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UNDP'S
SOCIAL
PROTECTION
OFFER 2.0



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United Nations Development Programme
1 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10075, USA

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I. Introduction



Social protection is an effective tool to promote economic and social inclusion and it is a key lever to reduce inequality and poverty, address vulnerabilities and enable investment in human development. It is now more critical than ever as the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into a harsh light the gaps in coverage throughout the world. Going into the crisis, half of the world (ILO, 2017) did not have adequate social protection and hence was not prepared to face the sudden and significant loss of income and large out-of-pocket health expenses.

While some countries were able to ramp up income support, the impact of the pandemic and related socio-economic slowdown are likely to set back hard-won development progress. The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) latest Human Development Report (HDR) shows that for the time in 32 years, the Human Development Index has declined globally for two years in a row in the wake of the pandemic (UNDP 2022 b). Similarly, it is estimated that 100 million (UNDP, 2020; World Bank, 2020) have fallen into poverty because of the economic slowdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The combined effect of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis could lead an additional 75 million to 95 million people to live in extreme poverty in 2022 (UNDP 2022c). Furthermore, by exacerbating exclusion, the triple crisis is threatening the achievement of the principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB). By 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor are expected to live in countries characterized by fragility, conflict, violence, and high levels of disaster risk (UNDP 2022a). Social protection can help mitigate this by playing a key role in sustaining basic income and increasing access to opportunities and resources, including basic goods and services such as quality health care (UNDP 2020 h).

The world of work has been badly hit by the pandemic and its socio-economic impacts, particularly micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and informal and non-standard workers.¹ Approximately 1.6 billion women and men make their living in the global informal economy and they receive little or no social protection (ILO, 2020). Many of them live day by day, on the brink of poverty, and usually cannot save for a rainy day. This vast exclusion is linked to a financing gap for social protection that is estimated, worldwide, at US\$27 billion per year in low-income countries and \$500 billion per year in middle-income countries (ILO, 2019). The pandemic has also exposed the extent of our society's dependence on women's unpaid and low-paid care work, including frontline health work and domestic work.

One lesson from the pandemic, though, is that it is possible to rapidly expand or launch social protection measures to cover those who are otherwise unprotected. Political will and creativity have been on display in the design of programmes and through leveraging digital technology to identify beneficiaries and deliver benefits. However, much remains to be done, including exploring solutions for the 'missing middle' (those not poor enough to receive social assistance benefits but whose source of employment offers little, if any, protection). The momentum generated by the pandemic should be harnessed to integrate those short-term measures into social protection systems.

For UNDP, social protection is understood as a set of nationally owned policies and instruments, organized around systems that provide income or in-kind support and facilitate access to goods and services to all households and individuals at least at minimally accepted levels, to (i) protect them from multiple deprivations and social and economic exclusion, as a matter of human rights and particularly during shocks or periods of insufficient income, incapacity or inability to work, and (ii) empower them by increasing productive capacities and enhancing capabilities.² At an operational level, social protection systems are articulated around programmes, platforms and institutions that provide coherence and consistency and are organized around contributory or non-contributory forms of income support and around social assistance, social insurance and labour market interventions.

¹ Including seasonal workers, street vendors, contributing family workers (mostly women and mostly unpaid) gig and platform workers.

² Adapted from UNDP, *Leaving No One Behind: A Social Protection Primer for Practitioners*, 2016.



Social protection can be a powerful tool to reduce multidimensional vulnerabilities and build resilience. By tackling inequalities, vulnerabilities, deprivations and exclusion, and advancing human rights, social protection can be a means to reach those left furthest behind and support the achievement of the SDGs (especially SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 16).³ A multidimensional approach to social protection is, hence, a key policy lever to connect and contribute to other development goals, such as fighting climate change or promoting gender equality, for example. To achieve these objectives, social protection interventions should strive for greater integration among the economic, social, governance and environmental pillars of sustainable development.

UNDP’s engagement in social protection is firmly grounded in the human development approach which aims at narrowing the gaps in basic capabilities (education, health, life expectancy, for example) and gradually enhancing advanced capabilities (quality of education and health care) that will give citizens the freedom and opportunity to live the lives they aspire to. It is anchored in the organization’s work of tackling inequalities and eradicating poverty. UNDP’s integrated Offer on Signature Solution 1 of the Strategic Plan⁴ 2022-2025 aims to empower 100 million poor, marginalized, and excluded populations to escape persistent multidimensional poverty and vulnerabilities by 2025. It creates synergies with the other Signature Solutions of the Strategic Plan, and builds on the recommendation of the UNDP Mid-Term Review (UNDP, 2020f), the evaluation of the poverty work of UNDP in least developed countries undertaken in 2019, which calls for a widening of the scope of social protection to address multiple vulnerabilities and a more concerted focus on gender dimensions, as well as the 2022 HDR that suggests a way out of the triple crisis (Covid, cost-of living and climate emergency) around the three key “Is” of the future: Insurance (including social protection), Innovation and Investment. This offer also builds on the social protection component of UNDP’s COVID-19 2.0 offer which aims to provide not only immediate relief but also look beyond recovery, towards 2030. As such, it is part of our response to the new economic paradigm called for by the current crisis, and it should be centred on a new social contract that creates equal opportunities and respects human rights.

