

Spotlight vi: The role of global networks in settings beyond ODA – the example of the Global Alliances for Social Protection

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Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions remains one of humankind's greatest challenges. According to the latest Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), 1.3 billion people across 101 countries are considered multidimensionally poor, two-thirds of whom live in middle-income countries. Based on this, one of the most pressing issues for both lower and upper-middle-income countries seems to be combating inequality.¹¹⁴ At the same time, climate change poses a serious risk to poverty reduction and threatens to undo the progress made during the past few decades.

Against this background, social protection systems play a crucial role, since they aim to protect the population against social, economic and natural risks. In addition, effective social protection systems promote the active participation of all population groups in economic growth processes, contribute to the reduction of inequalities and thus support sustainable and inclusive social development. Numerous countries have therefore incorporated the establishment and expansion of integrated social protection systems into their national development strategies and plans. Middle-income countries such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa but also Chile, Peru and Argentina are playing a leading role in expanding national policies and social protection systems. Most of these are expected to pass the threshold for high-income countries within the next decade and thereby graduate from the list of countries eligible for ODA. They have clearly stated their interest in further cooperating internationally on the topic in order to overcome specific technical challenges and knowledge gaps – even though bilateral development cooperation with these countries is either declining or has, in some cases, already stopped.

114 OPHI/UNDP 2019. South Africa, for instance, is ranked by the World Bank as an UMIC and still has one of the highest inequality rates in the world, with a consumption expenditure Gini coefficient of 0.63 in 2015 (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica/overview>). Chile, even ranked as a HIC, is the most unequal OECD country according to its Gini coefficient of 0.47 in 2017 and appeared in 2013 among the 10 most unequal countries in world, next to Brazil, Mexico and South Africa (See World Bank, 2016).

In 2013, the global GIZ project “Global Alliances for Social Protection” was created as a response to these demands. It is funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with resources specifically designed to pioneer new forms of international cooperation. The programme aims at fostering opportunities and structures for dialogue and technical exchange on social protection amongst interested partner countries (as listed above), regional organisations¹¹⁵ as well as international partners¹¹⁶ and Germany¹¹⁷.

The focus of the programme on middle-income and even upper-middle and high-income countries as main partners is a deliberate choice: the countries involved in the programme have gained valuable experience in the field of social protection and are eager to share them through dialogue with others. Their experiences are made accessible and usable, so that other countries – even those that are not amongst the direct partner countries in the programme – can benefit from good practices and lessons learned, and feed them appropriately into their own country’s context.

The programme itself works through regional hubs (Indonesia, Mexico, Chile, South Africa and Germany) and acts as a facilitator using appropriate and innovative learning formats, including special events, peer-to-peer learning, workshops and large-scale learning forums to promote networking and knowledge sharing. Its decentralised structure allows the programme to react directly and flexibly to the interests and learning needs of the partner countries and it therefore works on a wide range of topics, including productive inclusion, universal health coverage, financing and payment models for primary healthcare, single window service approaches, adaptive social protection, social protection and early childhood development, and beneficiary identification and registration, among others.

By bringing together partner countries at different levels of development (LMICs, UMICs and HICs), the programme fosters South-South learning on the key issues of social protection and creates new formats for international cooperation that go beyond the classical modalities of bilateral development cooperation. As a global programme without any funds to implement measures

115 Such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the African Union (AU).

116 In its current phase, the programme collaborates with the World Bank Group’s Global Practice on Social Protection and Jobs and the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG).

117 Though the programme focuses mainly on the exchange between the partner countries and regional and international development partners, the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has always been strongly involved in learning formats organised in Germany and has been a valuable knowledge provider in the context of these technical exchanges.

on a national level, strict partner orientation is key to its success: It allows the partner countries to identify specific knowledge gaps and needs for technical assistance with regard to clearly defined technical questions, which might then be attended to with follow-up programmes – funded with ODA or non-ODA means, e.g. from other partners or through national resources.

The Global Alliances for Social Protection may serve as one example of how countries can maintain access to knowledge and international dialogue on specific development challenges in the stage of transition or even after graduation from ODA – which, generally, is one of the biggest concerns of the countries affected¹¹⁸. By moving cooperation from a bilateral to a regional or multi-lateral level, global networks and alliances can offer suitable knowledge sharing formats in order to fill the gaps that arise when development partners withdraw from countries in transition.

