This interactive, facilitated course explores the basics of social protection and, in particular, how to view social protection through a sustainable development lens. The course champions the concept of universal social protection and focuses on designing, financing, and implementing comprehensive systems and policies that reduce vulnerabilities throughout all stages of people's lives.

**Introduction**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) lay out a set of key development objectives for developed and developing countries alike to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all.

Among the priorities agreed upon by member states is social protection — cited in the agenda as a primary means to protect all individuals and families against social contingencies and market risks across the life-cycle. Countries are called on to "implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable."

Currently, an estimated 69.4 per cent of the world’s population lives without adequate social protection coverage, including lack of access to a pension, unemployment benefits, health insurance, and income guarantees.

According to the International Labour Organization, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has simultaneously, "exposed deep-seated inequalities and significant gaps in social protection coverage, comprehensiveness and adequacy across all countries" and, "provoked an unparalleled social protection policy response". It is therefore time to accelerate the transformation of social protection systems in light of the pandemic, to ensure human-centred recovery and resilience.

The ambitious objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the newfound drive for building comprehensive social protection systems will require concerted efforts from across the spectrum of UN and national actors, joining up disparate interventions and leveraging new tools to build enhanced social protection programmes and achieve the 2030 target.
Objectives

By the end of this course, participants will be able to:

1. Establish the need for universal social protection systems for individuals and societies to advance sustainable development and realize the human right to social security;
2. Recognize the value of, and create a culture around, social protection as an investment and lever to achieve sustainable development;
3. Identify global trends, practical tools, and good practices in extending social protection, especially related to building up individual, household, and national socio-economic and crisis resilience;
4. Actively advocate for establishing universal, comprehensive, rights-based, and sustainable social protection systems in their context;
5. Identify the concrete policy steps necessary to design, finance, and implement nationally appropriate social protection systems;
6. Discern social protection approaches and tools to identify gaps in national social protection systems and contribute to fixing them.

Course methodology

UNSSC online courses are designed to deliver maximum learning outcomes through optimal time investments into carefully chosen high-quality learning materials. Specifically tailored to the needs of professionals interested in developing the skills to advance their career or deepening their knowledge of a particular subject, our facilitated online courses combine self-paced study modules with applied learning components such as case studies, interactive exercises and collaborative group work.

Participants also benefit from live moderated webinars which feature valuable inputs from renowned subject-matter experts, and allow real-time dialogue with high-level speakers. Webinar recordings are also made available to ensure that participants have a flexible and seamless learning experience.

An expert facilitator guides and assists the participants throughout the course, and provides real-time feedback on activities and exercises. Our user-friendly social online learning platform provides participants with the opportunity to connect with peers from diverse organizational backgrounds, fostering peer-to-peer learning.

While being interactive and participatory, UNSSC online courses give learners the opportunity to complete activities when it best fits their schedule. Participants are largely free to determine their own weekly study plan. Lasting five weeks and demanding five hours of work a week, UNSSC online courses incorporate the same high academic rigour as any UNSSC face-to-face programme.
Course contents

Week 1: Past, present, future: the history of social protection and the 2030 Agenda (the “why”)

- Definitions and visions on social protection
- History, characteristics, and structure of the 2030 Agenda
- Social protection and the SDGs
- Social protection and the 5Ps
- Lifecycle risks
- History of the welfare system and early social protection
- The human right to social security and the rights-based approach to social protection

Week 2: Forms and instruments of social protection (the “what”)

- International labour standards and social protection regulations
- Types of social protection (e.g., social assistance, social insurance, labour market policies)
- Coverage for all groups along the lifecycle (e.g., children, older persons, people with disabilities)
- Coverage of vulnerable groups (e.g., informal workers, migrants, LGBTIQ+ persons, rural populations)
- The role of data for social protection
- Social protection and gender
- Universal social protection and social protection floors

Week 3: Designing, financing, and reforming social protection systems (the “how”)

- Designing and reforming social protection systems
- Systems and needs assessments
- Financing and fiscal space
- National social protection strategies
- Operational cycles and information management of social protection schemes

Week 4: Implementation and partnerships for universal and comprehensive social protection systems (the “how”)

- Monitoring and evaluation
- Implementation
- Partnerships and stakeholders
- Initiating a culture of universal social protection
- Inter linkages and systems thinking in social protection
- Creating a participatory approach to building universal social protection systems

Week 5: Looking ahead: practical perspectives, global trends, and debates in social protection

- Identifying global trends like migration, environmental degradation and climate change, digitization, disasters etc.
- Shock responsive social protection and COVID-19
- Universal basic income

Target audience

Participants will represent various backgrounds and will have different levels of experience in social protection. Their work will span civil society, academia, the private sector, mass media, political parties, governments, NGOs, international organizations, donors, social workers, educators, volunteers, and influencers. We are looking for motivated people who do not necessarily have prior knowledge about social protection but can demonstrate they will use the knowledge gained to benefit others.

Cost of participation

The course is free of charge.