



EU-SPS/Finland: linking social protection and gender equality into policy processes at the UN, AU and EU



Introduction

During the course of the Initiative, EU-SPS worked towards bringing social protection and gender equality agendas together. This work intensified during the last year 2018-19 when EU-SPS/Finland agreed to support UN-Women's efforts in introducing social protection as one of the key tools to promote gender equality and to empower women, globally and particularly in Africa.

THL/Finland's main responsibility during the 4,5 years of EU-SPS was to innovate approaches that the EU-Commission (DEVCO) and EU Member States, including Government of Finland, could use and scale up to support social protection capacity development in low-income partner countries. EU-SPS/Finland's support has hence been focused on the strengthening of management capacities in social protection through the systematization of pre-service and in-service capacity development through national universities, colleges, Technical and Vocational Education and Training institutes (TVETs) and regional peer-to-peer learning networks and systems.

Key national partners have been among others Ministries, Social Protection Coordinating Bodies and national Universities. At the regional level partners have been e.g. the African Union Commission, the African Social Protection Leadership Training Program TRANSFORM and UN-Women Africa, Southern African Social Protection Experts' Network (SASPEN) and ECASSA (East and Central Africa Social Security Association). The key partners at the global level were among others EU-delegations, Finnish Embassies, international development partners such as UNICEF, ILO, UN-Women, UNDP/Socialprotection.org, FAO and the co-operation body SPIAC-B (Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board).

As agreed in the EU-SPS Steering Committee, the EU-SPS Programme (THL-Finland) worked during the last EU-SPS operational year particularly intensively together with UN-Women and especially its East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO). There was also close cooperation with the UN-Women HQ, the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), the Office of the UN Secretary General's Special Adviser for Africa (OSAA),





3. Adopt and promote policies that ensure that workers, particularly female workers, are able to balance occupational and family obligations;
4. Promote equality of access to employment, remuneration for jobs of equal value and social protection;
5. Provide social assistance to girls and protect them against child marriages and other harmful practices;
6. Promote the provision of social protection schemes that support the enrolment and retention of girls in schools and other training institutions and the organisation of programmes for women and girls who leave school prematurely;
7. Provide support to female farmers and improve women's access to credit, including micro-finance, and invest in their financial literacy.

The AU Social Agenda 2063 (draft presented to AU Ministers in April 2019) includes gender both as one of the nine Main Pillars of this AU long term strategy, and as its cross-cutting goal. Gender equality is discussed throughout the document. It states, for instance, that:

“Agenda 2063 with its 50 year perspective includes a strong message on realisation of the rights of women, children and youth to foster sustainable development. Particularly Aspiration 6 designates: ‘An Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children’. The emphasis on social equality – including gender equality – makes Agenda 2063 explicitly an agenda for equity within and between generations.”

“Agenda 2063 attributes exclusion and gender inequality as major sources or dimensions of poverty. Gender inequality is indeed an important contributor to exclusion, however, huge differences in income or livelihoods in the continent can also be traced back to historical factors, ethnicity, political affiliation, age, location, health and educational status, and (dis)ability. As mentioned earlier, the strategic direction and golden thread running

through Social Agenda 2063 and its thematic areas, is towards inclusion... Social protection programmes will constitute the underbelly of protection for the poor against further vulnerability as a result of poor or unequal access to necessary resources or services.”

“For instance, in the case of girls and in the case of persons with disabilities, there are a number of obstacles that exercise indirect discrimination. A girl with disabilities has a multiple disadvantage, in terms of both gender and disability.”

The **“Gender Equality as a Cross-Cutting Goal”** section of the AU Social Agenda 2063 is a 4-page long text that states, among other things, as follows:

“The status of women, over half of the population, and the relations between genders is a central element in social development. Gender inequality and discrimination of and violence against women have been and are major impediments to social and economic development. This must end, but it will not end without determined policies and action.”

