

Social Protection in Developing Countries: Legal, Economic, and Social Trends

Nodira R. Rustamova ^{1,*}, Sardorbek O. Sharifzoda ², Xurshida V. Burxanxodjaeva ³, Lola U. Rahimqulova ³, Mukhammad Ali Turdialiev ⁴, Farrukh U. Nurullaev ⁵, and Dauletbike A. Eshchanova ⁶

¹ Department of Psychology and Pedagogy, Faculty of Social Sciences, ISFT International School of Finance Technology and Science (Private University), Tashkent City, 100140, Uzbekistan;

² Acting Rector, Mamun University, Khiva City, 220900, Uzbekistan;

³ Department of Labor Law, Faculty of Law, Tashkent State University of Law, Tashkent City, 100000, Uzbekistan;

⁴ Vice Head of the Private International Law Department, Faculty of Law, Tashkent State University of Law, Tashkent City, 100000, Uzbekistan;

⁵ Department of International law and human rights, Faculty of Law, Tashkent State University of Law, Tashkent City, 100000, Uzbekistan;

⁶ Department of Civil law, Faculty of Law, Tashkent State University of Law, Tashkent City, 100000, Uzbekistan.

* **Corresponding author:** rustamovanodira19@gmail.com.

ABSTRACT: This paper investigates the evolution of social protection frameworks in developing countries, distinguishing between contributory and tax-financed systems. Through a comparative analysis of social insurance, social assistance, public works, and community-based employment programs, this study assesses their effectiveness in mitigating poverty, managing risks, and fostering resilience. A unique aspect of this research lies in its integration of economic, historical, and cultural factors, offering a comprehensive evaluation of social protection beyond conventional economic assessments. Key findings reveal the critical balance between efficiency and equity in resource allocation, underscoring the importance of addressing dependency and compliance in policy execution. By presenting a nuanced framework that bridges technical and social dimensions, this paper contributes to the growing discourse on sustainable social policies in the context of developing nations. It provides policymakers with actionable insights for crafting inclusive, long-term social protection strategies that align with both immediate relief and sustainable development goals.

Keywords: developing countries, social assistance, public goods, nudge theory, partnerships.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social protection has become a cornerstone in global efforts to alleviate poverty, reduce inequality, and foster economic resilience, particularly in developing nations. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), more than 55% of the world's population (approximately 4 billion people) lack any form of social protection, leaving them vulnerable to economic shocks, health crises, and poverty cycles [40]. In low-income countries, this figure is even more pronounced, with coverage rates dropping below 20%. This disparity underscores the urgent need for comprehensive social protection frameworks capable of addressing the multidimensional nature of poverty and vulnerability.

However, the concept of social protection is far from uniform. It has integrated itself deeply into the institutional frameworks of international development agencies, evolving into a critical element of policy discussions. Yet, its significance varies depending on the theorist or institutional stakeholder invoking the term. The operational practices described by agencies such as the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have played a central role in shaping the modern understanding of social protection [41]. Nevertheless, the meaning of social protection often reflects the diverse professional backgrounds and interests

of its practitioners. This dynamic can be likened to the way a stretched string resonates with related frequencies, symbolizing the interconnected yet distinct interpretations that exist across disciplines.

The World Bank stands at the forefront of this standardization movement, providing frameworks that enable even less experienced donors to contribute efficiently to social protection initiatives without incurring excessive financial or administrative burdens. The World Bank highlights that countries implementing robust social protection programs experience a 36% reduction in poverty gaps and significantly improve access to healthcare and education for marginalized communities [41]. Landmark initiatives such as India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) have demonstrated the transformative potential of targeted rural investments, enhanced livelihoods and fostering economic stability [42,43]. While existing models by Esping-Andersen and Evans provide valuable frameworks for understanding welfare typologies and state capacity, they often reflect experiences from high-income or industrialized nations. This study contributes to the literature by adapting these frameworks to the context of developing countries, where informal economies, rural populations, and fragile governance structures play a more significant role in shaping social protection.

Furthermore, although Kabeer's work offers critical insights into gender disparities, limited research exists that directly addresses the urban-rural divide in social protection policies. By integrating case studies from India (NREGA), Kenya (HSNP), and Brazil (Bolsa Família), this paper highlights the structural biases that favor urban areas, underscoring the need for more inclusive rural policies.

So, this paper draws on Esping-Andersen's welfare regime typologies, which classify social protection systems into liberal, conservative-corporatist, and social-democratic models, to analyze the structural dynamics influencing social policies in developing nations. While Esping-Andersen's framework primarily reflects experiences in high-income countries, this study adapts it to contexts characterized by informal economies and fragile governance structures, filling a critical gap in the literature on developing nations. Additionally, Peter Evans' theories on state capacity provide a lens to evaluate the administrative efficiency and political will required to extend social protection to rural and marginalized communities. By integrating these theoretical models, the research bridges the gap between existing welfare state literature and the realities of social protection in low- and middle-income countries.

Academic discourse has further enriched the understanding of social protection through models such as Esping-Andersen's welfare regime typologies, which classify social systems into liberal, conservative-corporatist, and social-democratic categories. This framework remains instrumental in analyzing how nations balance state intervention and market reliance to mitigate social vulnerabilities [44]. Additionally, Peter Evans' theories on state capacity highlight the significance of administrative efficiency and political will in successfully implementing welfare policies, especially in regions with fragile governance [45].

Despite this progress, significant challenges persist. The urban-rural divide, gender disparities, and limited coverage for informal sector workers continue to hinder equitable social protection. Naila Kabeer's gendered analysis of social protection emphasizes the disproportionate economic burdens faced by women, advocating for inclusive policies that address systemic inequalities in labor markets [46]. These gaps highlight the need for adaptive, context-sensitive approaches that reflect the realities of diverse populations.

The importance of social protection frameworks has grown significantly in response to the economic shocks brought about by global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing geopolitical tensions. As nations confront rising inequality and economic instability, social protection has become a critical tool for mitigating poverty and strengthening resilience. This study holds particular relevance for developing countries, where structural inequalities in social policy implementation continue to deepen the rural-urban divide. Addressing these disparities is not only vital for national economic stability but also essential for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those focused on poverty eradication, gender equality, and reducing inequality.

This paper explores the evolving landscape of social protection in developing countries by examining contributory and tax-financed systems through economic, historical, and cultural perspectives. By integrating theoretical models with empirical case studies, the research contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for sustainable, inclusive, and equitable social protection strategies.

The analysis draws on Esping-Andersen's welfare regime typologies, which classify social protection systems into liberal, conservative-corporatist, and social-democratic models. These typologies offer a valuable

framework for understanding the structural forces shaping social policies. While Esping-Andersen's work primarily reflects the experiences of high-income nations, this study adapts his framework to the distinct contexts of developing countries, where informal economies and governance limitations play a critical role.

Additionally, Peter Evans' theories on state capacity emphasize the significance of administrative efficiency and political will in the successful implementation of social protection programs. His insights highlight how fragile governance structures, particularly in rural areas, can obstruct equitable resource distribution. This analysis is further enriched by Naila Kabeer's gendered perspective on social protection, which underscores the need for inclusive policies that tackle systemic inequalities, especially in labor markets where women often bear disproportionate burdens.

By weaving together these models, the paper bridges the gap between classical welfare state theories and the realities of social protection in low- and middle-income countries. It presents a multidimensional framework that not only addresses economic vulnerabilities but also integrates social justice and inclusive growth as fundamental pillars of sustainable development strategies.

1. BACKGROUND AND IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

In the last decade, concern about social protection has intensified significantly. A host of various strategies have been thoroughly explored for extending protection to the poorest individuals—whether they are state employed, privately employed, or part of the informal workforce. The vulnerability of that segment of the world's population that is categorized as working poor is also rising markedly as the relentless sweep of globalization tends to magnify economic disparities and inequalities, leaving weak states and even mature welfare states equally exposed to crises that can dramatically accelerate the issuance of status in to full-blown conditions of destitution or may lead to the tightening of the cloth around a condition of chronic vulnerability, further exacerbating the situation. Long-term protection and comprehensive poverty alleviation measures can also play a vital role in assisting in preparations for the aging crises that are brought about by significant demographic changes and shifts. Yet the underlying philosophy of social protection remains controversial, and the policies that flow from this principle can be risky and complex, involving numerous stakeholders and opinions that must be navigated carefully [1].

Estimates suggest that only between 20 percent and 25 percent of the world's employed individuals (which equates to less than 13 percent of the global population) currently benefit from some form of coverage provided by various social protection schemes. This alarming statistic illustrates a pressing issue, as the majority of the world's poor population is significantly impacted by a variety of adversities, including economic downturns, political instability, environmental challenges, demographic shifts, and social distancing events that complicate their daily lives. Social protection is particularly crucial, as it may serve as a vital mechanism to prevent the rise of a lumpenproletariat, which refers to a segment of the working class that is largely marginalized and disenfranchised. This phenomenon is particularly evident in nations that are engaged in long-term democratic transitions, especially where historical factors have contributed to a lack of effective social safety nets designed for assisting marginalized groups [2].

1.1. Incorporating Key Academic Debates on Social Protection

In the discourse on social protection systems, several foundational models and academic debates shape contemporary frameworks. A pivotal contribution is Gøsta Esping-Andersen's welfare regime typologies, which categorize welfare states into liberal, conservative-corporatist, and social-democratic models. These classifications illuminate the varying approaches nations adopt to balance market forces, state intervention, and family-based support systems, offering a lens to analyze the distinct trajectories developing countries might follow in crafting social protection policies. Esping-Andersen's work underscores the intersection between economic development and social policy, highlighting the significance of institutional design in mitigating inequalities.

Parallel to this, the theory of state capacity in social protection, as discussed by scholars like Peter Evans and James Ferguson, emphasizes the role of administrative efficiency and political will in implementing effective welfare programs. Ferguson's critical examination of social protection in Southern Africa highlights how social programs often reinforce urban bias, privileging formal sector workers while neglecting rural populations. This urban-rural divide reflects broader concerns about distributive justice and the uneven reach of social policies.

Additionally, Naila Kabeer's gendered analysis of social protection brings attention to the differentiated impacts of welfare programs on women, advocating for inclusive frameworks that address systemic inequalities in labor markets and household economies. Kabeer's insights are crucial in addressing the "feminization of poverty" and ensuring that social assistance reaches marginalized groups.

By engaging with these academic debates and integrating insights from both classical welfare theories and contemporary critiques, this paper positions its analysis within a robust intellectual tradition. It seeks to contribute to the evolving conversation on how developing nations can design equitable, efficient, and context-sensitive social protection systems that bridge the urban-rural divide.

1.2. Illustrative Case Studies of Targeted Rural Investment

Targeted rural investment strategies have been pivotal in addressing poverty and enhancing economic resilience in developing countries. Two notable examples are India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP), both of which exemplify how well-structured rural investments can transform communities and promote sustainable development.

Case Study 1: India – National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Implemented in 2005, NREGA guarantees 100 days of wage employment annually to every rural household willing to engage in unskilled manual labor. The program aims to enhance rural livelihoods by investing in infrastructure projects such as water conservation, afforestation, and land development. By addressing unemployment and improving agricultural productivity, NREGA not only boosts rural income but also mitigates the effects of seasonal poverty. Evaluations of the program reveal its role in empowering women, as a significant portion of beneficiaries are female workers, thereby promoting gender inclusivity in rural economies.

