

Social Protection Brief No. 38

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Social Protection Working Group

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About this working group:

The working group aims at exchanging information and discussing ongoing research related to social protection. Researchers dealing with social protection and interested in an international exchange are also welcome to join.

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Discussion Papers

[Social protection and coloniality: learning from the past and present: framework paper](#) by Roelen, K., Lambin R., Brice Bado, A., de Carvalho, T., Chukwuma, J., Deane, J. & Muangi, W. C. (2025). IDOS Discussion Paper 21/2025. German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). <https://doi.org/10.23661/idp21.2025>

The historical influence of colonial powers and the continued, deep-rooted engagement of international development actors in shaping social protection systems is widely recognised across academic and policy arenas. Nevertheless, evidence of the role of coloniality in social protection remains limited. This Discussion Paper explores the enduring impact of colonialism on contemporary social protection systems by considering the role of coloniality in social protection in the Global South, and Africa in particular. It does so by employing a three-fold methodology, namely (i) an examination of empirical and theoretical literature, including scholarship on coloniality, policy transfers and political settlements in the realm of social protection, among other topics; (ii) semi-structured interviews with international and regional stakeholders from academia, civil society and international organisations; and (iii) country case studies in Côte d’Ivoire and Tanzania.

The paper proposes a “social protection and coloniality” analytical framework to allow for analysing and unpacking the role of coloniality in social protection. It zooms in on three key components through which coloniality in social protection is manifested, resisted or countered: (i) colonial legacies, (ii) postcolonial influences and (iii) domestic political economy factors. This framework provides a novel lens to examine historical path dependencies and pathways that have shaped and continue to influence contemporary social protection systems in the Global South. It enables the identification of context- and country-specific issues, bringing them to the forefront while emphasising enduring colonial footprints and their interplay with domestic factors.

Findings suggest that colonial legacies and postcolonial influences continue to shape social protection across Africa, as moderated by domestic political economy factors. It advocates for more equitable partnerships and critical reflection among international actors. The paper also calls for stronger integration of local knowledge to support country-driven social protection frameworks. By addressing these challenges and promoting context-specific solutions, it is possible to develop social protection systems that are more home-grown and less reliant upon external influences.

[Social protection and coloniality: learning from the past and present: Côte d’Ivoire case study](#) by Lambin, R. & Brice Bado, A. (2025). IDOS Discussion Paper 19/2025. German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). <https://doi.org/10.23661/idp19.2025>

This case study examines how social protection policymaking in Côte d’Ivoire has been shaped by a complex interplay of colonial legacies, postcolonial ideologies and domestic political-economic dynamics. Through stakeholder interviews and documentary analysis, it offers a nuanced understanding of the development of social protection arrangements in the country. The findings show that colonial rule established deep structural legacies that continue to constrain the scope and direction of social policy. The French administration embedded economic dependencies – most notably through integration into the CFA franc monetary zone and an economy centred on raw material exports – which continue to restrict the fiscal space needed for comprehensive, state-led social protection. In addition, the legal and

administrative architecture introduced under colonialism remains influential, shaping how social protection is conceptualised and implemented. This has fostered an insurance-based model that prioritises formal sector workers, despite Côte d'Ivoire's large informal economy.

[Social protection and coloniality: learning from the past and present: Tanzania case study](#) by Lambin, R. & Muangi W. C. (2025). IDOS Discussion Paper 20/2025. German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). <https://doi.org/10.23661/idp20.2025>

Tanzania has made notable progress in expanding its social protection system, yet the influence of colonial governance models, entrenched donor dependency and limited population coverage of existing provisions remain significant. This case study critically explores the historical and contemporary processes of social protection policymaking in Mainland Tanzania, drawing on qualitative interviews and documentary analysis. Colonial legacies continue to shape Tanzania's economic structure and institutional frameworks. Extractive colonial economies prioritised cash crops and mining, embedding a dependency that persists today and limits fiscal space for domestic investment in social protection. The British administration introduced formal governance and social protection institutions that remain pertinent today, but they continue to largely exclude the informal sector and rural populations, despite recent efforts to introduce social insurance schemes for informal sector workers (e.g. National Informal Sector Scheme, NISS).

