



Social Protection and Care Economy in Africa

Beginning of the course : 26 th January 2026

Application Deadline : 24 th January 2026

 CERTIFICATE

 ONLINE COURSE

Languages English - French

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Social Protection and Care Economy in Africa

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

ANNOUNCEMENT IN BRIEF

Type : Short Term Course

Programme Area : Social Protection

Beginning of the course : 26 January 2026

Duration : 4 weeks

Languages : English - French

Location : Web Based E-Learning

Fee : Covered by the UNECA

Application Deadline : 24th January 2026

Specific target audience : Technocrat in the fields of social Policy



N.B.: IDEP strongly encourages and supports the participation of suitably qualified female civil servants in its capacity-building and training program.

PROGRAM RATIONALE

African societies are currently undergoing major transformations that challenge their social protection systems and their vulnerable populations.

The first transformation is on the economic front. Africa got off to a strong start in the new century, emerging as the second fastest-growing region in the world during the 2000-2015 period (UNECA 2015). However, this growth has since slowed down, owing to the lingering effects of the global financial crisis and falling commodity prices. It has further ground to a halt in recent years, as health and geopolitical crises associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine¹ exposed the continent's high vulnerability to external factors. These trends had dire consequences on employment and economic security, given the limited diversification of the economy and its dependency on mining and extractive industries.

A second transformation is demographic. Since the 1990s, Africa has begun a profound demographic transition, including a decline in birth rates, continued urbanization, family nucleation, and incipient aging. Africa's average birth rate fell from 6.3 in 1990 to under 4.5 today; city-ward migration expanded the share of urban population from 28 to 43%, despite higher fertility in rural areas; and life expectancy grew from roughly 50 to 61 years, despite the expected toll from the pandemic. Although some of these demographic trends portend opportunity, they also put pressure on urban employment and the care of vulnerable populations.

Together, the above economic and demographic transitions heighten concerns about poverty, inequality and vulnerability. Poverty rates steadily fell between 1990 and 2015, from 54 per cent to 41 per cent. Yet, the absolute number of African people living in extreme poverty (on less than US\$1.90 per day) increased from 278 million in 1990 to 413 million in 2015. According to data from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic pushed an estimated 55 million Africans into extreme poverty in 2020 and reversed more than two decades of progress in poverty reduction on the continent². Income inequality is also rising in the region, to the point where Africa is now home to 12 out the 20 most unequal countries in the world (PRB ref). Unless urgent steps are taken, this inequality will keep rising over the next half century, given demographic trends where families in the lowest wealth quintile bear 2-3 times more children than do families in the top quintile (DHS 2024).

Social indicators such as education and health further illustrate the challenges Africa faces despite economic growth. Investment in social services has not kept pace with the rising population and associated needs. Education enrollment rates have improved, yet quality and completion rates, especially in rural areas, remain low. Access to healthcare has also shown disparities. There have been advances in maternal and child health, while issues like malnutrition and communicable diseases persist. The pandemic exacerbated these challenges, leading to setbacks in health systems and access to essential services, particularly for the most vulnerable.

Recognizing the capital role of social protection in addressing the challenges of poverty and economic instability in Africa, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for countries to "implement nationally appropriate social protection systems for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable" (target 1.3). Social protection

systems such as cash transfers, access to healthcare, education and other essential services, social protection systems can promote social inclusion and mitigate the impacts of economic shocks and support vulnerable populations.

Robust social protection systems are needed in many African countries particularly for informal workers; NEET (Youth not in Education, Employment, and Training) who make up a significant portion of the labor force. Strengthening these systems can help cushion the effects of economic downturns, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, by providing timely assistance to those in need.

Care systems are very important in the African context, particularly given the region's high rates of informal employment, large families, and significant reliance on intergenerational networks for care. These systems, which are essential for societal well-being and stability, are not always appropriately valued in the formal social protection schemes. They include tasks like childcare, elder care, support for persons with disabilities and other domestic work. In Africa, care work is essentially performed by women and remains largely unpaid and undervalued, contributing to persistent gender inequalities.