Case Study 2: Kenya Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP). Launched in 2008, HSNP is part of Kenya's broader social protection framework aimed at the most vulnerable populations in arid and semi-arid regions. The program provides unconditional cash transfers to households, enabling them to meet basic needs and invest in productive activities. HSNP has been credited with reducing food insecurity and enhancing economic stability in rural areas prone to droughts and economic shocks. The program's success in improving household resilience has positioned it as a model for adaptive social protection strategies across Sub-Saharan Africa.

These case studies underscore the importance of tailored rural investments in fostering inclusive development, reducing inequality, and enhancing community resilience. Integrating such strategies into national social protection frameworks can bridge the urban-rural divide, ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the primary goals of any society is to ensure a peaceful, harmonious, and prosperous life for all its members, a fundamental objective of immense importance that resonates deeply within the hearts and minds of individuals. Achieving this overarching goal requires a comprehensive framework that not only promotes but actively supports sustainable development in various forms; without continuous progress and positive change, no society can truly thrive in the long term, experiencing the fulfillment of its potential. Thus, social progress emerges as a crucial and indispensable component of economic growth and social harmony—a symbiotic relationship that fuels advancement. Throughout history, the steady evolution of human society has been intricately linked with the dynamic changes in both economic and social spheres, reflecting the ongoing struggle and triumph of communities to adapt and grow.

In this context, the crucial role of both the state and society is undeniably vital to ensure the well-being of every individual within the community, regardless of their diverse backgrounds or varying circumstances. Achieving a consistently high standard of both physical and mental development is essential for cultivating a thriving and resilient community. This must be done alongside a comprehensive approach to addressing a broad array of needs and interests that exist among the populace. The proper satisfaction of these numerous needs is a complex and multifaceted endeavor, which necessitates a comprehensive approach to effective social policy formulation and implementation. Indeed, social demand not only acts as a prerequisite for growth but also serves as a key driver of modern productive forces, profoundly influencing and significantly impacting overall economic development and prosperity.

The critical task of satisfying these complex social needs predominantly rests on the framework of social policy, which serves as a guiding principle to effectively direct societal efforts and allocate state resources in a meaningful manner. Social policy is not just an abstract concept; it is an essential political and economic tool designed to create sustainable conditions that allow the entire population to lead dignified and fulfilling lives, reach their full potential, and fully satisfy their various needs. This vital process is achieved through a nuanced combination of objective economic principles and targeted social interventions, which are specifically aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of market forces and addressing the pervasive issues of social inequalities in our communities.

However, in the absence of adequate corrective mechanisms, the negative consequences that arise from economic development may indeed be amplified significantly. Therefore, comprehensive social policies are absolutely essential to effectively counterbalance these adverse effects, particularly when it comes to addressing various forms of inequalities and providing a supportive safety net for vulnerable groups and individuals within society. The successful implementation of these policies necessitates not only the careful allocation of resources but also a deep consideration of the cultural, historical, and behavioral aspects that fundamentally shape societal responses to social initiatives and interventions. Understanding these dimensions is crucial for fostering meaningful and sustainable change [3].

The overall effectiveness of social policies in achieving these important objectives depends on a complex interplay of both economic factors such as the presence of budget constraints and various institutional limitations as well as non-economic factors, which include the prevailing cultural norms and societal values. Furthermore, the inherent capacity of institutions to effectively implement social policies will play a crucial role in determining their ultimate success. This highlights the pressing need for well-designed systems that are capable of adapting to and addressing the diverse and ever-evolving needs of modern societies across different contexts and demographics. The integration of these considerations is essential for fostering an environment where social policies can thrive and lead to meaningful, positive change for all citizens involved [4].

3. SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is a significant part of the ongoing and evolving reflections on the various social protection policies that exist today. It considers, with great emphasis, that it is critically important for such a policy to be socially sustainable. This sustainability is vital, not only to ensure social stability within communities but also to guarantee economic efficiency or effectiveness in a broader sense. Hence, the text provides a comprehensive procedural reflection on social security law. The ultimate and true objective of this reflection is to support and reinforce some fundamental objectives that are commonly attributed to this vital security system, which plays a crucial role in the lives of individuals and the overall functioning of society.

The sustainability of the social security system is a complex concept that, upon a more detailed and thorough analysis, presents a dual character. According to the approach that is widely accepted in the economic literature and scholarly discussions, the social security system is said to be sustainable when it is not susceptible to experiencing growing deficits that could lead to catastrophic consequences for its overall economic performance and stability. This important criterion applies equally to both pay-as-you-go systems and to economically capitalized funded pension systems, emphasizing the necessity for a balanced approach to ensure long-term viability and health of social security frameworks [5].

This study focuses on the pay-as-you-go social security system and the various challenges it faces in maintaining its long-term economic sustainability. In a traditional welfare state, there is an increasingly significant coupling between social security and the labor market dynamics. The rising costs of social security can lead to substantial economic distortions within the labor market, generating notable rigidity in the employment relationship itself. These distortions can ultimately reduce job creation opportunities and significantly affect the remuneration system. This situation arises either by delaying the necessary adjustments of wages in accordance with productivity or by establishing forms of earnings that do not align rationally from an economic perspective. The interconnectedness between these factors raises critical concerns about the overall efficiency and performance of the economy.

The findings of this comprehensive economic research aim to motivate and inspire a deeper legal analysis of social security law. These results also offer valuable guidance to the legislator who is eager to harmonize the numerous objectives inherent within the social security system. At the same time, this legislator does not wish

to abandon the pursuit of creating a more economically sustainable system for the future, ensuring that today's decisions positively impact the viability of the social security framework moving forward.

II. DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process for this study was structured to ensure comprehensive coverage of social protection frameworks in developing countries. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data sources to capture the multifaceted nature of social protection policies and their implementation.

1. PRIMARY DATA SOURCES

- *Interviews and Surveys.* Structured interviews were conducted with policymakers, social workers, and beneficiaries involved in social protection programs across India, Kenya, and Brazil. These interviews provided first-hand insights into the effectiveness and challenges faced in implementing social protection initiatives, such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in India and the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) in Kenya.
- *Focus Groups.* Focus group discussions were organized in rural and urban communities to gather perspectives from diverse demographics, including marginalized groups, women, and informal sector workers. The discussions aimed to capture localized experiences and the perceived impact of social protection schemes.

2. SECONDARY DATA SOURCES

- *International Reports and Publications.* Data from reputable international organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), World Bank, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were analyzed to establish global trends and benchmarks in social protection. Key reports, including the *World Social Protection Report 2023-25* by the ILO and the *Social Protection and Jobs* report by the World Bank, were extensively reviewed [40, 41].
- *Government Documents and Policy Papers.* National policy documents and annual reports related to social protection programs in the target countries were collected and analyzed. These documents provided critical insights into the legal frameworks, funding structures, and operational mechanisms underpinning these initiatives.
- *Academic Literature.* Peer-reviewed journal articles and case studies formed the academic backbone of this study. The work of scholars such as Esping-Andersen on welfare regime typologies [44], Peter Evans on state capacity [45], and Naila Kabeer on gender-responsive social protection [46] were integrated to provide theoretical grounding and comparative analysis.

3. DATA VALIDATION AND TRIANGULATION

To ensure data reliability and validity, a triangulation method was employed, comparing information gathered from interviews, government reports, and international publications. This approach minimized bias and ensured that the findings reflected a balanced view of social protection realities across different regions.

4. CHALLENGES IN DATA COLLECTION

Despite the robustness of the data collection process, several challenges were encountered:

- *Data Gaps.* In many instances, comprehensive data on informal labor and rural populations were limited, reflecting broader issues in national statistical systems [47].
- *Accessibility.* Some rural communities lacked the infrastructure necessary for extensive surveys, necessitating adaptive methodologies such as telephone interviews and mobile data collection units.

- *Gender Disparities in Data.* Data on women's experiences in social protection programs were often not disaggregated, complicating efforts to assess gender-specific impacts. To mitigate this, gender-focused interviews and community engagement initiatives were prioritized.

This rigorous data collection strategy ensured that the study captured the diverse, intersectional realities of social protection frameworks in developing countries, contributing to a nuanced and comprehensive analysis of their implementation and outcomes.

Most of the major international organizations that are actively working in the critical area of data collection do indeed collect some form of systematic data that is specifically intended to inform their policies and practices. However, despite the efforts made, significant and large gaps remain within this data, particularly when it comes to crucial areas such as data on informal labor and the various social protection systems, which are often noted to be inadequate, incomplete, and lacking in depth. Moreover, in many instances, where data on women's experiences and conditions are collected, they are unfortunately not distinguished from those of men in the same manner. This oversight leaves many significant problems and disparities unexplored and, consequently, unaddressed. Most of the data that is collected is regularly monitored over time to effectively track changes and emerging trends. Yet, this continuous monitoring does not always bridge the existing gaps, and as a result, it fails to provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving landscape of both informal labor and social protections. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important to enhance the depth and scope of data collection in these areas to ensure that the unique challenges faced by different demographics, particularly women, are properly highlighted and addressed [6].

Additionally, several international organizations do indeed gather vital budget data, yet there are extensive and significant gaps, as well as inconsistencies, especially for other mandates that require more focused and urgent attention. In addition to these pressing issues, many organizations find themselves unable to effectively and accurately track the overall role of the state in various socio-economic contexts and environments. While there is a considerable amount of literature available that covers various related topics, this literature often lacks a specific focus on individual countries or, in many cases, is not presented in local languages, which significantly diminishes its accessibility and overall usefulness for those who need it most. Furthermore, there are frustrating instances where there is sometimes absolutely no data available on a particular issue within a specific country, or, alarmingly, such data might not exist in any recognized international database, which renders it even more challenging to effectively address urgent matters and pressing issues within those contexts (see Table 1) [7].

Table 1. Challenges in data collection for social protection systems.

Challenges	Key Issues	Results
Gaps in Data Collection	Significant gaps exist in data on informal labor and social protection systems, with women's experiences often not distinguished from men's.	These gaps prevent a comprehensive understanding of disparities and lead to unaddressed issues, especially concerning gender-specific challenges.
Monitoring and Tracking	Data is regularly monitored to track changes, but this monitoring does not bridge the gaps in understanding informal labor and social protection trends.	Continuous monitoring is insufficient; enhancing the depth and scope of data is essential to fully address the evolving landscape of labor and social protection.
Budget Data Gaps	International organizations collect budget data, but inconsistencies and gaps exist, particularly concerning the role of the state in socio-economic contexts.	Lack of focus on specific countries and the absence of local language data reduce the accessibility and usefulness of the information for local stakeholders.
Data Frequency and Quality	High-frequency data is collected, but with low information content; headline figures are clear, but details are imprecise and lack granularity.	Despite the robustness of key variables, the lack of detailed data limits the ability to understand labor markets and welfare systems comprehensively.
Omission of Critical Context	Data collection often omits key conditions affecting the poorest individuals, leading to an incomplete understanding of societal contexts.	Failure to include critical elements results in limited insights into the challenges faced by the most

Challenges	Key Issues	Results
Challenges and Limitations	Recognizing the inherent limitations in data collection is crucial for deriving more insightful answers from current and future datasets.	vulnerable populations, hindering effective policy responses. Understanding and addressing these limitations can lead to more nuanced insights and improved data quality, which is essential for informed decision-making.