Reports

[Inequality in the Arab region. Rights denied, promises broken](#) by United Nations, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (2025)

Throughout 2024, the Arab region saw diverging fortunes. Conflict, war and occupation continued to affect a third of the countries in the region. Humanitarian emergencies and the risk of famine became more severe, and the risk of a regional war became greater.

Temperatures in the Arab region continued to increase above the global average, with some countries experiencing deadly heatwaves. Prolonged droughts in several countries significantly reduced agricultural production, severely affecting overall economic activity. Rising sea levels pose a growing threat to the region, increasing the risk of disease outbreaks and further diminishing an already limited water supply. These climate change impacts are accompanied by substantial economic costs and financial implications.

On the economic front, some countries continued to struggle with economic instability, while others made gains. Rich countries have continued to benefit from high oil prices, which are expected to last into 2025. The price of oil averaged \$81 throughout 2024.

Blogposts & Podcasts

[Opinion: The 2025 World Social Summit Must Not Be a Missed Opportunity](#) by Ortiz I., Frank, O. & Koehler, G. (2025). Inter Press Service News Agency.

Rumors circulating at UN Headquarters suggest there is little appetite for ambition at the Second World Summit for Social Development, set to take place in Doha on 4-6 November 2025. Diplomats and insiders whisper of "summit fatigue" after a packed calendar of global

gatherings—the 2023 SDG Summit, the 2024 Summit of the Future, and the upcoming June 2025 Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. Compounding this fatigue is the chilling rise of anti-rights rhetoric and political resistance from some governments, casting a shadow over multilateral efforts. For some, just getting any multilateral agreement is good enough. As a result, the Zero Draft of the Social Summit Political Declaration lacks the ambition required to confront the multiple social crises our world faces.

[Podcast: What works to reduce child poverty – Global Coalition to End Child Poverty](#) by Roelen, K. (2025). Episode 46. Poverty Unpacked - Discussing the hidden sides of poverty.

Currently, 859 million around the world live in multidimensional poverty and more than 300 million children live in extremely income-poor households.

With only five years to go until the end of the Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for the end of extreme child poverty and halving multidimensional child poverty, we are off track to reaching these goals.

BUT there are also countries where enormous progress has been made. This report points out the urgency of making progress AND gives pointers for how countries can do this, learning from valuable lessons in countries such as Peru.

Past Events

[Special Session on Decent Work and the Sustainable Development Goals](#). 9th Regulating for Decent Work Conference, 2-4 July 2025, Geneva, International Labour Organisation.

Bringing together contributions from over 74 leading labour scholars, a volume, *The Elgar Companion to Decent Work and the Sustainable Development Goals*, edited by Madelaine Moore, Christoph Scherrer and Marcel van der Linden, critically investigates the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and how it relates to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. While the mainstreaming of labour concerns into the United Nations agenda can be attributed to the ILO's strategic focus on decent work, the world is no closer to achieving the Decent Work Agenda. The Agenda cannot be blamed for this setback. However, the persistent decent work deficits expose tremendous obstacles encountered on the way to the stated goal of achieving 'full and productive employment and decent work for all'. Some critics argue that the concept itself needs to be re-evaluated, some see full employment as a utopian goal and look for alternatives to social inclusion, and others see the whole concept of decent work as too closely associated with the experience of rich countries where formal employment has traditionally been the norm.

[XI Regional School Feeding Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean](#). 15-17 July 2025, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, Sustainable School Feeding Network (RAES) - Latin America and the Caribbean.

The XI Regional School Feeding Forum is a high-level event that will bring together ministers and representatives from over 24 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with international financial institutions, UN agencies, civil society, academia, and international experts. The objective is to strengthen school feeding programmes as integrated policies for social protection, sustainability, and resilience.