Addressing the needs of all these groups requires both political will and policy efficiency. The political will is evident in the adoption of relevant SDGs and targets, including targets 5.3. and 5.4., which calls for countries to "recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate."

This political will must be reflected in the mobilization of resources. Social protection systems such as cash transfers, access to healthcare, education and other essential services, social protection systems can promote social inclusion and mitigate the impacts of economic shocks and support vulnerable populations. Achieving SDG target 1.3 on social protection systems for all in developing countries by 2030 is estimated to cost \$1.0 trillion, or 3.3 per cent of their combined GDP. For low-income countries, the financing gap is estimated at \$78 billion per year, or close to 16 per cent of their combined GDP on average¹.

Given these gaps, governments must design and manage programs efficiently. This necessitates that public officials have the appropriate knowledge and skills for developing systems that ensure effective delivery of services. Prioritizing capacity development, improving data collection, and ensuring efficient service delivery are key to making social protection systems effective, sustainable, and responsive to both short-term and long-term structural challenges.

It's against this background that IDEP is organizing the course on "**Social Protection and Care Economy in Africa**".

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The objective of the course is to provide middle and senior level officials and decision makers with comprehensive understanding social protection and care economy in Africa, including the design, financing, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of related policies and programs.

By the end of the capacity-enhancement training programme, the participants are expected to have acquired:

- Enhanced understanding of social protection frameworks and care systems.
- Knowledge of existing tools and mechanisms to address the financial sustainability of social protection systems, including insights into the relationship between social protection, public finances, and economic stability.
- Knowledge and expertise to design, implement, monitor and evaluate Social Protection Policies
- Skills to develop strategies for advancing gender and care sensitive social protection and building shock-responsive systems that enhance resilience to unexpected events, ensuring better mitigation and preparedness.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The course consists of the following key modules:

- **Module 1:** Social Protection and Care Economy: General Background
- **Module 2:** Social Protection: Assessing the Needs
- **Module 3:** Conceptual Background and Possible Responses
- **Module 4:** Megatrends and Shocks
- **Module 5:** Gender Sensitive and Shock Responsive Social Protection
- **Module 6:** Monitoring and Evaluating Social Protection Systems
- **Module 7:** Country Case Studies
- **Module 8:** Financing and Implementation

METHODOLOGY

This self-paced course will be delivered from **26th January to 20th February 2026**. The course will be moderated asynchronously. In addition, each module has interactive lessons that provide the core content around the topic for that module. The lessons are designed in a way that learners are also able to self-assess their understanding through built-in quizzes. Additional resources such as bibliographies, web links and optional readings are provided for participants who wish to deepen their knowledge of the course topic.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target participants are as follows:

- Middle and senior level policy officials and managers directly connected with or responsible for planning, designing, managing, monitoring, and evaluating Social Policy and Social Protection Policies; development policy and instruments in their countries;
- Officials outside the core planning institutions who play key roles in economic and/or Social Policy and Social Protection formulation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Acceptance to the Course

Applicants to the course are expected to have, as a minimum, a bachelor's degree preferably in social policy or Economy. In addition, two years of work experience in the field will be required. Qualified female candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

Until the registration deadline, participants are accepted to the course on a rolling basis and subject to availability of slots.

Applications must be completed exclusively on IDEP online application platform at :

<https://knowledge.uneca.org/idep>

Certificate of Completion

A Certificate of Completion will be issued by IDEP to all participants who successfully complete the course-related self-assessments presented for each module.

Technical Requirements

Access to internet is an essential condition for participation. The following specifications, as a minimum in terms of hardware and software, are required to take this e-Learning course, please consult your Network Administrator or Systems person to ensure that you have the following:

- Platform: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, ME, XP or superior; Mac OS 9 or Mac OS X; Linux
- Hardware: 64 MB of RAM, 1 GB of free disk space
- Software:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader
 - Adobe Flash Player
 - Microsoft Office (Windows or Mac) or Open Office
 - Browser: Google chrome, Firefox 36 or higher or Internet Explorer 7 or higher
- Modem: 56 K

Note that JavaScript, Cookies and Pop-ups must be enabled

CONTACT INFORMATION

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