The data can indeed be described as high frequency, which suggests a regular and consistent collection method, but unfortunately, it is characterized by low information content. The headline numbers that are presented are indeed clear and straightforward, making them easy to grasp, but the associated details remain fuzzy and imprecise, lacking the necessary granularity. This is certainly not to say that the current data is of poor quality or otherwise negligible in its ability to comprehensively describe the complex state of labor markets or the welfare system in developing countries. Instead, it is important to recognize that data for most of the essential key variables are surprisingly robust, indicating a reliable dataset. Furthermore, the existing databases that house this information are well utilized in much of the published work that effectively explores these important themes, leading researchers and policymakers to valuable insights and conclusions despite any limitations present in the data's depth [8].

The inherent nature of the data that is methodically collected allows us to extrapolate a considerable amount of information regarding the society that is depicted in the results emerging from this extensive process. However, it is essential that we recognize and acknowledge the significant conditions that impact the poorest individuals residing in the most populous countries; these critical elements are often omitted entirely from the data collection processes. This absence can lead to an incomplete understanding of the wider societal context. Despite these inherent limitations, the activities associated with the collected data possess a remarkable level of explanatory power. This power can effectively illuminate a variety of pressing issues and provide deeper insights into the complexities of social dynamics [4].

Possible challenges and discrepancies that may arise should be thoroughly reconsidered, keeping in mind the various data-related issues that serve as a guiding principle throughout this process. Fully understanding the inherent limitations that exist within the context of data collection and analysis has significant potential to yield more insightful answers. This understanding applies not only to the existing datasets we have at our disposal but also to the future data that might be collected over time. Emphasizing these aspects can lead to more nuanced insights that enhance our overall understanding of the subject matter [6].

5 LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION

A country's political history can significantly influence and shape its legal framework for social protection systems. This is particularly evident in regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, where violent gangs have increasingly emerged within nations characterized by weak legal institutions and a starkly high level of social and economic inequality. In order to effectively address these issues, it is crucial to foster dialogue and cooperation among the leaders of the region, alongside various social groups that represent the diverse interests and needs of their communities. Such collaborative efforts are essential for the development and implementation of a robust and effective social protection system that can safeguard vulnerable populations. Meanwhile, in Africa, the approach to tackling the complex challenges faced by numerous African countries involves a careful consideration of how to expand social protection floors. This expansion is informed by the experiences of industrialized nations that have successfully established comprehensive systems and the growing recognition that social protection is not just a policy option but a fundamental human right that every individual should enjoy.

The obstacles to progress in social protection in some developing countries include a lack of political will, the negative impact of economic reform programs, the absence of a social contract, and the dominance of elite interests. Political and trade union reforms that promote dialogue, reconciliation, and national unity are necessary if this situation is to change. National policies cannot disregard the rights of citizens to benefits based on residence and employment and need to consider not only redistributive effects but also the efficient

provision of social protection. Since the global community has an interest in alleviating poverty, the introduction of some form of legal framework for social protection could be a way to engage in policy dialogue on the topic.

- *Case Study 1. Brazil – Social Protection Amid Inequality and Crime*

- a. *Context:*

Brazil's social protection framework is heavily influenced by its political history and socio-economic challenges. The country faces significant social inequality and crime rates, particularly related to gang violence in urban areas. Weak legal institutions and a lack of sufficient public resources to combat organized crime have exacerbated these challenges.

- b. *Social Protection Approach:*

The Brazilian government has implemented social protection initiatives, such as the Bolsa Família program, which provides direct cash transfers to low-income families. The objective is to alleviate poverty and reduce inequality by targeting the most vulnerable groups. The program encourages dialogue among different social groups, aiming to include marginalized populations into mainstream society by improving their access to basic needs like education and healthcare.

- c. *Outcome and Challenges:*

While Bolsa Família has had success in reducing poverty levels and improving school attendance among children from disadvantaged families, the challenges of crime, corruption, and insufficient institutional capacity limit its impact. Efforts to ensure greater inclusion and dialogue have been hampered by political instability and elite interests [36].

- *Case Study 2: South Africa – Expanding Social Protection Floors*

- a. *Context:*

South Africa, one of the most industrialized nations in Africa, has been a regional leader in establishing a comprehensive social protection floor. However, the country continues to struggle with high levels of inequality and poverty, largely due to the historical impacts of apartheid and ongoing economic disparities.

- b. *Social Protection Approach:*

The South African government has implemented a range of social grants targeting different demographics, including the Old Age Grant, Child Support Grant, and Disability Grant. These programs are designed to provide basic income security to vulnerable populations and reduce poverty. The South African approach is informed by international standards, recognizing social protection as a human right.

- c. *Outcome and Challenges:*

Social grants have been crucial in alleviating poverty, particularly for those unable to participate in the labor market. However, challenges such as corruption, administrative inefficiencies, and a lack of political will to reform the labor market continue to hinder the effective implementation of social protection programs. Expanding the social protection floor remains a priority, with the government attempting to address coverage gaps, particularly in rural areas [37].

- *Case Study 3: Ghana – Challenges in Establishing Legal Frameworks for Social Protection*

- a. *Context:*

Ghana has been working towards establishing a robust social protection system to address the socio-economic challenges faced by a large portion of its population. Political instability, a lack of political will, and elite interests have often obstructed efforts to create an equitable social protection system.

- b. *Social Protection Approach:*

One of the key social protection initiatives in Ghana is the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) program, which provides cash transfers to extremely poor households to reduce short-term poverty and promote long-term human capital development. Additionally, Ghana has introduced National Health Insurance to improve healthcare access across the population.

c. *Outcome and Challenges:*

LEAP has improved the livelihoods of some of the poorest households by providing a safety net. However, challenges such as insufficient funding, a lack of social contract, and administrative inefficiencies have limited the reach and effectiveness of these programs. The absence of a comprehensive legal framework for social protection, combined with economic reform programs that prioritize fiscal austerity, has further restricted progress [38].

1.1 *International Legal Instruments*

A wide array of international instruments has been adopted by the international community to promote social policy and social protection, addressing the needs of vulnerable populations globally. These instruments are formulated at multiple levels global, regional, and sub-regional and include various forms such as declarations, conventions, resolutions, and recommendations. The United Nations, alongside other international organizations, plays a pivotal role in adopting and endorsing these instruments, demonstrating a collective commitment to addressing social challenges and enhancing welfare globally [9].

One of the earliest and most comprehensive international instruments is the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 102, which laid down the minimum standards of social security. This foundational document has provided a framework for subsequent agreements, including the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, which expanded and emphasized the original principles of Convention 102. These instruments have been instrumental in shaping social security systems across nations by establishing a minimum standard that governments can build upon.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) is another significant international instrument that outlines comprehensive provisions relevant to social protection. Articles 9, 11, and 12 of the ICESCR elaborate on the essential rights related to social security, including the right to social protection, the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to health. These provisions reflect the commitment of signatory nations to create systems that protect individuals' rights and enhance their living standards [10].

Additionally, regional instruments such as the European Social Charter and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights have specific provisions for social protection. These charters reinforce regional commitments to establishing social safety nets and ensuring that vulnerable groups, including children, women, and the elderly, are adequately protected. Below are three case studies that demonstrate the implementation of international legal instruments for social protection (Table 2):

Table 2. Case studies of international legal instruments for social protection.

Country/Region	Legal Instrument Implemented	Impact
Brazil	ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention	Brazil has incorporated several principles of the ILO Convention 102 into its social protection programs. The Bolsa Família program is an example of a cash transfer scheme designed to meet minimum living standards and reduce poverty. The program aligns with ILO standards by targeting vulnerable populations and ensuring income security, especially for low-income families. This has resulted in a significant reduction in extreme poverty and an improvement in child school attendance.
South Africa	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	South Africa has taken steps to implement the provisions of the ICESCR, particularly Articles 11 and 12, through its Child Support Grant and Old Age Pension programs. These programs ensure that vulnerable populations have access to a minimum level of income, fulfilling the right to an adequate standard of living and supporting the well-being of children and the elderly. Despite challenges such as administrative bottlenecks, these programs have been effective in reducing poverty and improving access to healthcare services.

Country/Region	Legal Instrument Implemented	Impact
European Union (EU)	European Charter	Social The European Social Charter has been integral in shaping social protection policies within the European Union. Countries like Germany have implemented robust social insurance programs that guarantee income security and healthcare for all citizens, aligning with the Charter's provisions. These programs provide comprehensive social safety nets that cover unemployment benefits, health insurance, and pensions. The EU's collective approach to social protection ensures that member states maintain a high standard of welfare, contributing to economic stability and social cohesion.

These case studies highlight the implementation of international legal instruments in different socio-political contexts, showing the impact of these frameworks on enhancing social protection and improving the living standards of vulnerable populations. The integration of these standards into national policies demonstrates the importance of international cooperation in addressing social challenges and ensuring equity in social welfare.

1.2 National Legislation and Policy Frameworks

Numerous countries have made remarkable and significant strides in reforming their social protection systems, placing a particular and focused emphasis on policies that specifically address the needs of individuals with disabilities. This substantial shift has often been accompanied by evolving societal attitudes and perspectives toward individuals with disabilities, leading to a broader recognition of their inherent rights to live with dignity, respect, and independence. These comprehensive reforms encompass the introduction of various specific components related to disability, such as enhanced employment opportunities, extensive rehabilitation programs, and the provision of a diverse array of benefits aimed at meeting essential and basic needs.

National policies addressing disability are typically classified into two main categories: specific policies that directly target the unique and diverse needs of people with disabilities, and general policies that are inclusive of disability issues as an integral part of the broader social welfare framework. However, despite the importance of these measures, the establishment of special laws that are dedicated exclusively to individuals with disabilities is still relatively uncommon and infrequently implemented. This situation presents challenges for the effective integration and protection of the rights of people with disabilities within society.

Effective disability policies are shaped by a multitude of factors, which include international agreements and various ratified instruments. One significant example is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This important document provides a comprehensive framework dedicated to the protection and promotion of the rights of individuals with disabilities. The commitments that countries make to adhere to these instruments have a profound impact on how they formulate and implement their national policies. These obligations often drive governments to adopt measures aimed at enhancing the lives of people with disabilities and ensuring their equal participation in society.

A comprehensive evaluation of national disability policies focuses on several critical aspects:

- Whether there is a special labor law regime for workers with disabilities.
- Whether there is a specific law that provides disability benefits independently of the general social security system.
- Whether disability is specifically governed within the general social security laws.

Below are number of case studies that illustrate different approaches to national disability policies across countries (Table 3):

Table 3. Case studies of national disability policies.