“The main objective is to remove gender discrimination and violence; strengthen economic, labour and social protection position of and access by women; and advance human security of women and girls, informed by a supportive legal and institutional framework.”

Gender equality investments required in Africa include the following, among several other things mentioned in the AU Social Agenda 2063:

- Enhanced human security: Recognition of health, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (SRHR) and dealing with harmful traditional practices (HTP), supported by improved nutrition and wellness, and removal of all forms of violence against women and girls;
- Legal protection: Legal system protection of women’s ownership and inheritance rights, education, wage equality, civil liberties and physical integrity;



- Leadership, representation and participation: Equal participation and demonstrated influence of women and girls in all leadership and decision-making positions; women and girls have equal voice and exercise agency in the home, community, and public spaces; and contribute equally to society in the media, literature and cultural resources;
- Recognition of the roles and position of men and boys, and of gender identity: Appreciating the role of men in childbirth, child care and in bringing up children, as well as gender identity;
- Gender-sensitive education, curricula and skills acquisition, also at TVET level;
- Gender-responsive social protection interventions and outcomes, granting equal access to women and, where relevant, supported by special tailored measures aimed at women (e.g., maternity protection; recognition of care work) via a range of social security instruments, including cash transfers;
- Labour law protection and labour market inclusion: Protecting labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all women workers; afford preferential employment opportunities to women and girls;
- Making social services available and accessible: Availability of social services to communities in rural and urban areas to lessen the burden of unpaid care work on women: energy, water, kindergarten, health system, education system, health insurance, social welfare and social security;
- Data and ICT: Appropriately gender-disaggregated baseline data to inform and support policy-making in relation to the gender dimension;

Work with UN-Women, UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and UN Commission on Social Development (CSocD)

“Social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure for Gender Equality” had been selected the priority theme of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW, March 2019). The cooperation between UN-Women and EU-SPS/Finland strengthened social protection related capacities among UN-Women staff and networks, and helped UN-Women’s advocacy on this theme in the policy processes of the UN, African Union, EU and Finland.

The UN-Women/EU-SPS cooperation started in June 2018, when THL-Finland invited the Dr. Shahra Razavi, UN-Women Chief of Research, to visit Helsinki and to attend the European Development Days (EDD) in Brussels, where ‘gender equality’ was the priority topic.

COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Headquarters, New York



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women





Dr. Razavi was known to be the lead author of the UN Secretary General's report for CSW-2019, on its priority theme of "Social Protection Systems, Access to Public Services and Sustainable Infrastructure for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls".

Dr. Razavi addressed a major national workshop on gender equality in Finland (together with President Tarja Halonen), and linked up with several key partners in the Finnish Ministries of Social Affairs and Health, and of Foreign Affairs, and also several political leaders. In Brussels Dr. Razavi, who is world's leading researcher on the Political and Social Economy of Care (SDG 5.4.) addressed the founding meeting of the SPIAC-B Gender Working Group, which was held at the Permanent Mission of Finland to the EU in Brussels.

