

Universal Social Protection: A shield during armed conflict

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Abstract

The latest escalation in hostilities along Lebanon's southern border is giving rise to emerging needs that can only be met through a universal and inclusive social protection system. The ongoing armed conflict is yet another crisis in a plethora of crises that people in Lebanon are left to withstand with minimal government support. This article demonstrates that a rights-based and inclusive universal social protection system is necessary in providing protection against risks and life shocks, whether these are linked to illness, changes in employment, natural or man-made disasters as well as armed conflicts. A universal social protection system is particularly important in meeting the unique challenges that groups living in vulnerability, women and children in particular, face during armed conflict. In February 2024, Lebanon launched its first-ever National Social Protection Strategy. This development is a milestone in achieving social justice in the country and in establishing a new social contract, with social rights being its main pillars. While the strategy is an important development, more remains to be done to secure a universal, inclusive, and rights-based social protection system that caters to the existing and emerging needs of all people in Lebanon.

Keywords: Social Protection, Social Security, Universal Social Protection, Conflict, War, Life Shocks, Livelihoods, Socio-Economic Conditions, Lebanon

To cite this paper: Jaafar Fakhri, "Universal Social Protection: A shield during armed conflict", Civil Society Knowledge Center, Lebanon Support, April, 2024 . DOI: .

[ONLINE]: <https://civilsociety-centre.org/paper/universal-social-protection-shield-during-armed-conflict>

The latest escalation in hostilities along Lebanon's southern border is giving rise to emerging needs that can only be met through a universal and inclusive social protection system. The ongoing armed conflict is yet another crisis in a plethora of crises that people in Lebanon are left to withstand with minimal government support. This article demonstrates that a rights-based and inclusive universal social protection system is necessary in providing protection against risks and life shocks, whether these are linked to illness, changes in employment, natural or man-made disasters as well as armed conflicts. A universal social protection system is particularly important in meeting the unique challenges that groups living in vulnerability, women and children in particular, face during armed conflict. In February 2024, Lebanon launched its first-ever National Social Protection Strategy.^[1] This development is a milestone in achieving social justice in the country and in establishing a new social contract, with social rights being its main pillars.^[2] While the strategy is an important development, more remains to be done to secure a universal, inclusive, and rights-based social protection system that caters to the existing and emerging needs of all people in Lebanon.

Israel launched 3,600 strikes on South Lebanon between 8 October 2023 and 19 January 2024, targeting more than 90 Lebanese villages.^[3] As of 15 February 2024, more than 88,000 people had been

displaced since the beginning of the armed conflict^[4] along the southern border.^[5] At least 52 percent of those displaced are women and girls.^[6] According to Lebanon's Ministry of Health, 177 people died and more than 800 were injured.^[7] **With the vast majority of those injured and dead being men (92 percent), women will find themselves in economic vulnerability and forced to take on the role of the principal breadwinner.** Lebanon lacks social assistance programs for specific groups of women, including women-headed households.^[8] This is despite the fact that about 20 percent of households in the country are headed by women.^[9] **Instead, Lebanon's available social protection schemes are fragmented, patriarchal and contribute to "widespread social insecurity."^[10]**

Israel's deliberate and indiscriminate attacks, using white phosphorus against non-military targets, including agricultural lands^[11] endanger the livelihoods of thousands of farmers and agricultural workers, who are already excluded from the country's labor code and are "...considered among the most vulnerable occupational groups in Lebanon."^[12] The sector is also riddled with gender disparities. Women, who constitute 43 percent of the agricultural workforce, were found to earn half or two-thirds of the wages paid to men for the same amount of work.^[13] **Thus, it is likely that the impact of the destruction of agricultural livelihoods will disproportionately affect women.**