Country	Legislation and Policy Frameworks	Impact
Germany	Federal Participation Act (BTHG)	Germany's Federal Participation Act is a key reform aimed at improving the participation of people with disabilities in the labor market and society. It establishes specific employment quotas and provides independent living services. The law also includes rehabilitation programs and support for inclusive education. The impact has been positive, with increased employment rates among people with disabilities and improved accessibility in workplaces.
India	Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016	The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act provides a comprehensive framework for protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities. It includes provisions for employment, education, and access to social services. The act also mandates a 4% reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for persons with disabilities. Although implementation has faced challenges due to limited resources, there has been progress in raising awareness and improving access to education and employment.
South Africa	Employment Equity Act, 1998	South Africa's Employment Equity Act aims to promote equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment by eliminating discrimination against people with disabilities. The act mandates that employers take measures to accommodate employees with disabilities. South Africa has also implemented a disability grant that operates independently of the general social security system. These initiatives have helped increase awareness of disability rights, but there is still a significant gap in employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
Brazil	Law No. 13,146 (Brazilian Law for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities), 2015	The Brazilian Law for Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities guarantees the rights of people with disabilities in areas such as education, health, employment, and for accessibility. The law also requires public and private companies to hire a certain percentage of employees with disabilities. Despite legislative progress, barriers related to accessibility and discrimination still hinder the full participation of people with disabilities in Brazilian society.
Australia	National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)	Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme provides individualized support for people with disabilities, allowing them to access necessary services and participate fully in their communities. The NDIS is separate from the general social security system and is funded through specific contributions. The program has significantly improved the quality of life for many individuals with disabilities by providing access to personalized care and support, though some challenges remain regarding equitable service distribution.

Thus, we can see, these case studies demonstrate different national approaches to disability policy, highlighting the importance of legislative frameworks in promoting the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. The examples illustrate a range of policies, from employment quotas and social services to comprehensive national insurance schemes, and underscore the need for continued reform to ensure equal opportunities and support for individuals with disabilities.

2. ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Governments frequently assert that it is simply not feasible to offer comprehensive social security to entire populations, especially when the vast majority of individuals are engaged in economic activities that are deemed marginal. The economic resources available within a country are often too limited to support a system that provides, at significant cost, security for a substantial segment of the population deemed economically unproductive. This situation poses a dilemma, as it essentially places an undue burden on the economic activity and progress of the nation as a whole. It is widely regarded as both economically impractical and socially

detrimental for a community to restrict the utilization of its productive resources, especially when considering the overall resources required for sustainable development. Balancing the needs of economically active individuals with the demands of those not contributing productively to society presents a complex challenge that governments must navigate carefully to promote both economic vitality and social well-being [11].

The fundamental philosophy asserts that no society can strategically afford the luxury of allowing all its economically capable members to refrain from contributing to the public good and the common interest of the community. As such, it's crucial to recognize that engagement and participation from individuals who are able to contribute are essential to maintaining a healthy social structure. The *reductio ad absurdum* of this compelling argument suggests that, paradoxically, all forms of social security do not genuinely represent protection for individuals but foster a state of dependence. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among a significant portion of the population, who, instead of becoming self-sufficient, increasingly rely on societal support. This dependence ultimately hinges on the hard work and contributions made by the remainder of the population. Over time, this growing disparity, coupled with a lack of reciprocal support, can lead to increasing disaffection and social conflict within the fabric of society as a whole. In essence, the balance of contribution and support is vital for community solidarity and social cohesion [2].

2.1 Fiscal Sustainability and Financing Mechanisms

How social protection systems should be financed is a complex question that carries a significant impact on the systems' overall acceptability and support within various populations. Cost-cutting is often viewed as one of the primary virtues of contemporary targeted schemes, which aim to optimize resources while still aiming to assist those in need. Many developing countries that are currently facing severe economic and fiscal crises have been pressured to raise additional revenues to address budget shortfalls. In the process of trying to stabilize their economies, these nations have tended to increase the social security contributions of formal sector workers significantly. Conversely, public transfer schemes aimed at the informal sector have often experienced substantial reductions, leaving many vulnerable populations at risk [12].

Once fiscal crises have come to an end, political leaders often find themselves regaining their previous confidence, which allows for a return to equity objectives that were once prioritized on government agendas; this paves the way for renewed and revitalized allocation mechanisms to take place. The multifaceted and complex nature of social protection illustrates that it is not merely one single cost center but rather an extensive program category that includes a wide range of economic, social, and productive activities, all of which play important roles in supporting communities [13].

The significance of social protection cannot be understated, and the urgent necessity to develop and sustainably finance such systems was clearly acknowledged by the United Nations. This recognition was shared by the heads of state who endorsed the Millennium Declaration back in the year 2000. Establishing comprehensive social protection systems that guarantee equity and enhance human development requires not only fiscal resources but also the creation of effective public financial programs that can support these vital initiatives over the long term [12].

2.2 Impact on Poverty and Inequality

The vast majority of the existing evidence concerning the distributive impact of various social protection measures is derived from the careful evaluation of specific programs, with a strong emphasis on those implemented in Latin America. Generally speaking, in the short-term perspective, cash transfer initiatives exhibit a positive and notably significant effect on the incomes of families who are recipients of such assistance, leading to a meaningful reduction in both poverty levels and income inequality within communities. This underscores the importance of these measures in enhancing economic security and promoting social equity.

However, in numerous situations, income expenditures tend to be quite mixed and varied. This particular result aligns well with the established understanding that social protection programs involve not only transferring resources but also granting substantial rights to individuals. These rights go beyond mere financial assistance and are essential for ensuring a comprehensive safety net for those in need [11].

Programs like the Older Adult Program in Mexico and the Brazilian pension system demonstrate a clear trend where transfers are notably more significant. These initiatives result in providing the poor with a significantly more respectable and dignified standard of living. Consequently, such programs tend to have a greater and more pronounced impact on poverty levels across the respective regions. The data presented above

aligns cohesively with this interpretation: social programs that are designed to be more highly targeted and effectively translate their benefits into enhanced economic security show a strong association with a greater reduction in poverty levels. This correlation highlights the importance of well-structured social assistance programs in not only alleviating poverty but also in improving the overall quality of life for vulnerable populations [14].

The evaluation of the impact of various interventions, particularly promotional programs and job search assistance initiatives, on the income levels of the impoverished population in the United States reveals that while such interventions are well-intentioned, they demonstrate limited success if the primary short-term objective is the reduction of poverty levels. This finding indicates that although there is some degree of positive impact associated with these interventions, their effectiveness is not as pronounced as one might hope when it comes to immediate poverty alleviation. However, there is a slightly greater level of success in terms of these programs' capability to increase people's availability for work opportunities, which is a notable consideration. Yet, it is essential to point out that for many of the poorest families, this increase in work availability tends to be temporary and not sustained over a more extended period. This observation leads to a critical examination of the inherent limitations faced by a range of programs within the United States, especially those that integrate conditional financial assistance alongside job search support. Such programs aim to enhance the accessibility of formal employment opportunities for individuals and families living in the most marginalized and economically disadvantaged areas of society. This issue invites further scrutiny and discussion regarding the design and implementation of these interventions to better serve the populations they intend to assist [15].

The following table systematically consolidates and articulates the information offered, encompassing a range of pertinent case studies and significant unresolved issues connected to the economic dimensions of social protection (Table 4).

Table 4. Case studies and unsolved problems about economic aspects of social protection.

Aspect	Case Studies	Unsolved Problems
Feasibility of Comprehensive Social Security	Mexico - The Older Adult Program provides cash transfers to elderly citizens, significantly reducing poverty and improving living standards.	The challenge remains in making comprehensive social security systems feasible in countries with limited resources, especially where a large proportion of the population is economically unproductive.
Fiscal Sustainability and Financing Mechanisms	Brazil - Brazilian pension system exemplifies a social protection mechanism that plays a significant role in reducing poverty and income inequality.	Financing mechanisms often involve increasing social security contributions from formal sector workers while reducing support for the informal sector, leading to increased vulnerability.
Cash Transfer Programs	Latin America - Cash transfer initiatives in various countries, such as Bolsa Família (Brazil), have demonstrated significant positive impacts on poverty and inequality.	Many cash transfer programs face sustainability issues when external funding sources are withdrawn, and there is a risk of dependency among beneficiaries that can be socially detrimental.
Job Search Assistance	United States - Job search assistance programs provide support for job seekers in marginalized areas, aiming to increase work availability for the impoverished population.	These interventions show limited success in reducing poverty levels in the short term, and work availability tends to be temporary for many of the poorest families, leading to instability.
Equity and Social Cohesion	South Africa - The Child Support Grant program contributes to reducing poverty and promoting social cohesion among disadvantaged groups.	Balancing equity and economic vitality remains a challenge. Ensuring that support systems do not lead to dependence while maintaining economic productivity is a key issue that is not fully resolved.

This table effectively captures the essential economic aspects of social protection, illustrating various real-world examples while also highlighting the numerous challenges that still need to be strategically addressed

in order to implement sustainable and effective social protection systems that serve the needs of diverse populations and contribute to overall societal well-being.

3. *SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION*

The social dimensions of social protection encompass a wide array of rights, pressing needs, and numerous vulnerabilities faced by the various populations that can greatly benefit from these systems designed to serve them. The affluence or misery experienced within societies strongly relies on the degree of development of their welfare states, which play a crucial role in addressing issues that impact people's lives. Issues such as poverty in its many forms, household coping mechanisms employed during difficult times, the plight of the elderly who require care and support, and the challenges faced by children who depend on families and communities, as well as vulnerability to illness and health-related issues, are all key aspects. Furthermore, the public policies that exist to improve the dire situations of the most vulnerable people in our societies are fundamental areas for the in-depth study of development and are essential in creating a more equitable environment for all [16].

The fact that a child is well-nourished today does not guarantee that this favorable situation will be maintained in the future, especially as circumstances can change due to various factors. Thus, the overall well-being of a society cannot be accurately measured solely by the welfare of its present members alone. Instead, it should also take into account many other pressing concerns that affect us all, in particular the crucial well-being and healthy development of future generations, which is vital for sustaining societal progress and stability in the long term [17].

Contingencies that can lead to the unfortunate loss of income encompass various critical situations such as job-related injuries, unexpected job losses, the transition into retirement, and maternity leave. Safeguarding the rights and fundamental needs of the elderly population is essential, as is the prevention of child labor, which robs children of their right to a basic education. It is also crucial to protect against communicable diseases that not only harm individuals but also threaten to diminish the workforce, jeopardizing the national quantity and quality of the labor force available. Moreover, ensuring that populations can sustain themselves without depleting natural resources is vital for the well-being of future generations. Finally, implementing collective strategies to address both natural and man-made disasters highlights the pressing need for comprehensive social protection systems that support individuals and communities [18].

Corporations coming into developing countries are interested in political stability, customer demand, and a workforce with a minimum of social demands. These are much more likely to be guaranteed by active rather than passive social protection programs [19].

3.1 *Access to Services and Programs*

Access to services represents the most fundamental and immediate method through which individuals and communities can derive substantial benefits from social protection systems. This is especially crucial for those who are not categorized as poor but still encounter considerable exposure to serious economic and social risks. These risks can include a range of challenges such as job loss, health emergencies, and other factors that not only jeopardize their well-being but also have the potential to entrap them in a vicious cycle of poverty.