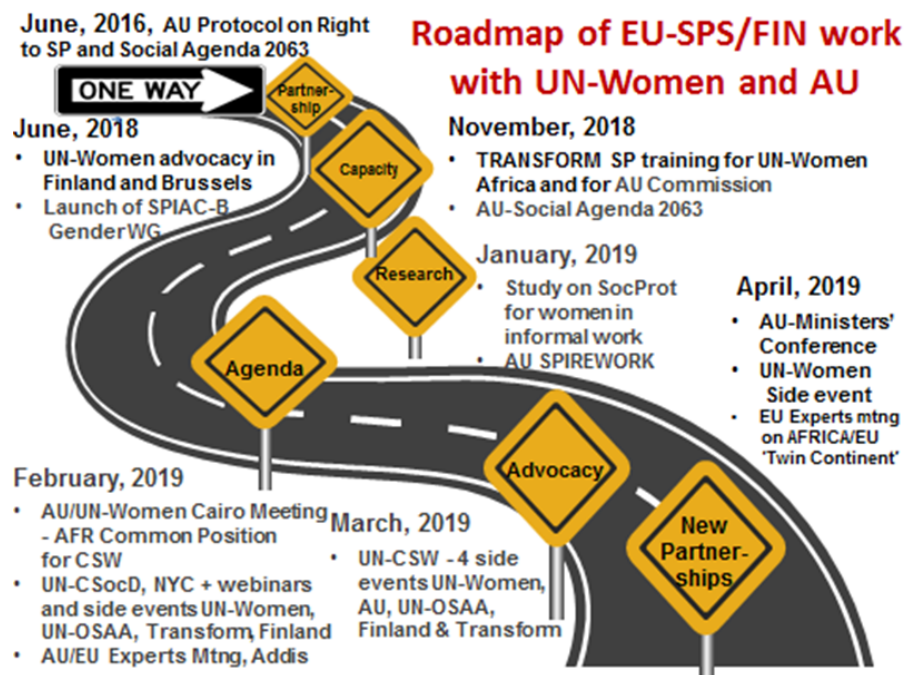
UN-Women and THL-Finland agreed to cooperate in the process of preparing the priority theme for UN-CSW 2019 (UN Commission on the Status of Women). As part of this work THL/EU-SPS organized and sponsored the TRANSFORM Social Protection Leadership Training for representatives of 10 UN Women country offices in Africa, plus two regional offices. Another TRANSFORM social protection training was arranged for senior staff of the AU-Commission.

UN Women Africa had designed a study on 'Innovative approaches to provide access to social protection and public services for women in agriculture and informal sector in Eastern and Southern Africa'. THL-Finland identified the African expert that UN Women ESARO commissioned to undertake the study. A decision was made by UN-Women ESARO and THL-Finland to present it at a joint side event during the CSW in March 2019.

EU-SPS/Finland facilitated the participation of African experts in the UN Women Expert meetings preparing the Secretary General's (SG's) report and recommendations for CSW. To generate evidence for the SG's report UN Women wanted to undertake a cost-

benefit analysis of the various child care options in Kyrgyzstan. This work was sponsored by THL under the EU-SPS Programme.

THL-Finland played a very active role also in the SPIAC-B Gender Working Group, helping in the drafting of and consultations related to the joint SPIAC-B position paper for the UN-CSW on 'Social Protection for Gender Equality'. Meanwhile in Africa, the UN-Women and African Union staff, working together with the TRANSFORM Master Trainers, arranged a large continental 'Pre-CSW' workshop for Africa in Cairo 3-6 Feb, 2019, where 54 AU Member States came together to formulate Common African Positions for the CSW. This meant, that the Africa Group arrived to New York to negotiate CSW Agreed Conclusions better prepared than ever before.



CSocD and CSW 2019: Global momentum for social protection and gender equality

This year (2019) offered a unique momentum for social protection and gender equality as social protection was chosen to be the priority theme for both the UN Commission on Social Development (CSocD) held in February 2019 and for the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held in March 2019.



As a continuation of the existing collaboration with the AU, Ministries, UN Women, African social protection experts (TRANSFORM), the THL/EU-SPS Team considered it important to support the participation of some of the key partners to the CSocD and the CSW. Active participation as a speaker at the global level was part of the capacity development process for African experts.

Already prior to the CSocD, THL/EU-SPS started actively to form the link between the CSocD and CSW and social protection and gender. THL/EU-SPS together with UN-DESA (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs) arranged a preparatory webinar (@Socialprotection.org) on Inequality Reduction through Social Protection. The UN Secretary General's reports for the CSocD and the CSW were introduced by UN-DESA and UN-Women respectively. The African TRANSFORM social protection leadership training program was introduced by one of the TRANSFORM Master Trainers, Mr. Stanfield Michelo (more info on the webinar later in this briefing note).

