

Leaving No Child Behind: toward greater synergy between social protection and child protection systems

Thursday, February 14, 2019: 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. in CR12, United Nations Headquarters NYC

In the world today, almost one child out of five lives in extreme poverty, which can cause profound and lasting damage to a child's physical, cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial development; yet only 35 percent of children worldwide benefit from effective access to social protection programmes. This is a deep concern for governments, UN agencies, and civil society organizations, and the challenge of extending social protection for children worldwide is intensified by the need to reach children in the most deprived situations and to ensure that no child is left behind.

Social protection systems and child welfare address poverty through social insurance and social assistance. Child protection programmes, with policies focused on children's wellbeing, shares similar goals. But the experiences of families in extreme poverty reveal a disconnect between the two sets of policies that not only impacts the capacity of the families to address their own challenges but also reduces the efficiency of both systems. Most social protection interventions limit their focus to gains in children's health and education, and rarely aim to tackle the multiple deprivations that are transmitted across generations and across time.

Also, many developed countries still have child protection systems that were designed before the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that fail to address multiple deprivations. Instead, these systems too often resort to separating children from their families despite the proven positive impact of family-based responses, especially for people living in extreme poverty where the deprivation experienced by an entire family can be misidentified by the authorities as neglect of the children. Poverty should never be a cause for family separation, and so family strengthening programs must be put in place.

When family separation is unavoidable and in the best interest of the child, any alternative care should be of high quality and framed within child protection and social protection systems. States should establish targeted social protection measures, including financial support for young people as they leave alternative care and transition to independence.

In the global North and South, both states and non-state actors are taking initiatives to meet these challenges. What lessons can be shared from countries' attempts to implement a more integrated approach to social and child protection systems? And how are these attempts perceived by families living in extreme poverty?

In the context of the thirtieth anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Movement ATD Fourth World, SOS Children's Villages, UNICEF, the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, and the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (tbc) are organizing a side event to explore how to strengthen the links between child protection and social protection in a way that is more supportive of family-based and community-based responses. It will also address the prevention of violence, including institutional violence.

The panel will comprise grassroots delegates, representatives from member states, non-governmental organizations, and UN agencies. Panel members will include:

- Ms. Kimberly Tyre and Ms. Maxine Andujar, ATD Fourth World activists with direct experience of child social services in the US (International Movement ATD Fourth World)
- Mr. David Stewart, Chief, Child Poverty and Social Protection, Social Inclusion and Policy Section, UNICEF New York
- Mr. Andro Dadiani, Programme Advisor, Central and Eastern Europe, SOS Children's Villages
- A Member State representative (TBC)