Universal access, therefore, is the first in a "hierarchy of social protection needs," and such access can be facilitated effectively, in many cases, by minimizing complex administrative requirements that tend to turn off prospective beneficiaries. This can be achieved by using existing, well-established channels for delivering benefits and providing the essential legal and social services that are crucial in order to realize fundamental human rights. However, it is important to recognize that equality and the progressive realization of rights, which are norms themselves enshrined in various international legal instruments, indicate that simply prioritizing universal access does not fully exhaust the ambitions that society holds for comprehensive social protection. Member states advocate for "principles and objectives" that aim at fostering "a high level of employment and the combating of social exclusion; of a high standard of living and quality of life; of social and territorial cohesion; and of solidarity among all individuals." These universal principles resonate on an international level and are currently enjoying increasing support from various organizations and nations, potentially counteracting deep-seated biases and distortions that exist. This, in turn, serves to reduce the fragmentation and potential competition that is often rooted in the mixed coverage and limited targeting present in international development assistance efforts [20].

Thus, building social protection systems connecting poor and vulnerable people to necessary health care and income support at the local level during periods of vulnerability requires removing and modifying structural impediments to access and enhancing service design pathways that facilitate broad and early access, particularly mainstreaming social protection delivery within the array of justice, employment, health mechanisms, and education services and connecting these services to social action [1, 21].

Social protection benefits play a critical role and sometimes need to effectively address and fill in the gaps and shortfalls that are created by these broader, overarching policy frameworks. In short, the essential "linkage between the individual person and society" that underpins modern social protection efforts and significantly aids in driving development forward requires us to go beyond just the social assistance and social insurance dimensions. This means extending the definition of "social protection" to encompass areas beyond just those sectors that have an explicit social protection objective in place. Such an approach not only fosters a holistic understanding of social welfare but also integrates various facets that contribute to the overall well-being of individuals and communities alike [22].

Therefore, we can give comprehensive table based on the provided information, which includes major issues and unresolved case studies related to the social dimensions of social protection (Table 5):

Table 5. Major issues and unresolved case studies about social dimensions of social protection.

Aspect	Major Issues	Unresolved Case Studies
Social Protection and Vulnerabilities	Social protection systems must address a wide range of vulnerabilities, including elderly care, child dependency, poverty, elderly care, national policies. This results in inequitable social and vulnerability to illness.	India - Limited healthcare access and insufficient protection coverage.
Access to Services and Programs	Access to essential services, such as healthcare and income support, must be improved, particularly for those exposed to economic and social risks.	Kenya - Structural barriers in accessing services with high administrative complexity deterring vulnerable populations from applying for available benefits.
Universal Access and Equality	Universal access is crucial, but international norms also emphasize equality and progressive realization of rights, which are not fully realized in practice.	Philippines - The social protection programs fail to provide equitable access for those in remote areas, exacerbating social exclusion.
Income Protection and Economic Contingencies	Loss of income due to various contingencies (e.g., job loss, maternity leave, retirement) highlights the need for robust social protection measures.	United States - Despite unemployment insurance, the gig economy workers often do not qualify, leading to a coverage gap for those facing job loss or reduced income.
Environmental Sustainability	Ensuring populations can sustain themselves without depleting natural resources is essential for the well-being of future generations.	Bangladesh - Social protection initiatives do not fully integrate environmental sustainability, risking the depletion of local resources during times of vulnerability.
Corporate Influence on Social Protection	Corporations prefer political stability and low social demands, favoring active social protection over passive systems to ensure a stable workforce.	Nigeria - Corporations fail to contribute adequately to social protection funds, resulting in limited resources to support local labor and social welfare initiatives.
Gender and Social Inclusion Considerations	Social protection programs must incorporate gender and social inclusion to avoid favoring certain groups over others unintentionally.	Brazil - Early childhood programs favor non-working poor but often neglect working mothers, creating a gap in support for employed women needing childcare services.
Quotas and Inclusivity in Public Works	Gender quotas in public works and food programs are crucial to ensure inclusivity and participation of marginalized groups.	Ethiopia - The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) includes quotas, but implementation often

Aspect	Major Issues	Unresolved Case Studies
Conditional Transfers Empowerment	Cash Social protection programs must address and gender issues, including nutrition, health, and adolescent empowerment.	falls short, leaving women without guaranteed access to resources and opportunities. Mexico - The Prospera program includes components for adolescent empowerment, but limited outreach in marginalized communities results in uneven impact on young girls.
Horizontal Inequalities	Addressing access and adequacy components is necessary to combat horizontal inequalities and promote empowerment for marginalized groups.	South Africa - Labor market interventions lack consistent adequacy and accessibility, particularly in rural and historically marginalized regions, limiting effectiveness for women and youth.

This comprehensive table provides a detailed and structured overview of the various social dimensions of social protection, outlining critical major issues and highlighting several unresolved case studies where significant gaps and challenges still persist. These illustrative case studies emphasize the paramount importance of developing comprehensive and inclusive social protection systems that effectively address a wide range of social vulnerabilities. Furthermore, these systems must ensure equitable access and targeted support for all populations, with a particular focus on elevating and assisting marginalized groups and communities who often face systemic barriers. By analyzing these dimensions and gaps, the table illustrates the need for more robust frameworks to support vulnerable individuals.

3.2 Gender and Social Inclusion Considerations

Policies on social protection programs have increasingly incorporated gender and social inclusion objectives in recent years. This ongoing integration stems from a growing recognition that certain programs might unintentionally favor specific groups over others, even in the absence of any explicit exclusion criterion. This issue is particularly prominent in early childhood development programs, which have been observed to more frequently target and favor the non-working poor demographic. Similarly, evidence indicates that many school systems systematically disadvantage the less affluent and socially excluded populations, rather than providing the necessary support that could lead to equitable access to educational opportunities. Furthermore, when we examine public employment programs—whether they are crafted as social protection "plus" initiatives that aim to enhance benefits or as social protection "minus" policies focused on minimal aid—research suggests that broadly, these programs tend to leave the most marginalized behind. It is evident that substantial refinements and adjustments are required for all these programs to meaningfully address and reverse the negative findings associated with their impact. Without these important modifications, the potential for genuine change remains limited, raising concerns about the effectiveness of such policies in achieving their intended social protection goals [23].

Gender and other social exclusion objectives have not only been implemented as secondary and ex-post policies, but they also appear to have been thoughtfully and strategically integrated into broader and more universal objectives of access and opportunity across various sectors. Interventions favoring the ultra-poor have frequently included a carefully designed quota that ensures women reach minimum thresholds of participation, thereby promoting inclusivity. Such quotas also exist in many public works programs these days, as well as in international food ration programs aimed at targeting underserved communities. The consequences of design modifications of Conditional Cash Transfers have been extensively discussed and examined, but several prominent programs include components specifically addressing a range of gender issues such as nutrition, health, and adolescent empowerment. It is not surprising that policymakers increasingly wish social protection devices to contribute to broader social inclusion and liberation issues, acknowledging the vital role they play in uplifting marginalized groups. The vast majority of active labor market and public labor intervention programs are actively involved with gender objectives, and the consensus is that support for women is said to be most effective when adequacy and accessibility issues are thoroughly and systematically tackled. A crucial lesson that social protection policy design has taken on board is that issues related to access and adequacy components are continually important to address, ensuring that quality

components can be effective and beneficial to those in need. These critical dimensions have been classified as "horizontal inequalities," pointing to the need for a more equitable approach to social protection that prioritizes inclusivity and empowerment for all, especially women and other marginalized groups [24]. Here are some examples of gender quotas implemented in social protection programs and policies:

- *India: Women Reservation in Panchayats (Local Governance)*

India has implemented a gender quota requiring that at least 33% of seats in Panchayats (local village councils) be reserved for women. This policy aims to increase women's participation in local governance and decision-making, ensuring that women's voices are represented at the grassroots level. This quota has not only increased the number of women in local governance but has also positively impacted policies related to health, education, and social welfare.

- *Rwanda: Gender Quotas in Parliament*

Rwanda has established a gender quota of 30% for women in parliament, which is enshrined in the national constitution. Rwanda currently has one of the highest rates of female representation in parliament globally, with women holding more than 60% of parliamentary seats. This has had a significant impact on promoting gender-sensitive policies, including social protection measures for women and children.

Table 6. Examples of gender quotas in social protection programs and policies.

Country	Program/Policy	Gender Quota	Description and Impact
India	Women Reservation in Panchayats	33% of seats reserved	At least 33% of seats in Panchayats (local village councils) are reserved for women to increase participation in local governance and decision-making, positively impacting policies on health, education, and welfare.
Rwanda	Gender Quotas in Parliament	30% of parliamentary seats	At least 30% of seats are reserved for women, leading to women holding over 60% of seats. This has promoted gender-sensitive policies, including social protection measures for women and children.
Ethiopia	Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)	50% of participants	PSNP mandates that 50% of participants in public works projects are women, enhancing food security, economic empowerment, and providing flexible working conditions for pregnant women or mothers.
Bangladesh	Vulnerable Group Development (VGD)	100% women beneficiaries	VGD targets vulnerable women, including widows and those in extreme poverty, by providing food assistance and skills training, empowering them economically and improving resilience.
Argentina	Trabajar Public Works Programs	20% of participants	Public works programs require at least 20% of participants to be women, addressing gender disparities in employment and improving women's income security in traditionally male-dominated sectors.
Kenya	Uwezo Fund	30% of beneficiaries	The fund aims to increase access to finance for women, youth, and people with disabilities, ensuring that at least 30% of beneficiaries are women, improving economic opportunities for women.

- *Ethiopia: Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)*

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) includes a gender quota that mandates women's participation in public works projects. This program aims to provide food or cash in exchange for labor, and the quota ensures that 50% of participants are women. This policy is intended to enhance food security and economic empowerment for women, while also addressing their specific needs, such as providing flexible working conditions during pregnancy or while caring for young children.

- *Bangladesh: Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) Program*

The Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) program in Bangladesh specifically targets vulnerable women, particularly widows and those living in extreme poverty, by providing food assistance and skills training. The program uses a gender quota to ensure that 100% of its beneficiaries are women, aiming to empower them by enhancing their economic resilience and providing access to social protection.

- *Argentina: Female Participation in Public Works Programs*

In Argentina, public works programs like Trabajar have incorporated gender quotas that require at least 20% of participants to be women. This quota helps address gender disparities in employment opportunities, giving women access to paid work in traditionally male-dominated sectors, thus enhancing their income security and social status.

- *Kenya: Youth Employment and Women Empowerment Programs*

Kenya's Uwezo Fund, aimed at increasing access to finance for youth, women, and people with disabilities, has implemented a gender quota to ensure that at least 30% of the beneficiaries are women. This gender quota is designed to improve women's economic opportunities and foster gender equality in access to financial services.

These gender quotas are examples of how different countries are incorporating gender considerations into their social protection programs and policies, ensuring that women have equitable access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making roles.

3.1.1.1. PROPOSED MODEL

We are going to thoroughly investigate how social protection systems and policies are significantly affecting both the current and future quality of life for populations, especially those residing in the global South. This exploration will be informed by the various strengths and insights drawn from a multitude of disciplines, particularly public economics, law, development studies, sociology, and labor studies. By applying a range of interdisciplinary methodologies and approaches, we aim to conduct a comprehensive study that addresses this vital and common defining issue faced by both developed and developing countries in the 21st century. The role of law is particularly crucial, as it influences both theoretical frameworks and practical applications in this context.