The THL EU-SPS Team (Timo Voipio), the UN Special Adviser on Africa (former AUA-Commissioner, Under Secretary General Bience Gawanas) and Stanfield Michelo were invited by the Government of Finland to speak in its side event in the CSocD on innovations on social protection in Africa.

Based on the outcomes of this side event the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) and THL/EU-SPS formulated a set of key messages from CSocD to the CSW (attached), which enforced the link between social protection and gender equality. These key messages were then brought to and disseminated at the CSW.

Prior to the CSW THL/EU-SPS arranged another global webinar together with UN Women ESARO and the SPIAC-B. The purpose of this webinar was to share views of different stakeholders on how best promote universal access to gender-responsive social protection (more on the webinar later).

The UN Women representatives, AU-Commission officials as well as African government officials were invited by THL/EU-SPS to speak during the CSW at the side events organized by the Government of Finland's and the SPIAC-B Gender Group.

THL/EU-SPS at the UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD)

The EU-SPS participated in several side events during the CSocD, and was in charge of the following event:

Thursday 14 February: Innovations for Inequality Reducing Social Protection Policies in Europe and Africa

Organizers: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA); Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA); THL/EU-SPS

Moderator: Dr. Timo Voipio, THL/EU-SPS Initiative

Speakers: Mr. Stanfield Michelo, Master Trainer, African Regional Social Protection Leadership Curriculum TRANSFORM; Dr. Päivi Mattila-Wiro, Head, Government of Finland's Key Programme on Career opportunities for people with partial work ability, Ministry for Social Affairs and Health; Ms. Bience Gawanas, UN Under Secretary General, UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA); Dr. Daniela Bas, Director, Division for Inclusive Social Development, UN-DESA.





The purpose of the side event was to discuss how to progressively streamline fragmented social protection programmes into nationally appropriate social protection systems that cover all people throughout the life cycle. Special experiences were shared from African countries' efforts including from EU-SPS supported experiences in developing multi-disciplinary social protection curricula for pre- and in-service training.

The OSAA and the THL/EU-SPS developed a set of key messages that derived from the side event presentations and concluding discussions. The purpose was to bring them over to the CSW, where they were dealt with in the side event of OSAA and UN Women. They key messages (2 pages) are attached at the end of this document. In an ultimate summary:

Universal social protection is the right of every person. Social protection systems need to be comprehensive, gender-responsive and address the full lifecycle of people. Systematic and domesticated capacity building and national dialogues, as well as peer-to-peer learning between countries are key in addressing the social protection implementation gaps. New innovations are needed, especially to address social protection of people working in the informal economy, by formalizing informal work, and creating care economy jobs, while ensuring protection for informal sector workers.

For the African Union leaders, social protection is not only a right but also a key part of the African productivity agenda. Social protection systems promote inclusive growth, sustainable development, social cohesion and the provision of basic services, as stated in the African Union draft Protocol on the Right to Social Protection and the AU Social Agenda 2063. It is imperative to strengthen global partnerships and support to capacity development in social protection systems, including through Finland-Africa and EU-Africa Cooperation.

Mr. Stanfield Michelo was an invited speaker in a CSocD High-level Panel Discussion on the Priority theme: "Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies".

THL/EU-SPS at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The EU-SPS/THL participated in the arrangement of the following events during the CSW:

Monday 11 March 2019: Strengthening Social Protection Systems to Promote Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality,

Organizer: Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B)

Chair: Roopa Hinton, Social Development Advisor, DFID-UK

Speakers sponsored by the EU-SPS: Ms. Sarah Mshiu, Coordinator of Tanzania's Social Protection Policy Reform (sponsored by THL/EU-SPS); Ms. Nena Thundu, Coordinator of the African Union Campaign Against Child Marriage.