The unofficial truce between Israel and Hamas, which began on 24 November and expired on 1 December 2023 after being renewed twice, provided for some calm along the southern border.^[14] Farmers who returned to their land amid the truce describe finding their crops "...contaminated with white phosphorus and dangerous unexploded shells..."^[15] Besides issuing recommendations for farmers, the state is said to be entirely absent.^[16] **The conflict affected the livelihoods of herders and farmers, who are unable to herd or care for their animals and land amidst the shelling.**^[17] The mayor of a southern Lebanese town reportedly stated that "...half of the 100 chicken farms in the border areas were destroyed by Israeli attacks, which killed thousands of poultry – the main source of livelihood for their owners."^[18] Lebanon's head of the beekeepers' association confirmed that the conflict is compromising the livelihoods of 750 beekeepers in the affected areas.^[19] Furthermore, the conflict resulted in the destruction of 123,930 square meters of olive trees, which are considered an important commodity for the Lebanese economy.^[20] The impact of the indiscriminate shelling is expected to jeopardize one fifth of the national olive production profits, which amounted to nearly USD 23 million in exports in 2020.^[21] **The destruction of livelihoods will worsen the socio-economic conditions of those impacted.**

In the absence of a universal social protection system, the conflict along the southern border will make a bad situation even worse for Lebanon's already struggling households. Lebanon continues to grapple with an economic crisis that the World Bank (WB) ranked among "[...]the top 10, possibly three, most severe crises episodes globally since 1900."^[22] By February 2023, the Lebanese pound had lost more than 98 percent of its value prior to the onset of the crisis in 2019.^[23] Public assistance, including third-party payments for health care services, are provided in accordance with the official rate, which is far from the black market value of the currency.^[24] Consequently, those insured by public social security systems were oftentimes refused admission to hospitals or were asked to deposit large sums of money to access medical treatment.^[25] This is especially the case when considering that Lebanon's inflation rate is among the highest globally, standing at 222.42 percent in 2023.^[26] Around 80 percent of the Lebanese live in poverty and nearly half of them, 36 percent, are below the extreme poverty line.^[27] In

this context, several rights are affected, including the right to education and the right to health.

Lebanon's economic crisis is forcing more and more children out of the classroom and into work. In a 2023 rapid assessment, the UN Children's Agency (UNICEF) found that 26 percent of sampled households had children that were not attending school.^[29] Children's deprivation of access to education is particularly worrying among refugee communities, with about half of the sampled Syrian households having children who were out of school.^[30] More families are sending their children to work. According to the same rapid assessment, 16 percent of Lebanese households and a third of Syrian households had their children work in order to support household income.^[31] To make matters worse, the ongoing hostilities have forced the closure of around 50 schools in the border area,^[32] affecting more than 6,000 students.^[33] Moreover, populations experiencing displacement often lose their access to education. In a survey, 40 percent of sampled young women and girls who were housed in shelters in Lebanon confirmed that they were not attending any learning.^[34]

The ongoing conflict can also be another breaking point for the psychological wellbeing of people in Lebanon, and particularly for children. In 2022, one-fifth of Lebanon's youth (people aged 15 to 24) reported feeling depressed.^[35] As households grapple with conflict-related challenges, the psycho-social needs of children may exacerbate and be left unaddressed. The same can be said for women. In a series of consultations led by UN Women and others, it was found that "[w]omen reported an overwhelming level of stress, frustration and confusion amid the current violence and hostilities."^[36] Women and girls who are housed in shelters also experience feelings of insecurity and stress. A recent survey found that more than half of the 46 adolescent girls and women, aged between 11 and 24, reported feeling unsafe going to the toilet alone at night.^[37]

UNICEF also found in the 2023 assessment that a staggering 81 percent of sampled households had decreased their spending on health treatment, up from 75 percent when a similar assessment was conducted in April 2023.^[38] As income and resources shrink, women's health tends to be perceived as less of a priority.^[39] Research suggests that maternal mortality rates rise during economic crises.^[40] This is the case in Lebanon, where the rate of maternal deaths has nearly tripled between 2019 and 2021.^[41] Moreover, due to the economic crisis, **women who are unable to afford sanitary pads were found to resort to negative coping mechanisms.** A study by Fe-Male and Plan International found that "41.8% of Lebanese women... had to reduce the number of sanitary pads they use during their menstrual cycle (meaning they'd use a single pad for a longer period) ..."^[42] These findings are likely to worsen as households plunge into further economic distress due to the impact of the armed conflict. Access to sanitary pads becomes restricted in the context of displacement. Young women and girls stated that access to sanitary pads was limited in the shelters where they are housed.^[43] Gender-based violence (GBV) also correlates with stressful life experiences.^[44] GBV is rampant in Lebanon and cases have risen particularly against women among Syrian refugees since the onset of the economic crisis.^[45] Prior to the economic crisis, about a third of married Lebanese women were experiencing intimate partner violence.^[46] **It is likely that the loss of livelihoods coupled with displacement caused by the ongoing armed conflict will contribute "...to a generalized level of stress of the sort that is correlated with higher levels of domestic violence and gender-based violence..."**^[47]