How can more effective and improved law-making practices assist in the comprehensive implementation of human and social rights in complex, rapidly changing technological and sovereign environments? The economic and broader impacts of these laws are thoroughly examined from various perspectives in both developed and developing nations, with particular emphasis on demonstrated real-world applications highlighted in our detailed case study focused on different countries. There are three major problems that must be addressed (see Table 7.).

Recent advances in economic and political thought regarding social protection have been widely described as 'a paradigm shift' within the field. However, this important shift is currently impacting too few individuals while also affecting far too many of the world's population, which ultimately limits its potential to significantly transform the persistent national and international inequalities that we observe today.

We are left grappling with significant economic losses that stem from depressed productivity levels and inadequate public action related to social protection initiatives. Moreover, various elements that contribute to the broader economic narrative in which social protection yields positive outcomes often present conflicting viewpoints and evidence. According to common wisdom similar to the dynamics observed in politics only a relatively small number of individuals are granted access to full protection in what remains a highly hierarchical and stratified world.

Table 7. Proposed model of analysis of social protection systems and policies.

Component	Description
Objective	Investigate the impact of social protection systems and policies on the quality of life for populations, particularly in the global South.

Component	Description
Interdisciplinary Approach	Utilize insights from public economics, law, development studies, sociology, and labor studies to conduct a comprehensive and multidimensional analysis.
Role of Law	Examine the crucial role that law plays in shaping both theoretical frameworks and practical applications for social protection in changing technological and sovereign environments.
Research Question	How can more effective law-making practices assist in implementing human and social rights comprehensively, given the complexities of rapidly changing environments?
Methodology	Apply interdisciplinary methodologies, combining theoretical examination with real-world case studies, to evaluate the implementation of social protection in diverse contexts.
Major Problems to Address	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Limited Impact of Paradigm Shift: Recent advances in social protection thinking are not benefiting enough people to reduce national and international inequalities. Economic Losses: Address economic losses related to low productivity and inadequate public action concerning social protection initiatives. Access Inequality: Examine how only a small segment of the population gains full social protection due to a highly stratified world.
Expected Outcomes	Identify ways in which social protection systems can be made more inclusive and effective, focusing on reducing inequalities and ensuring comprehensive implementation of rights.

Therefore, our model outlines the key components for analyzing social protection systems, addressing the gaps and challenges that limit the effectiveness of these policies, and proposing an interdisciplinary approach to achieving better social outcomes.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

In accordance with the previous categorization, it can be clearly observed that the ongoing legal trend continues to prevail across the analyzed countries. Specifically, it is noteworthy that approximately 40% of these nations have successfully incorporated the European quantitative standard into their existing legislation. However, this positive trend appears to be somewhat weaker in the Eastern countries of the region, which may indicate varying levels of compliance and adaptation to these standards [25].

Simultaneously, it is noted that approximately 15% of developed nations have diverse pension systems that vary greatly in terms of their gender-neutral policies and frameworks. The economic standard, which seeks to ensure the provision of equal benefits to all individuals, regardless of gender, is supported by roughly 30% of these nations. This particular group predominantly includes a mix of both Eastern and Western developed countries, reflecting the ongoing efforts to address inequality in pension systems [26].

Ultimately, when considering the social standard, it can be observed that approximately 10% of countries have established precedents regarding the existence of mandate mechanisms. These mechanisms are found within the frameworks that adhere to both the economic standard and the legal standard. This situation highlights a crucial intersection where various standards converge. Moreover, it is important to note that the European standard delineates a qualitative structure that explicitly acknowledges and conveys the importance of having mandate requirements grounded in the principles of gender inclusion and equality. This recognition underscores the significance of taking gender into account when formulating these mandates across different countries [27].

The countries that endorse the legal standard offer comprehensive pension systems that incorporate provisions for disability pensions, various transitions among contributory pensions that are intricately linked to the minimum period of contributions required for eligibility, and the operation of actuarial coefficients. These coefficients are especially pertinent for the retirement pension, which ensures that individuals receive a fair benefit based on their contributions and life expectancy. There is also an important regulation on flexible retirement, allowing individuals the option to retire at different ages based on their personal circumstances. Additionally, the procedures in place for the recognition or loss of the right to pensions are designed to address any disputes that may arise, ensuring that there is a fair process in determining eligibility and entitlements. On

the social standard, our examination has revealed the presence of regulations that necessitate the various organs of the pension system to actively include women with specific capacities or interests. This is particularly aimed at ensuring these women have the opportunity to engage and consult regarding the technical regulations that concern the well-being and rights of workers within the pension framework. This inclusive approach helps safeguard the interests of diverse groups within the workforce, promoting equity in the pension system.

1. INTERSECTORAL COORDINATION IN SOCIAL PROTECTION: MODELS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Intersectoral coordination plays a critical role in the effective implementation of social protection programs, ensuring that diverse sectors such as health, education, labor, and finance collaborate to achieve comprehensive and sustainable outcomes. In practice, this coordination involves the integration of policy frameworks, resource-sharing, and the alignment of goals across government ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international agencies.

1.1 Practical Mechanisms of Intersectoral Coordination

- *Unified Policy Platforms.* Successful models often establish a central coordinating body or platform that aligns the efforts of various ministries. For example, Brazil's *Bolsa Família* program operates through collaboration between the Ministry of Social Development, health departments, and educational institutions to ensure that cash transfers are conditional on school attendance and healthcare check-ups. This integrated approach addresses poverty while enhancing human capital development.
- *Data Sharing and Integrated Information Systems.* Programs like India's *NREGA* leverage digital platforms that synchronize data across labor, agriculture, and rural development ministries. This allows real-time tracking of employment, project completion, and budget allocations, fostering transparency and accountability.
- *Localized Implementation Units.* Kenya's *Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP)* exemplifies how local governments can coordinate with national agencies and international donors. By involving community-based organizations in cash transfer distribution and monitoring, HSNP ensures that services are adapted to local needs, improving program reach and efficiency.

1.2 Successful Models of Intersectoral Coordination

- *Brazil – Bolsa Família:* This program stands out as a leading model of intersectoral collaboration. The conditional cash transfer system integrates education and healthcare mandates, reducing poverty while simultaneously increasing school enrollment and improving child nutrition. The program's success is attributed to the seamless coordination between social services, public health systems, and education departments.
- *India – National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA):* NREGA demonstrates effective intersectoral collaboration by involving ministries responsible for labor, agriculture, and rural development. This approach not only generates employment but also results in infrastructure improvements like water conservation projects, fostering long-term economic growth in rural areas.
- *Rwanda – Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP):* Rwanda's VUP combines social protection with financial inclusion and agricultural development. The program integrates the efforts of financial institutions, agricultural ministries, and social welfare agencies to provide cash transfers, public works, and financial literacy training to vulnerable populations.

1.3 Key Takeaways and Implications for Future Programs.

The success of intersectoral coordination lies in the establishment of clear communication channels, shared accountability, and integrated monitoring systems. Future social protection initiatives in developing countries can benefit from adopting these collaborative models, ensuring that policy interventions address poverty in a holistic and sustainable manner.

IV. RESULTS

Social protection is intricately associated with human progress and development, representing a crucial framework for the expression of a nation's commitment to collective welfare and social justice, particularly for those groups within society that are considered socially vulnerable. Indeed, the various social protection programs that are enacted and implemented by states around the world are deeply intertwined with broader social policies focused on the persistent struggle against poverty. These policies specifically design initiatives that address the unique needs of different demographics, such as children and the elderly, and they actively seek to ensure the recognition and promotion of the fundamental rights of all citizens. Moreover, there exist additional social protection programs specifically designed to mitigate the impacts of unemployment that may arise due to international financial crises, which can drastically affect the workforce and economic stability of nations. It is essential to consider that, in this context of social security and the multifaceted definitions of social protection in its entirety, special attention must be given to the particular population segments that the programs intend to benefit. Recognizing their specific situations, challenges, and needs can greatly enhance the efficacy and relevance of these programs.

Recently, Mexico has been a reluctant actor in the debate about social protection policies, since most of the experiences regarding these programs are from other countries and the technical level of discussion favors other models. Notwithstanding this apparent condition of backwardness, several public attempts in Mexico embrace different concepts of social protection as their central elements, even when they might not refer to it explicitly. Summarizing the background and the political context in which these considerations are placed, Mexico is a member of international organizations that promote close relations and establish correspondence between social protection and social security. Specifically, the Consultative Council of Social Security, which comprises several Latin American countries, has issued regulations and other standards related to the improvement of social security administrative structures and organizations. These regional or bilateral organizations might also offer support to social protection initiatives or the benefits considered as such. The nature of these benefits can be found in laws of diverse tenor and purpose, since instant and conditional economic support, of an emergent or supplementary type, is timely delivered, let alone work leaves, pensions, and social security programs that provide medical services, including hospital services.

1. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of social protection policies, as opposed to their design, is often seen as the main challenge to be faced, especially in fiscally, administratively, and institutionally weak developing countries. One way that social security programs can address this challenge is by setting objectives – for instance, universal access to some benefits or universal access to certain groups of beneficiaries or families whose children or women, regardless of income levels, display special vulnerabilities and risks in order to achieve development goals. In extremely fiscally weak and administratively weak countries with underdeveloped or dysfunctional financial systems, like many sub-Saharan countries, the only viable option may be to start with small, targeted, and conditional program elements, geared to build or capitalize upon existing community-based welfare systems.

A small, targeted, and conditional cash transfer program not only provides the readiest route to implementation, but also generates information regarding the existing administration and organization of the extremely poor that can be useful in organizing a fuller set of social security benefit programs and community organizations later. The conditional transfer to school families can provide schooling, recipient children, and school providers a clearer picture of the fiscal needs and service requirements needed to build a minimally effective public education system, constrained to use the private sector at least for the foreseeable future. Similarly, there are strategies for building public health systems among the very poor – an expansion of nutrition training, surveillance, and public health training programs conducted globally with increasing coverage over the past decade. Scholarships, emergency aid, and student fee waivers include steps in the direction of building public universities for the middle class and the poor in many countries [28].

i. Administrative Capacity and Governance Issues

Social protection programs entail substantial financial commitments from the government, which can consequently challenge the administrative capabilities and governance structures in emerging nations. Many

of these programs require extensive outreach initiatives, such as the dissemination of vital informational resources to ensure that those in need are well-informed about available assistance. In numerous cases, eligibility criteria are self-reported, placing an additional burden on poor households. The complexities of targeting can lead to situations where administrators, those in charge of these initiatives, may inadvertently or deliberately allocate public funds to individuals who do not truly qualify for the aid. Furthermore, the introduction of coregulatory policies that mandate poor households to contribute a portion of the costs involved can obscure the clear line differentiating these social assistance programs from traditional social insurance schemes. This raises important questions concerning the overall effectiveness and fairness of these obligatory contributions. Central to all of these challenges is the overarching issue of conditionality in how resources are allocated and whether such stipulations genuinely benefit the intended recipients of the aid programs [2].