Key points discussed: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets a clear vision for action to expand the coverage of social protection systems and measures for all, with a view to eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, including gender inequality. Providing access to reliable and adequate social protection over the course of people's lives has a transformative impact on women's and girls' roles and opportunities in economic, social and political life, leading to positive spillover effects for their families and communities.

Yet despite some progress in strengthening social protection systems, significant gaps remain. The majority (55%) of the world's population remains unprotected by any form of social protection, and women are over-represented in this unprotected group.

This side event explored what governments, development partners and civil society can do to empower women and girls through social protection. It built upon a Joint Statement developed by the SPIAC-B (Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board), calling on governments and international partners to better utilize and strengthen social protection systems to promote gender equality and empower women and girls, and listing specific actions to be taken.



The EU-SPS being an active and founding member of SPIAC-B and its Gender Working Group gave its strong inputs into the joint statement. THL-Finland also suggested and promoted two of the speakers – Sarah Mshiu and Nena Thundu – to the panel and participated in the arrangements of the side event.

Monday 11 March 2019: Right Holder. Carer. Worker. Mother. - Social Protection for Women’s Rights - Enhancing Social Protection Especially for Mothers.

Organizers: Governments of Finland and Zambia, together with the African Union Commission, Department of Social Affairs (AUC-DSA)

Speakers: Päivi Sillanaukee, Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, Finland; Hon. Elizabeth Phiri, MP, Minister of Gender of the Republic of Zambia; Jane Marie Ong’olo, Head of Division, Social Welfare, Vulnerable Groups and Drug Control Department of Social Affairs, African Union Commission; Tanja Auvinen, Director, Gender Equality Unit, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland;

Moderator: Katri Viinikka, Finland’s Ambassador for Gender Equality

The purpose of this side event was to discuss social protection practices that are relevant for girls and women, and especially for mothers. Various national social protections systems, displaying diverse paths to realizing the universal right to social protection were highlighted in the session by examples. The event underscored the importance of women’s and girls’ individual rights for social protection as a means for realizing gender equality.

The side event included presentations of quality day-care services and maternity and child health care in Finland, as well as on the health system in Zambia. The commentator from Plan International raised the issue of girls, who are routinely neglected in social protection schemes. There are a lot of barriers in girls’ lives that hinder them to live to their full potential. Social protection schemes that are directed to mothers assume that all mothers are adults. The truth is that annually 2 million girls become mothers under the age of 18.

The side event approached social protection from the perspective of the multiple roles of women, especially as mothers, as right holders, as carers and as workers. Social protection needs to be designed and implemented in a way that recognizes and addresses these multiple and intersecting roles.

EU-SPS participated in the design of the program and the drafting of the speeches of Finnish speakers. It also proposed the other panel speakers from the African Union Commission and from the Government of Zambia.

14 March 2019: Innovative approaches in providing social protection and access to public services for women in agriculture and the informal sector

Organizers: UN Women ESARO, THL/EU-SPS, Government of Ethiopia

Speakers: H.E. Yalem Tsegaye, Minister of Women, Children and Youth, Ethiopia; Mari Kangasniemi, Social Protection Officer, FAO; Flora Myamba, TRANSFORM Master Trainer and independent expert on social protection, Tanzania (sponsored by THL/EU-SPS).

The purpose of the side event was to introduce the outcomes of the study on social protection commissioned by the UN Women in Africa. The study mapped out and documented the provision of social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure to workers, especially women in the informal sector. The study summarized key successes as well as identified possible solutions for increasing coverage of social protection for workers in the informal sector.





Social protection cash transfer schemes targeted to women have been one of the success stories of international development recently. However, social protection is more than that. Another important part of social protection is the access to social services and care. The SDG 5.4. draws attention to the unpaid care work that usually falls onto the shoulders of women. The SDG 5.4. calls for a redistribution of care work (a) between men and women and (b) between paid and un-paid work: The formalization of care work could (a) create millions of decent formal jobs for women and men, and (b) liberate millions of women from their conceived care obligations and promote women’s human right to participate meaningfully in the labour markets, entrepreneurship and political life.