Furthermore, the increase in hostilities along the southern border is putting additional strains on the healthcare sector, which was rapidly disintegrating amid financial collapse.^[48] Like the rest of the

country's hospitals, health facilities in border towns were already experiencing a shortage of staff, fuel, and medicine, making them ill-equipped to handle mass casualty events.^[49] Within this context, the Lebanese government's support remains minimal.^[50] Armed conflicts exacerbate health risks due to limited access to healthcare services, increased exposure to toxic chemicals used in warfare,^[51] and limited access to clean water and sanitation.^[52] Together, these factors magnify health concerns among vulnerable groups, such as women, children and people with disability.

As people are forced to find housing in safer areas, demand increased on apartments, causing a rise in rental prices by as much as 100 to 200 percent in some areas.^[53] According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the majority of those displaced are staying with host families (81 percent) and 13 percent opted to rent apartments elsewhere.^[54] Only two percent of those displaced are housed in collective shelters.^[55] **Amid the lack of state support, internally displaced persons are left to fend for themselves.** Aid organizations are providing essential support such as food, mattresses, pillows and hygiene items.^[56] Other support may be available; however, it is conditional on the type of work that those who are displaced perform.^[57] Among those fleeing to safer regions are Palestinian and Syrian refugees, who have been displaced numerous times before.^[58] Syrian refugees, who are among the country's poorest, must also navigate an increasingly hostile environment, in which access to shelter may be denied.^[59]

The conflict is also disrupting supply lines. In border areas, several pharmacies had reportedly closed due to the ongoing shelling.^[60] Some of the villages became ghost towns with most of their residents reported to have fled. Bakeries, stores, and groceries have also closed in border towns.^[61] This inevitably impacts livelihoods as well as access to medicine and nutritious food for those who choose to remain in the villages and towns that are impacted by the ongoing hostilities. Together, these factors exacerbate the vulnerability of individuals within the conflict zones.

Within this context, and in the absence of state support, informal welfare is being further entrenched in Lebanon's fragmented social protection system. In late November 2023, Hezbollah announced that the party will compensate those directly impacted by the hostilities.^[62] This approach is not uncommon. Sectarian political parties across the board have long provided services to their constituencies.^[63] **A clientelist approach to protection must give way to a universal and state-led social protection system that will strengthen the social contract between citizens and the state and achieve social justice.**

The right to social protection is articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 22 states that “**everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security** and is entitled to realization... of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.” Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), an international human rights treaty, recognizes the right to social security.^[64] The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, a treaty body that monitors the implementation of the ICESCR, clarifies the elements of this right. First, the state must make the right to social security available through a system “... to ensure that benefits are provided for the relevant social risks and contingencies.”^[65] Second, the system should provide for the coverage of principal branches, including health care, sickness, old age, unemployment, child support, maternity, disability, as well as survivors and orphans on the death of a breadwinner.^[66] Third, the amount and duration of the benefits

that are made available through the system must be adequate and provide for the realization of essential economic and social rights.^[67] Given that the ICESCR is a legally binding instrument, **states parties are duty-bound to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to social protection of everyone in territories under their jurisdiction.**^[68] This is "... without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."^[69] **Social, economic, and cultural rights apply in times of peace, during national emergencies, and in conflict.**^[70] The right to social protection is also recognized as a sustainable development goal.^[71]

People in Lebanon cannot be left unaided in withstanding shocks and crises and must benefit from a formal system that is inclusive, rights-based, and shock-responsive. A universal social protection scheme would especially benefit women and children, who are exposed to unique vulnerabilities during armed conflict.

