

**ONLINE**

01 JAN 2026 - 31 DEC 2026

# Social Protection for a Rapidly Changing World

Sustainable development and the SDGs

**LANGUAGE**  
English**DURATION**  
20 hours**ENROLL BY**  
31 Dec 2026**PRICE**  
550 USD**LOCATION**  
ONLINE**TARGET**  
UN Only **CONTACT** [sustainable-development@unssc.org](mailto:sustainable-development@unssc.org)

This self-paced course is intended for individuals seeking to understand the fundamentals of social protection and its application within the framework of sustainable development. It promotes a universal, life-cycle approach, emphasizing partnerships, strategic design, financing, and implementation of inclusive social protection systems aimed at reducing vulnerabilities across all segments of society.

## Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), outlines a comprehensive set of development objectives for both developed and developing countries—aimed at ending poverty, protecting the planet, and promoting prosperity for all.

Social protection is among the key priorities endorsed by Member States, recognized in the Agenda as a vital mechanism to safeguard individuals and families from social contingencies and market risks throughout the life-cycle. Countries are urged 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, approximately 69.4% of the global population lacks adequate social protection coverage—missing access to essential services such as pensions, unemployment benefits, health insurance, and income security.

According to the International Labour Organization, the COVID-19 pandemic has both “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.” This moment presents a critical opportunity to accelerate the transformation of social protection systems to support a human-centred recovery and long-term resilience.

Achieving the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda—and advancing comprehensive social protection systems—will demand coordinated efforts from UN entities and national stakeholders, joining up disparate interventions and leveraging new tools to strengthen social protection programmes and meet the 2030 targets.

# Objectives

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

1. Demonstrate the need for universal social protection systems for individuals and societies to advance sustainable development
2. Grasp the important national-level implications of social protection being a human right
3. Recognize the value of and create a culture around social protection as an investment and lever to achieve sustainable development
4. Utilize concrete policy steps to design, finance, implement, and deliver nationally appropriate social protection systems
5. Identify global trends, tools, and good practices in social protection, particularly in the context of building up individual, household, and national socio-economic and crisis resilience
6. Actively advocate for establishing universal, comprehensive, rights-based, and sustainable social protection systems in their country or regional context

## Course methodology

UNSSC online courses are designed to maximize learning outcomes through optimal time investment in carefully curated, high-quality learning content. These courses are specifically tailored for professionals seeking to enhance their skills for career advancement or deepen their subject matter expertise. The self-paced modules feature applied learning elements, including case studies.

Learners have the flexibility to complete course activities at their own convenience.

UNSSC online courses maintain the same high academic rigour as their face-to-face counterparts, while allowing participants to set their own study schedule.

# Course contents

## Module 1: What is social protection?

- Definitions of social protection
- History of the welfare system and early social protection
- Where we stand today – overview of the social protection landscape

## Module 2: Present and Future: Social Protection, Partnerships, and the 2030 Agenda (the “why” and “who”)

- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Social protection and the SDGs
- Social protection and the SPs
- Key partnerships in the social protection field
- Lifecycle risks

## Module 3: Key pillars of social protection (the “what”)

- Social protection floors, universal social protection, and ILO standards
- Instruments of social protection (e.g., social assistance, social insurance, labour market policies)
- Complements to social protection systems (graduation, Cash+, informal social protection, care policies, universal basic income)
- Coverage, adequacy, comprehensiveness, and sustainability
- Social protection as a human right, international labour standards and social protection regulations

## Module 4: Designing, financing, and reforming social protection systems (the “how”)

- The policy and reform cycle of social protection systems
- Designing social protection systems
- Adopting and updating national strategies for social protection
- Fiscal space and financing social protection
- Reforming social protection systems

## Module 5: Implementing comprehensive social protection systems (the “how”)

- Implementing social protection systems
- The role of information systems and data
- Monitoring and evaluating social protection systems
- Initiating a culture of universal social protection

## Module 6: Looking ahead: global trends and adaptive social protection (the “future”)

- Adaptive and shock-responsive social protection
- Deep dive: social protection during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Global trends in the social protection field
- Advocacy for social protection

# Target audience

This course is exclusively available to UN staff members who are interested in learning about social protection and committed to applying the knowledge gained for the benefit of others.

# Cost of participation

The cost is \$550. Staff from UN entities can access this course upon payment of the course fee.

Certificates from the United System Staff College will be awarded to participants upon completion of the course.