15 March 2019: Making Social Protection, Public Services and Infrastructure Inclusive and Meaningful for Women and Girls in Africa

Organizers: UN-OSAA, UN Women, Office of the Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security, Government of Egypt (in its capacity as Chair of the AU) and the Government of Finland

Speakers: Ms. Bience Gawanas, UN Under Secretary General, UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa; Mr. Mohamed Fathi, Permanent Representative of Egypt to the UN; Kai Sauer, Permanent Representative of Finland to the UN; Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngucka, Executive Director, UN Women; H.E. Ms. Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on Women Peace and Security.

The purpose of the side event was to advocate for the priorities of African women and girls with respect to social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure. The event aimed to identify biases and challenges as well as priorities for promoting women’s rights, agency, voice and participation as well as accountability for gender equality in social protection, public services and infrastructure in Africa; highlight and share good practices and initiatives; explore synergies in the Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 and propose concrete action oriented recommendations to support the implementation of gender-responsive social protection systems.

The OSAA and THL/EU-SPS key recommendations from the CSocD were brought into this side event, disseminated and dealt with in the presentations (the key messages are attached to this briefing note).



Global webinars organized by EU-SPS/Finland at socialprotection.org, in preparation of the UN-Commissions

Inequality reduction through social protection: Webinar in preparation of the UN Commission for Social Development, 28 January 2019

Organizers: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA); THL/EU-SPS

Moderator: Dr. Timo Voipio, Chief Expert, THL/EU-SPS

Speakers: Dr. Amson Sibanda, Chief, Social Policy Analysis Section, UNDESA; Dr. Shahra Ravazi, Chief of Research and Data, UN Women; Mr. Stanfield Michelo, Master Trainer, TRANSFORM

The webinar aimed to introduce and discuss the UN Secretary General’s reports to the ECOSOC Commissions CSocD and CSW as well as Zambia’s experiences in building a national social protection system.

You can find a brief and the full recording of this webinar [here](#) (offline readers, see thl.fi/eu-sps-videos for the recording).



Social Protection Systems for Gender Equality: Webinar in preparation of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

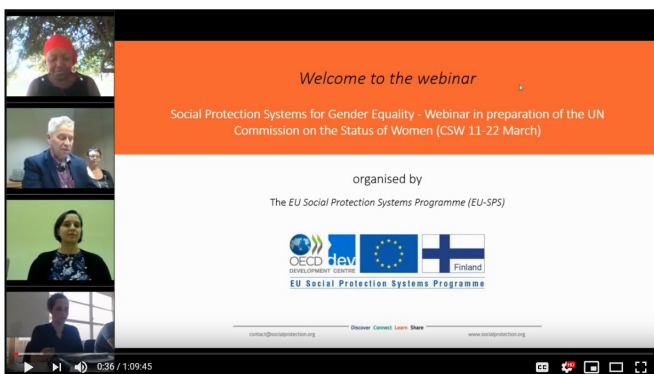
Organizers: THL/EU-SPS, UN Women ESARO, SPIAC-B

Moderator: Dr. Timo Voipio, Chief Expert, THL/EU-SPS

Speakers: Dr. Fatmata Sesay, Regional Policy Advisor, UN Women Africa; Ms. Roopa Hinton, Chair, Gender Working Group of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B); Ms Mutale Wakunuma, Consultant, Institute for Social Policy in Africa, TRANSFORM Master Trainer

The purpose of this webinar was to bring together various key stakeholders from Africa, UN Women and international development (SPIAC-B) to share views on how best to promote universal access to gender-responsive social protection for all women, men and children, expanding coverage progressively, in nationally appropriate ways, in all countries and regions.