*This article is published alongside the infographic "[Towards adaptive and shock responsive universal social protection. Protecting in times of war.](#)"

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<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2012/10/WPSsourcebook-05B-WomenWorkingForRecovery-en.pdf>

[9] ILO cited in UN Women and Beyond Group, *Social Protection in Lebanon From a Gender Perspective: Baseline Assessment Report*, 2021.
https://lebanon.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/SP%20Baseline%20Report%20_1.pdf p. 11.

[10] Gender Alert (n 6) p. 2.

[11] The Center for Social Sciences Research and Action, *An Intersectional Perspective on Social (In)security: Making the Case for Universal Social Protection in Lebanon*, January 2022
<https://civilsociety-centre.org/sites/default/files/resources/cessra-intersectionalperspectivesocialinsecurity-jan2022-en-online.pdf> p. 4.

[12] "Israel: White Phosphorus Used in Gaza, Lebanon" (Human Rights Watch, 12 October 2023). <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/10/12/israel-white-phosphorus-used-gaza-lebanon> accessed 14 December 2023.

[13] “Over 75 percent of workers in the [agricultural] sector are not registered with the [NSSF]..., meaning that they have no health benefits, insurance policies, nor even social security benefits which may qualify them to receive compensations should disasters occur and impede their crops and livelihood...” See, Michelle Eid, “Israel’s Environmental and Economic Warfare on Lebanon” (The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy, 28 November 2023) <https://timep.org/2023/11/28/israels-environmental-and-economic-warfare-on-lebanon/> accessed 15 December 2023.

[14] See, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Country Gender Assessment of the Agricultural and Rural Sector*, 2021. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb3025en/cb3025en.pdf>

[15] “Israel-Hamas truce expires, fresh fighting reported” *Reuters* 1 December 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-hamas-truce-expires-fresh-fighting-reported-2023-12-01/> accessed 15 December 2023.

[16] Nada Maucourant Atallah, “‘I can’t sell poison’: Farmers in south Lebanon say white phosphorus has ruined crops” *The National News* 28 November 2023. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/lebanon/2023/11/28/lebanon-white-phosphorus-dhayra-truce/> accessed 15 December 2023.

[17] The mayor of a southern village that was shelled by Israel said “In Lebanon, there is no compensation, no help, no one from the government came to help us...” Abdallah Garib quoted in *ibid.*

[18] “Feature: Farmers in S. Lebanon suffer heavy losses due to border conflict with Israel” *Xinhua* 27 November 2023 <https://english.news.cn/20231127/84d4c8ff29594938bb5011dcc5933fb/c.html> accessed 15 December 2023.

[19] Youssef Fayyad quoted in *ibid.*

[20] Majed al-Halabi quoted in *ibid.*

[21] Michelle Eid, “Israel’s Environmental and Economic Warfare on Lebanon” *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy* 28 November 2023 <https://timep.org/2023/11/28/israels-environmental-and-economic-warfare-on-lebanon/> accessed 15 December 2023.

[22] *ibid.*

[23] WB, *Lebanon Economic Monitor*, Spring 2021
<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d4c22ec3-de98-5d7f-bb6c-988964e1cea9/content> p. 21.

[24] WB, *Lebanon Economic Monitor: The Normalization of Crisis is No Road for Stabilization*, Spring 2023
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099027005152320346/pdf/IDU0ea0213ae0e0f804ba309c>

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[25] In February 2023, Lebanon adopted a new official rate of LBP 15,000 per US dollar, scrapping the previous rate of 1,507.5. See, “Lebanon devalues official exchange rate by 90%” Reuters 1 February 2023

<https://www.reuters.com/markets/currencies/lebanon-sharply-devalues-official-exchange-rate-central-bank-says-2023-02-01/> accessed 14 December 2023.

[26] An Intersectional Perspective (n 11) p. 22.

[27] Stephanie Bechara “Lebanon’s inflation remains in the triple digits in 2023” *L’Orient Today*, 23 January 2024 <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1365438/lebanons-inflation-remain...> accessed 16 February 2024.

[28] “Lebanon: €60 million in humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable” (European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), 30 March 2023). https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/lebanon-eu60-million-humanitarian-aid-most-vulnerable-2023-03-30_en#:~:text=An%20estimated%2080%25%20of%20the,per%20capita%20in%20the%20world accessed 14 December 2023.

