



## **Urgent Need to Develop Universal Social Protection System at Scale in Nigeria: A Clarion Call.**

**LAGOS, Nigeria, September 30, 2021/NNNGO-** "The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the inadequacies and weaknesses in our social protection system further widening the gap between the rich and the poor, leading to increased economic inequality in our society". A combination of debt burdens, inadequate health systems, largely informal economics, rural-urban migration, pre-existing medical conditions, gender and socio-cultural disparities made the crisis especially acute particularly in the developing countries like Nigeria.

These thoughts were echoed by participants at the People's Assembly organised as part of the Global Week to Act for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the Nigeria Network of NGOs in partnership with the Society for Family and Social Protection in Nigeria and Global Call to Action Against Poverty to call for more action on the part of governments world over including Nigeria to accelerate action on the SDGs.

"We the people of Nigeria who will not be left behind in order to form a more perfect union of people, one of solidarity and respect for every person's human rights to eliminate poverty and inequalities, and emerge from the COVID 19 pandemic into a just, equitable, resilient and sustainable world do ordain and establish this Declaration of the People's Assembly".

Oyebisi, B. Oluseyi, Executive Director, Nigeria Network of NGOs pressed home participants' declaration when he said "The last 18 months have been difficult for families and communities across the country as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our vision of equality and inclusion as aspired in the Sustainable Development Goals have become blurred. We have more poor people with more billionaires during the pandemic. Our country belongs to the club of nations begging for vaccine supply whereas others have secured vaccine supplies".

"The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed the weak state of existing social protection systems. Decades of broken promises, policies that prioritise financial obligation over human rights and social and environmental responsibility through austerity programmes that have gutted social protection programmes, emergency safety nets, and essential public services.

While emergency programmes provide relief in times of crisis, they are stopgap measures. The Federal, State and Local Government must create a universal social protection system if the Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved"

Listing their demands, the 61 organisations participating in the virtual People's Assembly asked government at all levels to "put cash into the hands of people who need it the most, including excluded and marginalized communities, migrants and refugees, older persons, parents on

parental leave, people with disabilities, the working poor, those unable to work and individuals who face gender or other forms of discrimination”.

They called on the United Nations to “establish a Global Fund for Social Protection to provide the technical, advisory and financial resources that low-income countries need to establish and maintain Social Protection Floors. The fund will also support capacity building within and between nations so that countries can learn from each other and put in place sustainable systems that are resilient against external shocks” and encouraged Civil Society Organisations to “embark on National debt audits with governments to critically examine existing debt, propose changes to prevent the re-accumulation of unsustainable and illegitimate debt and assess reparations for the damage caused by such debts”.

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**About the Global Week to Act for the SDGs**

The Global Week to #Act4SDGs (17-28 September) aims to drive collective action, mobilizing key stakeholders from all sectors to drive change while reminding world leaders that people around the world are doing their part to accelerate progress on the SDGs. Held during the high-level week of the United Nations General Assembly, this year’s mobilization will also drive action around the Food Systems Summit, pre-COP in Milan, and keep up momentum in the lead up to COP26 in Glasgow. People around the world are joining in solidarity to show there is hope beyond the pandemic, and that we can turn it around for a healthy, just and green recovery, keeping the promise of the SDGs in this decisive decade counting down to 2030.

<http://act4sdgs.org>

**About NNGO**

The Nigeria Network of NGOs (NNGO) is the first generic membership body for civil society organizations in Nigeria that facilitates effective advocacy on issues of poverty and other developmental issues. For 29 years, we have worked to give non-profits in the country the needed support to keep their doors open and to serve millions of communities, families, individuals and variety of causes that critically need their intervention. [www.nnngo.org](http://www.nnngo.org)

**About GCAP**

GCAP is a network of over 11,000 civil society organisations (CSOs) organized in 58 National Coalitions and in constituency groups of women, youth and socially-excluded people, among others. **Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)** supports people in their struggles for justice and brings individuals and organisations together to challenge the institutions and processes that perpetuate poverty and inequalities. Together, we defend and promote human rights, gender justice, social justice, climate justice and the security needed for the dignity and peace of all. <https://gcap.global/es/peoples-assembly/>

**About SFSP**

Society for Family and Social Protection in Nigeria - We are a national organization with a diverse membership base from all the states of the Federation. We work to advocate for a comprehensive social protection policy for the vulnerable and people often left behind. [https://www.facebook.com/sfsp33/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/sfsp33/?ref=page_internal)