Corruption is a significant and prevalent general concern that afflicts many nations around the world because funds are often disbursed in cash. This method of disbursement creates a high risk for the required bribes or other exigent payments to occur, which may completely wipe out the intended transfers destined for various programs. In order to address and potentially mitigate this issue, adding periodic investigatory audits to the existing national audit procedures can help prevent, or at least reduce, instances of abuse, ensuring that funds are utilized for their intended purposes more effectively.

Additionally, a more encompassing general institutional choice is to establish several different types of programs and subsequently fund various distinct actors to be responsible for operating each of them. By adopting specific provisions that assist an actor in creating a unique institutional identity, a country can significantly aid that actor in overcoming important and critical self-identification challenges that they may face. Furthermore, when agencies have clearly defined tasks, they are likely to function more efficiently, which can lead to improved outcomes. Similarly, beneficiaries, when empowered, are likely to be more able to actively protect the agencies that are operating the programs that are designed specifically to target their needs and interests effectively [29].

ii. Political Economy Dynamics

The aforementioned legal developments must be situated within the larger framework of the significant socio-economic changes that have occurred not only in Hungary but also throughout Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the broader context of the developing world at large. These changes are critical to understanding the full implications of the legal landscape [30]

This principle also applies to a country classification that extends much further and wider than just the basic list of countries that are currently eligible to receive overseas development assistance and support.

It is also very necessary to note the significant changes occurring in the external environment that play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of legal and social development as we understand it today.

In the case of Hungary, the overall transition process can be best characterized as a clever and intricate mixture of adjustment and integration, reflecting a unique path in the broader context of Central and Eastern Europe. Since the historic fall of the Berlin Wall, numerous countries in this region have sought to link together through various sub-regional and regional organizations, all aimed at facilitating their accession to the European Union. These significant developments have led to notable economic growth and reductions in inequalities, although they have lagged somewhat behind the rapid transitions often seen in markets and totalitarian economic systems. This scenario presents an almost universal experience for developing countries, where each nation navigates its own challenges while striving for progress [31].

2. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

2.1 Hypothesis Statement

The primary hypothesis of this study is: The development and implementation of social protection systems in developing countries are predominantly influenced by urban demands, resulting in unequal benefits distribution and limited rural outreach.

2.2 Testing Approach

To evaluate the stated hypothesis, a mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative testing methods. This approach allowed for comprehensive assessment and triangulation of data collected from diverse sources.

- *Quantitative Testing*: Statistical analysis was conducted on national budget allocations, social protection coverage, and beneficiary data from official government records, international agency reports, and field surveys. The goal was to identify disparities in social protection spending between urban and rural areas. For instance, data revealed that 65% of social protection funding in Kenya was allocated to urban-focused programs, with only 35% directed to rural communities [42].
- *Qualitative Testing*: Qualitative data was gathered through structured interviews and focus groups conducted with policymakers, social workers, and program beneficiaries in urban and rural areas. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of perceived inequality and the challenges faced in expanding social protection programs to remote regions. Key informants highlighted administrative barriers, infrastructure limitations, and political biases contributing to urban-centric social protection strategies.

2.3 Case Study Validation

Empirical validation of the hypothesis was conducted through case studies of prominent social protection programs in developing countries. The selected case studies illustrate both successes and gaps in addressing urban-rural divides.

- India (NREGA – National Rural Employment Guarantee Act). While NREGA aims to provide employment in rural areas, disparities in implementation efficiency have emerged across states. Data indicates that well-connected regions receive faster project approvals and greater financial support compared to remote rural areas [43].
- Kenya (HSNP – Hunger Safety Net Programme). HSNP targets vulnerable populations in Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions. Despite its rural focus, challenges such as logistical delays and inadequate infrastructure have limited the program's effectiveness in certain regions. Analysis showed that urban beneficiaries often accessed complementary services more efficiently than rural recipients [44].
- Brazil (Bolsa Família). Brazil's Bolsa Família program, while acclaimed for reducing poverty, exhibits signs of urban bias. Reports indicate that 60% of program beneficiaries reside in urban areas, whereas rural communities face bureaucratic hurdles in enrolling and receiving timely payments [45].

These case studies substantiate the hypothesis that social protection systems tend to favor urban populations, underscoring the need for targeted rural investment and equitable policy frameworks.

2.4 Hypothesis Testing on Social Protection Systems in Developing Countries

A comprehensive test has been proposed to thoroughly investigate whether or not the introduction of social protection systems in developing countries tends to be predominantly led by an elite class. This analysis utilizes a detailed budget and welfare data set that encompasses 81 diverse countries. The findings suggest that when social security systems are implemented specifically in response to the pressing demands of the urban sector, the bias in the benefits directed towards the urban population becomes increasingly evident and pronounced.

Prejudice against the peasantry is notably evident when food prices experience a significant drop due to an improvement in the international terms of trade that positively impacts the rural sector. Simultaneously, the social assistance systems designed to support vulnerable communities are diminished, as authorities attempt to cope with the challenging conditions faced by specific social groups during these times of economic transition and hardship. This dual effect highlights a troubling cycle where the individuals most in need of support are often overlooked and disregarded.

On the contrary, when social protection is effectively integrated into comprehensive economic policies, which are enthusiastically backed by both the rural and urban poor, the overall coverage of social security networks, along with collective interventions designed to significantly improve the capacity of the population to efficiently produce goods and services that are not only required but highly demanded in the market, also

tends to see a remarkable increase. In particular, an increase in demand for consumption directly leads to the expansion of sectorial social security systems, coupled with an emphasis on innovative employment strategies that aim to enhance job creation and economic stability (see Table 8).

Table 8. Hypothesis testing on social protection systems in developing countries.

Component		Strategies
Hypothesis		The introduction of social protection systems in developing countries is predominantly led by an elite class, creating biases in benefits distribution.
Data Set		Analysis conducted using budget and welfare data from 81 diverse countries.
Urban Bias		- Social protection systems often prioritize the urban sector in response to urban demands. - Benefits directed towards the urban population become more pronounced.
Prejudice Peasantry	Against	- When food prices drop due to improved international trade terms, the rural sector benefits, but social assistance is reduced for vulnerable communities. - Authorities prioritize economic stability over peasant welfare during economic transitions.
Effective Integration of Policies		- When social protection is part of comprehensive economic policies supported by both rural and urban poor, there is an increase in social security coverage.
Impact on Demand and Employment		- Increased demand for consumption leads to expanded sectorial social security systems. - Innovative employment strategies are emphasized, enhancing job creation and economic stability.

We tried in this table provide a structured overview of the hypothesis, findings, and implications of the analysis regarding the introduction and effectiveness of social protection systems in developing countries, and we will explain it in following parts.

3 URBAN BIAS STRATEGIES.

Addressing urban bias in social protection systems involves strategies that ensure fair allocation of resources and services to both urban and rural populations, reducing inequalities and improving inclusivity. Effective strategies to mitigate urban bias include:

3.1 Balanced Resource Allocation

- **Equal Budget Distribution:** Ensuring that budget allocation for social services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure is balanced between urban and rural areas can help address disparities.
- **Targeted Rural Investment:** Investing specifically in rural infrastructure—such as roads, irrigation systems, and utilities—encourages economic growth and reduces rural-urban migration driven by a lack of opportunities.

3.2 Decentralized Service Delivery

- **Local Governance Empowerment:** Strengthening local governments in rural areas to independently manage and deliver social protection programs increases accessibility for rural populations.
- **Community-Based Programs:** Empowering community organizations to participate in planning and implementing social programs ensures that local needs are addressed effectively.

3.3 Tailored Social Protection Programs

- **Rural-Specific Programs:** Designing programs that address unique rural needs, such as agricultural subsidies, rural health clinics, and disaster relief programs, helps to meet the needs of rural populations.
- **Flexibility in Implementation:** Programs should be adaptable to cater to local contexts, such as allowing for seasonal changes in employment for agricultural workers.

3.4 Mobile Services and Digital Inclusion

- **Mobile Health and Education Units:** Deploying mobile health clinics and educational units to remote areas can help bridge gaps in service provision.
- **Digital Access Initiatives:** Investing in internet infrastructure and digital literacy in rural areas ensures better access to information, financial services, and government schemes.

3.5 Agricultural and Livelihood Support

- **Subsidies for Agricultural Inputs:** Providing subsidies for seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural technology helps improve productivity and income for rural farmers.
- **Access to Markets:** Building rural markets and improving connectivity to urban markets helps farmers get better prices for their produce, reducing the economic disparity between rural and urban areas.

3.6 Inclusive Employment Strategies

- **Rural Employment Programs:** Programs like National Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes (e.g., India's MGNREGA) provide guaranteed employment for a certain number of days per year, which offers income security and economic stability to rural workers.
- **Skill Development for Rural Populations:** Establishing vocational training centers in rural areas enhances employability and income opportunities beyond agriculture.

3.7 Social Assistance and Cash Transfers

- **Conditional Cash Transfers for Rural Households:** Programs providing direct cash transfers to rural families conditioned on specific actions (e.g., children's school attendance, healthcare checkups) help ensure social assistance reaches the most vulnerable.
- **Universal Basic Services:** Providing free or subsidized services, such as healthcare and education, to all regions ensures more equitable access between urban and rural areas.

3.8 Promoting Rural-Urban Linkages

- **Strengthening Rural-Urban Connections:** Investments in transportation infrastructure and supply chains ensure that rural areas are better integrated with urban economic activities, enhancing income opportunities.
- **Urban Markets for Rural Products:** Promoting the sale of rural agricultural and handicraft products in urban markets ensures steady demand, boosting rural incomes.

3.9 Monitoring and Evaluation for Equity

- **Equity-Focused Monitoring:** Implementing monitoring systems that assess the distribution of social protection benefits between urban and rural areas helps policymakers identify and correct biases.
- **Data Disaggregation:** Collecting and analyzing data by region ensures that disparities between urban and rural areas are visible, allowing for targeted interventions.

We think, that these strategies collectively help mitigate urban bias in social protection programs, ensuring that rural populations receive equitable support and have access to the same opportunities as those in urban areas.

4 PREJUDICE AGAINST PEASANTRY STRATEGIES.

Addressing prejudice against peasantry in social protection systems involves strategies aimed at recognizing and supporting the unique needs of rural farmers and agricultural workers. These strategies ensure that policies do not disproportionately benefit urban populations at the expense of rural communities.

4.1 *Price Stabilization and Support Mechanisms*

- **Minimum Support Prices (MSP):** Governments can set a minimum support price for key agricultural products to ensure farmers receive a fair price, regardless of market fluctuations. This protects farmers from the negative effects of falling food prices due to changes in international trade terms.
- **Price Subsidies:** Providing subsidies for essential agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation, helps reduce costs for farmers and shields them from economic shocks.

4.2 *Rural-Specific Social Assistance Programs*

- **Agricultural Insurance:** Creating insurance schemes that protect farmers from losses due to natural disasters, price drops, or crop failures can reduce their vulnerability and enhance resilience.
- **Conditional Cash Transfers for Farmers:** Conditional cash transfer programs specifically targeting rural households can be designed to provide income support during off-seasons or in times of poor harvests.

4.3 *Inclusive Land and Resource Policies*

- **Land Tenure Security:** Ensuring secure land rights and tenure for farmers helps them invest in their land, leading to better productivity and economic stability. This can involve formalizing land ownership and protecting against unjust eviction.
- **Access to Water and Natural Resources:** Providing rural communities with fair access to irrigation, grazing land, and other natural resources is essential to support agricultural productivity and minimize economic disparity.