[29] In April 2023, 18 percent of similar households had school-aged children who were not attending school. See, UNICEF,

Trapped in a

downward spiral: The unrelenting toll of Lebanon's crisis on children, December 2023, p. 3 _
<https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/10866/file/UNICEF%20CFRA%202023%20E...>

[30] *ibid.*

[31] *ibid* p. 4.

[32] Anne Marie El-Hage, "Lebanon's schools prepare themselves for war" *L'Orient Today* 23 October 2023 <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1354397/lebanons-schools-prepare-themselves-for-war.html> accessed 1 January 2024.

[33] "Children hit ever-harder by Lebanon's unrelenting crises" (UNICEF, 13 December 2023) <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/children-hit-ever-harder-lebanons-unrelenting-crises> accessed 2 January 2024.

[34] UNICEF, *Situation of Displaced Adolescent Girls and Young Women in the South of Lebanon*.

[35] Rosabel Crean, "The fragile state of children's mental health in Lebanon" *The New Arab* 18 January 2022 <https://www.newarab.com/features/fragile-state-childrens-mental-health-lebanon#:~:text=Globally%2C%20one%20out%20of%20seven,15%2D24%20reporting%20feeling%20depressed> accessed 3 January 2024.

[36] Gender Alert (n 6) p. 2.

[37] Situation of Displaced Adolescent Girls and Young Women (n 35).

[38] Trapped in a downward spiral (n 30) p. 4.

[39] UNAIDS 2012 report cited in Nisreen Salti and Nadine Mezher, *Women on the Verge of An Economic Breakdown: Assessing the differential impacts of the economic crisis on women in Lebanon*, UN Women Issue Paper, September 2020
<https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/10/Lebanons%20Economic%20Report%20Updated%20201110%20FH.pdf> p. 28.

[40] Stavropoulou and Jones 2013 cited in *ibid*.

[41] UNICEF, *A Worsening Health Crisis for Children: The Consequences of the Failing Health System has Immediate and Longer-term Impacts on Children*, April 2022
<https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/8491/file>

[42] The study also found that more than half of the teenage girls in Lebanon who cannot afford to buy sanitary pads are Syrian refugees. See, Myriam Sweidan “Lebanon: The Economic Crisis and Period Poverty” *Daraj Media* 14 July 2021 <https://daraj.media/en/75915/> accessed 15 December 2023.

[43] Situation of Displaced Adolescent Girls and Young Women (n 35).

[44] Women on the Verge of An Economic Breakdown (n 40) p. 29.

[45] SGBV Taskforce 2019 cited in *ibid* p. 11.

[46] Gender Alert (n 6) p. 3.

[47] Women on the Verge of An Economic Breakdown (n 40) p. 29.

[48] Timour Azhari, Laila Bassam and Maya Saad, “Lebanon's healthcare on brink of collapse amid crisis, says minister” *Reuters* 20 January 2022 <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-healthcare-brink-collapse-amid-crisis-says-minister-2022-01-20/> accessed 2 January 2024.

[49] John Davison and Maya Gebeily, “Lebanon’s struggling hospitals could collapse if war escalates, doctors fear” *Reuters* 15 November 2023 <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/lebanons-struggling-hospitals-could-collapse-if-war-escalates-doctors-fear-2023-11-15/> accessed 2 January 2024.

[50] The caretaker Health Minister stated that the ministry helped cover the costs of injured persons. Little information is available on the extent and nature of this support. See, Emmanuel Haddad, “How are Lebanese hospitals preparing for potential war?” *L’Orient Today* 27 October 2023 <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1355008/how-are-lebanese-hospitals-preparing-for-potential-war.html> accessed 2 January 2024.

[51] According to the Ministry of Health, as of 2 January 2024, 18 percent of casualties were due to chemical exposure. See, Cumulative Emergency Report (n 7).

