



PROCEDURES SPECIALES DU  
CONSEIL DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

SPECIAL PROCEDURES OF  
THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

UNITED NATIONS INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON THE QUESTION OF  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND EXTREME POVERTY

**Questionnaire on recent adjustments of public expenditure and  
the impact on those living in extreme poverty  
addressed to States by the Independent Expert on the  
question of human rights and extreme poverty**

**I. Introduction**

This questionnaire is designed to obtain information from States for the preparation of a report by the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty Ms. Magdalena Sepúlveda.

The Independent Expert's next report to the Human Rights Council will inquire into **the extent of current or expected fiscal contraction by States, particularly cuts in public expenditure, on the enjoyment of human rights, especially their access to economic, social and cultural rights, by those living in poverty.** The report will ask whether such policies are in line with international human rights standards as well as with political commitments made with regard to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, it will address the impact on those living in poverty in particular women and children of budgetary cuts to social protection systems, emphasising that social protection is not only an integral part of a sustained, broad-based recovery from the global financial crisis but a tool that can assist States in fulfilling their obligations under international human rights law. In particular, they have the potential to facilitate the realization of several legally binding human rights, such as the right to an adequate standard of living including food, clothing and housing; the right to social security; the right to education; the right to the highest attainable standard of health; as well as the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs.

**How to answer the questionnaire**

When answering the questionnaire, States are asked to provide information on policies and programmes adopted as a result of the recent global crisis, between 2007 and 2010. States are also asked to provide information on "post-crisis" policies and programmes, adopted or expected to be adopted during the period 2009 to 2011. These time periods are a guide only and States should take an inclusive, rather than exclusive, approach when completing the questionnaire.

If the information requested in the questionnaire has been provided by the Government in another context (e.g. in a report to one of the UN human rights treaty bodies) reference to the specific report or document should be provided. There is no need to repeat the information provided elsewhere. Additional appropriate information, above and beyond that which is specifically requested, would be welcomed.

Governments may wish to identify a **focal point** responsible for coordinating the response to the questionnaire, and make this focal point known to the office of the Independent Expert for further follow-up.

### Submission of responses

Due to the limited capacity for translation, we kindly request that you submit your answers, if possible, in a UN working language. Responses should be sent (in hard copy or electronic format) by **31<sup>st</sup> January 2011** to the below address.

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## II. Definitions

For the purpose of this questionnaire, the **global economic crisis** refers to the unprecedented increases in food and fuel prices in 2007-08 and the worldwide economic slowdown from 2007 to 2010.

For the purpose of this questionnaire, **social expenditures** refer to those public expenditures on social goods (food, water and housing), social service delivery (such as education and health) as well as on social protection initiatives.

For the purpose of this questionnaire, **social protection initiatives** refer to policies and programmes that aim to enable people to respond to various contingencies and manage levels of risk or deprivation that are deemed unacceptable by society. These schemes aim to offset the absence or substantial reduction of income from work; provide assistance for families with children; and provide people with health care, housing, water and sanitation, education, or social work. Among the most relevant social protection schemes addressing those in extreme poverty are cash transfer schemes, school stipends, social pensions, food vouchers, food transfers, user fee exemptions for health care or education or subsidised services.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Enhancing social protection and reducing vulnerability in a globalised world, Report of the Secretary-General*, E/CN.5/2001/2, para. 6-8.

### **III. Questionnaire**

*For all questions, if available, please provide relevant assessments, baseline studies, programme outlines, programme evaluations etc.*

#### **Post-crisis adjustment and fiscal consolidation processes (2010 onwards)**

1. Has your country adopted, or does it expect to adopt, contractionary fiscal policy in the aftermath of the global economic crisis?
2. What percentage, if any, of expenditure reductions are being or will be directed at social expenditures, including education, health, social security, housing, water and sanitation?
3. Please describe all actual or proposed reductions in expenditure on specific social protection programmes, including any reduction of benefits or number of beneficiaries.
4. Please describe all actual or proposed reductions in expenditure on the wage bill, including any cap or cut in wages of public health and education sectors workers?
5. Have current economic recovery policies taken into account developments in unemployment, food prices and social inequalities?
6. Does your country expect to restore public expenditure after a certain time period, and, if so, when?

#### **Impact of the reductions in social expenditure on those living in extreme poverty**

7. What is the assessment of the current access of the most vulnerable groups (particularly women, children, the older people and persons with disabilities) to social goods, services and assistance, which are essential to their enjoyment of human rights? To what extent is their inadequate access attributable to the reductions in social expenditure? Please provide major findings.
8. Did the Government carry out any impact analysis (incidence analysis) of the impact of the public expenditure or social expenditure reduction on the most vulnerable groups in society prior to its implementation? If yes, please provide major findings.
9. Were any alternative fiscal policies considered and discarded, and, if so, why?
10. What mechanisms are in place to ensure that the human rights of those living in extreme poverty are protected, respected and fulfilled in light of reductions in public expenditure?
11. Please indicate whether there was a public consultation prior to taking measures to reduce public expenditure. If yes, please describe which non-governmental agencies or groups were consulted.