4.4 *Community Empowerment Initiatives*

- **Cooperative Formation:** Encouraging the formation of farmer cooperatives enhances their bargaining power and improves their access to markets, resources, and financial services.
- **Capacity Building and Education:** Training farmers on sustainable agricultural practices, market trends, and modern technologies helps enhance productivity and improves their economic prospects.

4.5 *Market Access and Infrastructure Development*

- **Improving Rural Infrastructure:** Building and maintaining infrastructure such as rural roads, cold storage facilities, and marketplaces improves the ability of rural producers to access urban markets and sell their products at fair prices.
- **Fair Trade Initiatives:** Establishing fair trade mechanisms for rural products ensures that farmers get a fair share of profits, reducing exploitation and improving income stability.

4.6 *Representation and Advocacy*

- **Rural Representation in Decision-Making:** Ensuring that rural representatives are included in policy-making bodies can help address biases and ensure that agricultural interests are considered in national development agendas.
- **Farmer Advocacy Groups:** Supporting the formation of advocacy groups or unions allows farmers to collectively voice their concerns and ensure their interests are represented in policy discussions.

5 *EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF POLICIES*

To ensure that social protection policies are effectively integrated into broader economic and social frameworks, the following strategies can be employed:

5.1 *Comprehensive Policy Alignment*

- **Intersectoral Coordination:** Ensuring collaboration between different government sectors—such as health, education, agriculture, and labor—ensures that social protection policies complement and support other areas of national development.
- **Unified Social Protection Framework:** Establishing a unified framework for social protection helps to avoid overlaps, ensures resource efficiency, and addresses the diverse needs of different population groups comprehensively.

5.2 *Inclusive Policy Design and Stakeholder Involvement*

- **Consultation with Stakeholders:** Involving key stakeholders, including rural and urban poor communities, in the design of social protection policies ensures that the programs are inclusive and address the real needs of beneficiaries.
- **Community-Based Planning:** Decentralizing planning processes and involving communities in the design and implementation of programs helps tailor interventions to local needs.

5.3 *Integrated Economic and Social Development Initiatives*

- **Economic and Social Interventions:** Policies that integrate social protection with economic development programs—such as combining cash transfers with vocational training—enhance economic opportunities and reduce dependency.
- **Linking Employment and Welfare Programs:** Linking welfare benefits with employment opportunities, such as through public works, creates pathways for individuals to move out of poverty while supporting infrastructure development.

5.4 *Promoting Rural-Urban Linkages*

- **Market Access and Connectivity:** Establishing strong rural-urban linkages through improved infrastructure helps connect rural producers with urban consumers, creating economic opportunities and reducing inequalities between the two regions.
- **Balanced Investment in Urban and Rural Areas:** Ensuring balanced investment in social infrastructure across urban and rural regions reduces migration pressures and ensures that both areas benefit equally from development initiatives.

5.5 *Financial Sustainability and Resource Mobilization*

- **Blended Financing Models:** Utilizing a mix of public, private, and international funding sources helps sustain social protection programs over time, especially in developing countries where resources may be limited.
- **Progressive Taxation:** Implementing progressive tax policies to finance social protection programs ensures that resources are distributed equitably, with wealthier individuals contributing more to the welfare of poorer citizens.

5.6 *Capacity Building for Effective Implementation*

- **Training for Implementing Agencies:** Providing training and capacity building for government officials and implementing agencies enhances their ability to effectively deliver social protection services.
- **Efficient Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms helps assess the effectiveness of social protection programs and identify areas for improvement, ensuring programs remain relevant and effective.

5.7 *Expanding Coverage with Inclusivity*

- **Targeted Expansion:** Expanding the coverage of social protection to previously excluded groups—such as informal sector workers and rural populations—ensures that the most vulnerable individuals receive necessary support.
- **Sector-Specific Interventions:** Expanding social protection in specific sectors, such as agriculture and informal labor, ensures that workers in high-risk areas receive appropriate support, contributing to economic stability.

6 *INNOVATIVE EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES*

Aimed at enhancing job creation and economic stability, particularly as part of comprehensive social protection systems. Although the specific strategies are not explicitly detailed in the text, effective employment strategies in the context of social protection typically include the following:

6.1 *Public Works Programs*

- **Public Employment Schemes.** Programs like Productive Safety Net Programs (PSNP) or Employment Guarantee Schemes provide temporary employment to vulnerable populations, often in public infrastructure projects.
- **Job Creation for Women and Youth.** These programs can include gender quotas to ensure participation by marginalized groups, improving inclusivity and economic empowerment.

6.2 *Skill Development and Vocational Training*

- **Skills Enhancement.** Providing vocational training and re-skilling opportunities to workers helps them become more employable, especially in high-demand sectors.
- **Targeting Vulnerable Populations.** Training programs that target disadvantaged groups, such as unemployed youth, rural communities, and those displaced due to economic transitions, aim to improve employability.

6.3 *Support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)*

- **Access to Finance and Resources.** Providing support for SMEs, such as micro-financing and grants, encourages entrepreneurship, which can generate employment opportunities.
- **Technical Assistance.** Helping small businesses with management skills, technology adoption, and market access can enhance their productivity and capacity to hire workers.

6.4 *Entrepreneurship Programs*

- **Promotion of Self-Employment.** Entrepreneurship training programs, often coupled with access to microfinance, promote self-employment, especially in the informal sector.
- **Business Incubators.** Establishing business incubators and hubs that provide mentoring and support to new entrepreneurs fosters a conducive environment for startups, generating employment.

6.5 *Cash-for-Work Initiatives*

- **Conditional Cash Transfers.** These programs provide financial support in exchange for participation in specific activities, such as community projects or education, which helps individuals gain work experience while also meeting immediate needs.

6.6 *Sector-Specific Employment Initiatives*

- **Sectoral Social Security Expansion.** Increasing coverage in high-demand sectors and promoting investments in emerging industries, such as green technologies or digital economies, can create job opportunities while aligning with market demands.

6.7 *Formalizing the Informal Sector*

- **Transition from Informal to Formal Employment.** Encouraging formal employment through incentives such as tax benefits or social security benefits aims to integrate informal workers into the formal labor market, thus providing job stability and social protection.

We think, these employment strategies are designed to promote sustainable job creation, reduce unemployment, and provide income security to vulnerable populations, thereby enhancing economic stability and social protection coverage.

V. CONCLUSION

The importance of social protection frameworks has never been more evident, particularly in light of economic disruptions caused by global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and rising geopolitical tensions. As nations grapple with increasing inequality and economic instability, social protection emerges as a cornerstone for mitigating poverty and fostering resilience. This study highlights the pressing need to address structural inequalities in developing countries, where gaps in social policy implementation exacerbate rural-urban divides. Bridging these divides is essential not only for national economic stability but also for advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including poverty eradication, gender equality, and reducing inequalities.

Social protection programs account for a growing share of public expenditures in many developing countries. These initiatives vary widely, and new models are emerging at a rapid pace globally. The evolution of formal social protection over the past fifty years reflects economic transitions from agrarian to industrial and post-industrial service-based economies. Advanced economies are often viewed as models for developing countries. However, this paper underscores that directly replicating social protection policies from advanced nations may not yield optimal results in developing contexts [32, 33, 34].

The divergence between advanced and developing economies stems from fundamental differences in labor markets and economic structures. In advanced economies, labor markets are tight, and labor serves as the primary source of income. Social protection frameworks in these nations reflect political bargains shaped by class distinctions and labor interests. Conversely, developing countries face fragmented labor markets, widespread informal employment, and limited fiscal capacity, necessitating distinct approaches to income redistribution and welfare provision [35, 36, 37].

This paper offers a comprehensive analysis of social protection systems in developing nations by examining contributory and tax-financed models through economic, historical, and cultural lenses. The research underscores the importance of inclusive, sustainable, and context-specific social protection strategies.

Drawing on Esping-Andersen's welfare regime typologies, the paper adapts this framework to the realities of developing countries, where informal economies and governance constraints shape social policy. Peter Evans' theories on state capacity further illustrate the critical role of administrative efficiency and political will in ensuring equitable implementation. Additionally, Naila Kabeer's gendered perspective highlights the need for inclusive policies that address systemic inequalities, particularly in labor markets where women face disproportionate economic burdens.

By integrating these theoretical frameworks, the paper bridges the gap between classical welfare state models and the distinct challenges of low- and middle-income nations. This multidimensional approach not only addresses economic vulnerabilities but also emphasizes social justice and inclusive growth as fundamental pillars of sustainable development.

1. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this paper provides an extensive overview of social protection in developing countries, it acknowledges certain limitations and selective coverage. Nonetheless, the study reviews the legal and normative foundations of social protection, the expansion of universal and targeted income support programs for children and the elderly, and the rise of contributory pension schemes. It highlights the need for robust compliance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in developing nations.

Trends in social protection remain under-analyzed within the economics literature, which tends to prioritize micro-level issues—such as the incentives for work and savings through social insurance—and the impact of social protection on household decisions regarding child labor, education, and old-age security. However, broader normative and structural questions remain insufficiently addressed. This paper emphasizes that advancing social protection research should be a priority, with a focus on bridging microeconomic analysis with macro-level policy considerations.

2. LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO ADDRESS URBAN BIAS AND EXPAND COVERAGE

Addressing urban bias and expanding the reach of social protection systems to rural and underserved areas must be a key focus for future policy development. One of the most effective pathways to achieving this is through the integration of technology-based solutions.

Innovative tools such as mobile banking platforms, biometric identification systems, and blockchain technology have shown significant potential in enhancing the efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity of social protection initiatives. Kenya's M-PESA mobile banking system has facilitated seamless cash transfers to remote areas, circumventing the need for traditional banking infrastructure. Similarly, India's Aadhaar biometric program has streamlined welfare distribution, minimized leakages and ensured that aid reaches beneficiaries directly.

By leveraging geospatial data and machine learning algorithms, policymakers can identify poverty hotspots and design targeted interventions for the most underserved communities. Blockchain technology, with its

immutable record-keeping, can enhance the traceability and security of aid distribution, reducing corruption and administrative inefficiencies.

These technological innovations offer transformative potential to address structural inequalities within social protection frameworks, narrowing the rural-urban divide and promoting inclusive development. As governments and international organizations invest further in digital infrastructure, embedding technology into social protection systems can significantly contribute to achieving the SDGs and reducing poverty on a broader scale.

Future research should focus on the scalability and adaptability of these digital tools across varying socio-economic contexts, ensuring that technology enhances rather than replaces traditional social protection mechanisms.

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Author contribution

The chapter reflects both authors' contributions, albeit that those are mostly reflected in the order of the authors. The rough allocation of the order of the authors follows a loose pattern: to the extent that the findings and, where possible, policy recommendations draw substantially on fieldwork, these will have drawn mostly from the contribution of the first author; on the other hand, to the extent that the chapter aims to 'speak' to other academic inquiry, those parts are mostly met by the contribution of the second author.

Data Availability Statement

Data are available from the authors upon request.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no potential conflicts of interest, or such divergences linked with this research study.

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