cycle.
The Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation (204):	Advocates for the formalization of the informal sector of the economy.

**Source:** International Trade Union Confederation [ITUC] (2018). <https://www.ituc-csi.org/brief-gender-gaps>

## ANNEX H: Principles to be applied in Complaints and Appeals Mechanism

- **Impartiality and consistency:** Each case has to be considered on its own merits and all evidence should be clearly documented and analyzed. Decisions should be consistent.
- **Transparency and clarity:** Complainants/appellants should be given a clear explanation of the criteria for accepting complaints/appeals and a guide to the way they will be addressed including social protection staff behaviour. Outcomes should be transparent.
- **Effectiveness and rapidity:** Complaints should be resolved as quickly as possible. Local level points of contact should deal with simple complaints, while a system for regular internal reporting should facilitate escalation of unresolved complaints.
- To facilitate easy use, complaints and appeal mechanisms should be simple and rapid.
- **Accessibility and simplicity:** the service should be known, free to use, open, simple and available to all who need it. Awareness material should be available, personnel should be contactable by letter, e-mail and telephone, literacy and language barriers should not exist.
- **Responsiveness:** The mechanism should respond to the needs of all complainants. Social protection measures may be needed for managing contacts with appellants who have particular needs and for responding to unreasonable demands or behaviour of complainants and appellants. This requires proper training of staff and adequate resources.
- **Proportionality:** this implies an assessment of the complaint and a response to it that takes into account the nature of the issue and the effect it has had on the complainant/appellant. The depth of the investigation and the time taken may be proportional to the seriousness of the issue, however quality of evidence and investigation should remain.
- **Confidentiality:** Complainants have a right to expect that their privacy will be respected, and their complaint will be investigated in privacy.

**Source:** TRANSFORM 2017 Shock Responsive Training Manual available at <https://transformsp.org> and <https://socialprotection.org/institutions/transform>

## ANNEX I : NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION DOCUMENTATION

### ECOWAS: National Social Protection Documents

	Member States	National Social Protection Document	Date of Document	Sources
1	Benin	Holistic Social Protection Policy	Developed 2012 and Validated Feb 2014	Questionnaire <sup>1</sup>
2	Burkina Faso	National Social Protection Policy	September 2012	Pino and Confalonieri <sup>2</sup>
3	Cape Verde	National Strategy for Social Protection	Unknown Date	ILO <sup>3</sup>
4	Cote D'Ivoire	National Social Protection Strategy	May 2014	Questionnaire
5	Gambia	National Social Protection Policy	2015-2025	Questionnaire
6	Ghana	Ghana National Social Protection Policy	Adopted 2015	Questionnaire
7	Guinea	No information	No information	No information
8	Guinea Bissau	No information	No information	No information
9	Liberia	National Social Protection Policy & Strategy	July 2013	Questionnaire
10	Mali	National Action for Extending Social Protection 2011-2015	January 2011	Pino and Confalonieri
11	Nigeria	National Social Protection Policy	2017	Questionnaire
12	Niger	National Social Protection Policy	Aug. 2011	Pino and Confalonieri
13	Senegal	National Social Protection Strategy	Developed 2015; Updated 2015	Questionnaire
14	Sierra Leone	National Social Protection Policy	Reviewed in 2017 But not enacted	Questionnaire
15	Togo	National Social Protection Policy Draft document	July 2012 Not yet approved	Pino and Confalonieri

### Sources

1. This information is derived from responses provided to a Questionnaire distributed to ECOWAS Member States on the ECOWAS Social Protection Framework, during a workshop at Abuja, Nov 20-21, 2019.
2. Pino, A. and Confalonieri, A.M.B. (2014). "National social protection policies in West Africa: A comparative analysis" *International Social Security Review*, Vol. 67, 3-4: p. 129.

## ANNEX J: KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

### Relevance:

- Is the policy/programme consistent with the needs of its target group?
- How well does the policy/programme align with priorities of key stakeholders, such as the government?
- How appropriate is the programme strategy to achieve the programme objective?

### Effectiveness

- To what extent is the programme/policy achieving the intended outcomes?
- How can programme/policy implementation be improved to deliver its outputs more according to plans?
- To what extent is the programme/policy reaching its intended target population?

### Efficiency

- To what extent does the programme acquire/use inputs (human and material resources) of appropriate quality and quantity at the lowest possible cost?
  - To what extent are maximum outputs produced for any given set of inputs?
- Can the costs of the policy/programme be justified by the results?
- To what extent has the programme delivered outputs in time?

### Impact

- To what extent can a social protection specific impact be attributed to the programme/policy?
- How did the programme/policy make a difference on the lives of the target population?
- What are unintended, positive, or negative, outcomes of the policy/programme?

### Sustainability

- To what extent will changes produced by the policy/programme be maintained?

**Source:** 2018 TRANSFORM Shock Responsive Training Manual available at <https://transformsp.org> and <https://socialprotection.org/institutions/transform>