You can find a brief and the full recording of this webinar [here](https://thl.fi/eu-sps-videos) (offline readers, see thl.fi/eu-sps-videos).



EU-SPS/Finland cooperation with UN-Women and African Union in the context of the AU Conference of Ministers of Social Affairs and Labour

UN-Women Africa, AU Commission (Department of Social Affairs, DSA) and EU-SPS/Finland cooperated closely during the AU Conference of Ministers in charge of social protection (STC/SDLE) in Addis Abeba 31 March – 5 May, 2019. The purpose of this work was to share the key lessons learned from the UN



Commissions with African Ministers, senior officers and gender and social protection experts, and particularly to advocate for gender-responsive social protection as one of the key tools to reduce poverty, vulnerability and inequalities in Africa, and to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in all African Union social protection work and documents, including the AU Protocol on the Right to Social Protection and the AU Social Agenda 2063.

As reported in the beginning of this Briefing note, gender equality is a key pillar of both these strategic AU documents. At the Ministerial conference the AU also adopted a number of other important documents, e.g. the AU Plan of Action Against Child Marriage and Harmful Traditional Practices, AU Policy Framework on Disability Inclusion, AU Action plan to reduce the discrimination of Persons with Albinism, as well as the AU Plan on Decent Work for Informal Workers including Social Protection for Informal and Rural Economy Workers ('SPIREWORK').



UN-Women + TRANSFORM Master Trainers + AU Protocol on Right to Social Protection + AU Social Agenda 2063



Dialogue, mutual learning, and networking among countries are also key in building comprehensive social protection systems. By means of technical consultation and funding of international events and learning forums with a socio-political focus, as well as through support for networks and online platforms, exchange between relevant stakeholders in different countries can be promoted. By sharing experience, other countries can benefit from the good practices and lessons learned, and adapt these for use in their own national context (eg. the TRANSFORM social protection leadership training developed by African social protection experts, at the request of the African Union, and which African Master Trainers are now rolling out to all parts of Africa).

It is key to come up with **new innovations** suitable and effective in different national contexts to address social protection issues and challenges. An example from Finland is the creation of job opportunities for persons with disabilities, which has involved cooperation with employers through central labour market parties.

It is key to address the issue of people working in the informal economy, paying attention also to the middle-income level. **Governments need to enhance the process of formalizing informal work**, while ensuring protection for informal sector workers. This is a high priority for the African Union leaders, since informal workers make up a large majority of the workforce in many African countries. Social protection is therefore not only a right but also a key part of the African productivity agenda: Thus, social protection and greater economic stability are intertwined.

The cornerstone for social and economic development on the African continent is the nexus of peace, security and development, which is buttressed by good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Social cohesion among people is critical for poverty eradication, reducing vulnerability and addressing inequality. **Social protection systems promote inclusive growth, sustainable development and social cohesion** – and should not exist solely as a stop-gap measure for market failures. Rather, they should strongly propel education, early childhood care, health care, food security, good nutrition, decent work and the multiplier effect for cash transfers in local communities as the key equalizers.

In any society, **social protection must be dealt with in conjunction with the provision of basic services.**

The African Union, Regional Economic Communities and Member States have, since the adoption of the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment and Poverty Alleviation, taken big strides in putting social protection for vulnerable populations on continental and national agendas as demonstrated by various social protection instruments of the African Union. That commitment to strengthening social protection has been further demonstrated by the **ongoing efforts of the African Union pertaining to drafting a Protocol on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection as well as the Social Agenda for 2063, which forms the social pillar of the African Union's Agenda 2063.**

It is imperative to **strengthen the global partnership for development and scale up financial and non-financial support in critical areas for eradicating poverty and reducing inequality.** Support to building national capacities in social protection systems, including the programmes supported by the Government of Finland, EU and other development partners, is more important than ever before. It is crucial to prioritize support for social protection systems within the frameworks of North-South, South-South and EU-Africa Cooperation.