

Holistic Approaches for a Sustainable Future: Centering Individual, Collective and Planetary Well-being

Tuesday 16 April, 2024 - 1.00 - 3.00 p. EST

Panel 2

Holistic Well-Being and Sustainability – an Integrative Policy Approach

Thank you

The reason I have advocated for years for **National Floors of Social Protection** – a floor and not a ceiling, is because this is a great example of an integrative policy approach to holistic well-being and sustainability. Social Protection Floors, as an Integrative policy approach – is a policy that is available across the life-cycle, taking account of times when we experience threats to our personal or family's wellbeing. Social protection provides universal access to health care including maternity care; income security for children, providing access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services; basic income security for persons of active age who are unable to earn sufficient income due to sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability, and basic income security for older persons. While I say this, I am keenly aware that social protection is a fundamental human right and the achievement of universal social protection is on global and national agendas, yet more than 4 billion people remain entirely unprotected.

Holistic wellbeing and sustainability are **intricately linked concepts** that underscore the importance of considering the interconnected of **human health, environmental health and social equity**. Integrative policy approach recognizes that addressing one aspect without considering its impact on others may lead to short term gains but long term consequences. Integrative social policies aim to promote health and wellness not only for the individual but also of communities and for the planet as a whole.

Integrative policy approaches recognize and honour **relationships** between human health and health of the environment. Policies designed with this perspective in

mind **prioritize actions** that minimize harm to ecosystems e.g. reducing pollution, mitigating climate change - knowing that these factors directly impact human health. Another example is sustainable agriculture, which not only ensures **food security** but also protects soil fertility and water resources, safeguarding the health of both peoples and planet.

Integrative policy approaches are impacting the work of ILO, as they revisit social protection policy to integrate more directly the planetary wellbeing dimension reviewing environmental sustainability and decent work. Social protection is at the heart of any **just transition process**, playing a twofold role.

First, it can be used **to protect populations at increased risk of climate related hardship**, thus supporting adaptation efforts. Social protection benefits and services, such as healthcare, unemployment protection, and employment guarantee schemes, can support individuals and households affected by extreme weather or slow-onset events linked to climate change in coping with changing conditions. Many countries are adapting existing schemes or designing new ones to provide climate responsive social protection for households at risk. (Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan in 2013) ¹ Having Social protection measures in place before an event occurs helps to expedite relief, and is more cost efficient than responsive efforts designed and implemented only after the shock.

Second, social protection is essential to support individuals and households that are **negatively affected by green policies particularly if livelihoods are tied to unsustainable practices**. Social Protection provision can help those who lose their jobs, encounter restrictions on their livelihood activities, or who face higher prices for their essential energy needs. By offsetting the side effects of green policies, social protection contributes to their acceptability and to strengthening social consensus. e.g. China, Costa Rica and US, EU

Integrative policy approaches to holistic wellbeing and sustainability emphasize social justice and equity. It acknowledges that access to resources such as clean air and water, nutritious food, and safe living environments is essential for everyone to thrive. Policies aimed at promoting holistic wellbeing and sustainability should address disparities in access to these resources. By prioritizing equity and

¹ Shaping the Future of Social Protection page 220 ILO PDF (www.ilo.org)

inclusivity, these policies foster resilient community that are better equipped to adapt to environmental and social challenges while promoting the wellbeing of all its members.

While we seek to heighten our awareness of living and behaving sustainably during this sustainability week, we are bombarded by death dealing systems and structures that threaten us, humanity and the planet. War with its dreadful death tolls, and its trauma inducing impacts is utterly destructive of wellbeing, destructive of the environment, jeopardizing humanity's future and is irreconcilable with a sustainable future, centering individual, collective and planetary well-being

The exploitative nature of neo-liberal capitalism is destructive of the environment and people in the name of profit. Debt, climate change and corporate capture are threats to human rights, to humanity and the planet. Gender inequality, the demise of democracy, the limiting of civic space are challenges to holistic approaches for a sustainable future yet the human spirit's drive and resilience in favour of life, and life in its fullness is indomitable, unconquerable, unquenchable and so in this week we seek to be sustainable pioneers for the future – another world is possible.

I end with opening lines of V'ahavta by Aurora Levins Morales

Thus spoke the prophet Roque Dalton:

*'All together they have more death than we,
but all together, we have more life than they.'*²

Winifred Doherty

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² <http://www.auroralevinsmorales.com/blog/vahavta> Aurora Levins Morales