[52] Due to inefficient water supply systems, people in Lebanon rely on water trucking and private providers, which oftentimes do not provide safe water, to meet their daily demands. Additionally, they depend on bottled water for their drinking needs. Because of the inflation, access to clean and safe water became a financial burden for Lebanon’s struggling populations, including refugees. See, UNICEF, *Struggling to keep the taps on: Lebanon’s water crisis continues to put children at risk*, July 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/media/8891/file/Struggling%20to%20keep%20the%20taps%20on%20EN.pdf>

[53] Malek Jadah and Madeline Edwards, “Threat of war brings higher rent in Beirut’s ‘safer’ mountain outskirts” *L’Orient Today* 10 November 2023 <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1356850/threat-of-war-brings-higher-rent-in-beirut-s-safer-mountain-outskirts.html> accessed 1 January 2024; The Minister of Tourism and the hotel syndicate were called upon to act through issuing directives that would prohibit people from increasing prices. See, Najia Houssari, “Hospitals in Beirut, southern Lebanon finalize emergency plans as war fears mount” *Arab*

[59] [William Christou](#), “Syrians displaced by Lebanese border clashes suffer from lack of support, racism” *The New Arab* 1 November 2023 <https://www.newarab.com/news/escaping-lebanon-border-clashes-syrians-face-racism-too> accessed 2 January 2024.

[60] “Lebanon border-area pharmacies: Challenges and closures amidst ongoing shelling” *LBC International* 17 November 2023 <https://www.lbcgroup.tv/news/news-bulletin-reports/735588/lebanon-border-area-pharmacies-challenges-and-closures-amidst-ongoing/en> accessed 1 January 2024.

[61] An owner of a grocery store in a southern Lebanese town quoted in “Exchange of Fire Drives Women, Children Out of South Lebanon Border Towns” *Asharq Al-Awsat* 26 October 2023 <https://english.aawsat.com/features/4629111-exchange-fire-drives-women-children-out-south-lebanon-border-towns> accessed 1 January 2024.

[62] Nicholas Frakes, “How Hezbollah helps its constituency rebuild after conflict” *L'Orient Today* 30 November 2023 <https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1359034/how-hezbollah-helps-its-constituency-rebuild-after-conflict.html> accessed 15 December 2023.

[63] See, *An Intersectional Perspective* (n 11) p. 22.

[64] Article 9 of the ICESCR: “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance.” Article 26 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, articles 11 and 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and article 28 of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantee the right to social security for children, women, and persons with disabilities, respectively. Furthermore, the right to social security is also codified in regional human

rights instruments, including in Article 36 of the Arab Charter on Human Rights. The African Charter on Human and People Rights does not expressly recognize the right to social security. However, in 2022, the African Union adopted a protocol specifically on the right to social protection. As of April 2023, the protocol is only signed by two states parties to the African Charter. See, 'List of countries which have signed, ratified/acceded to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security' (African Union, 24 April 2023)

[https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/42736-sl-PROTOCOL_TO_THE_AFRICAN_CHARTER_ON_HUMAN_AND_PEOPLES_RIGHTS_ON_THE_RIGHTS_OF_CITIZENS_TO_SOCIAL_PROTECTION AND SOCIAL SECURITY.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/42736-sl-PROTOCOL_TO_THE_AFRICAN_CHARTER_ON_HUMAN_AND_PEOPLES_RIGHTS_ON_THE_RIGHTS_OF_CITIZENS_TO_SOCIAL_PROTECTION_AND_SOCIAL_SECURITY.pdf) accessed 13 December 2023.

[65] UN Economic and Social Council 'General Comment No. 19 The right to social security (art. 9)' (4 February 2008) UN Doc E/C.12/GC/19 para 11.

[66] *ibid* paras 12 – 21

[67] *ibid* para 22

[68] Human rights impose obligations on states parties to respect, protect, and fulfill. See, Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights 'CESCR General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Art. 12) Adopted at the Twenty-second Session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, on 11 August 2000 (Contained in Document E/C.12/2000/4)' para 33.

[69] Article 2(2) of the ICESCR; According to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “

‘Other status’ as recognized in article 2, paragraph 2, includes sexual orientation.” See, Economic and Social ‘General Comment No. 20 Non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights (art. 2, para. 2, of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)’ (2 July 2009) UN Doc E/C.12/GC/20 para 32.

[\[70\]](#) UN General Assembly, ‘Report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights’ (19 May 2015) UN Doc E/2015/59 para 12.

[\[71\]](#) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)1.3 “Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.” For more information on the SDGs, please refer to UN General Assembly ‘Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ (21 October 2015) UN Doc A/RES/70/1.