Against this background, the offer presented here adopts an integrated vision of social protection in line with the imperatives to achieve the following:⁵

1. **Protect/prevent** – by decreasing vulnerabilities to risks and shocks, ensuring adequate consumption and income and food security, and preserving access to basic services. The positive impacts of social assistance and social insurance interventions such as cash and in-kind transfers, and social care services in many countries around the globe provide evidence of their relevance.
2. **Empower/promote** – by increasing productive capacities and new capabilities of vulnerable households, including via access to quality health care and education as well as labour market interventions.
3. **Transform** – to build a more just society based on fairness by addressing structural drivers of poverty, inequality and vulnerability, including by addressing social norms and promoting a transformation towards an equalizing, greener and more sustainable way of living.

³ More specifically to contribute to the following targets: SDG 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day; SDG 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions; and SDG 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

⁴ Signature solution (SS) 1: Poverty and inequality; SS 2: Governance; SS 3: Resilience; SS 4: Environment; SS 5: Energy; SS 6: Gender equality.

⁵ These three functions of social protection are aligned with the UNDP Inequality Paper’s proposal of ‘buckets of response/solutions’ to address inequality (UNDP, Inequality Narrative, Background Note) as well as on the transformative social protection framework (Devereux, Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

II. Approach

Some of the main lessons from the pandemic are that there are (1) significant gaps in social protection coverage, (2) weak governance of social protection systems and (3) an evident level of shock-unresponsiveness of existing social protection mechanisms. These are the key issues this offer seeks to address. This is not meant to be an exhaustive offer but rather one where UNDP can contribute and partner with other UN Agencies to deliver in an integrated manner in areas where it has strong value propositions and/or collaborative advantages at the country level.⁶

2.1 CHALLENGES

Gaps in social protection

With more than half the people in the world receiving only partial or no social protection coverage at all, their capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from shocks is limited. This can lead them to harmful coping strategies like taking on high-risk jobs, selling off assets, going into debt or foregoing investment in their own human development. The key gap in social protection is therefore coverage, which can be due to multiple factors, for example, poorly designed and/or managed programmes and fragmented systems where particular categories of people fall through the cracks;⁷ eligibility criteria; remoteness, which limits access and being counted; budget constraints and limited fiscal space for scaling up programmes. Lack of access can also be caused by more structural issues like gender-based discrimination, traditional norms and values that perpetuate exclusion of certain populations and working in the informal sector. Additional gaps are related to comprehensiveness (which risks are covered) and adequacy (how adequately are risks covered).⁸

Existing social protection systems may reflect and reproduce unequal power relations and exclusions in society; thus, by moving towards social protection for all, we challenge these social exclusion factors, especially when providing economic independence and dignity to all. There is a need to look at governance arrangements, design of the social protection schemes, as well as structural barriers and cultural norms and practices that can prevent some individuals from accessing social protection. Comprehensive understanding of intra-household dynamics is also required for designing social protection programmes that deliver protection to all individuals within the household. It is also key to look at the unprecedented extensions in coverage as a response to the pandemic and how to leverage them for more permanent enhancements of social protection systems at the country level.

Weak governance systems

The administrative, institutional and legal architecture that underpins and delivers the programmes, can drive these gaps in coverage. Where there is a focus on standalone programmes or governance systems are not strong enough to manage social protection programmes across the social insurance-assistance continuum effectively, there are risks of deliberate or accidental exclusion of eligible populations, and inclusion of non-eligible households or duplications across programmes, delays in payments or delivery of benefits and even corruption. Besides being technically sound, social protection programmes need to be properly managed, financed and implemented and here is where solid governance can be of critical importance. Governance that is responsive to people's demands and management that is transparent and accountable with an adequate and responsive grievance management system is more likely to correct course, address corruption issues and be inclusive.

Furthermore, transparent and accountable social protection systems require social registries or interoperable databases where (a) all individuals that are entitled to receive protection are known to the state and are registered individually to receive protection, and (b) only those eligible are registered, and registered only once. Both of

⁶ See Partnerships section in this document.

⁷ ILO and UNESCAP 2020 points out, for example, that some may be disqualified from participating in poverty-targeted non-contributory schemes, while at the same time they cannot participate in contributory schemes due to the informal nature of their work.

⁸ Comprehensiveness and adequacy of benefits will be prerequisites for considering extended coverage.

these conditions can only be achieved via comprehensive legal identity systems, with integrated civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and identity management systems (such as national ID card schemes) which require strong governance capacities, including for data protection. For these identity systems to really promote inclusion they need to focus on whole of government approaches and empowerment (e.g., women are often significantly impacted in terms of being able to have their own documents and ID in various countries).⁹

Shock-unresponsiveness of existing social protection mechanisms

Social protection gaps and weak governance exacerbate the vulnerability to risks and shocks of many people, as well as the shock-unresponsiveness of existing social protection mechanisms. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of designing social protection programmes and systems that:

- i. can react to sudden and/or new macro or covariate shocks (e.g., the need for adaptive social protection or area-based programmes is becoming more important in the context of climate change) and are able to increase benefits and/or cover new beneficiaries; and
- ii. have the flexibility to incorporate new transfers, programmes or phase out old programmes if necessary.¹⁰

There are people who, by virtue of their location or their socio-economic situation are particularly vulnerable to idiosyncratic and/or covariate risks and shocks. For example, when the main breadwinner or breadwinners of the household work in the informal sector, they are in a constantly precarious situation in which, if they lose their jobs, there is no safety net to mitigate the impact, especially if they are not poor enough to benefit from social assistance programmes. This would be an example of an idiosyncratic risk/shock that affects one individual or household only. Covariate risks, which affect whole communities, can include being located in areas prone to earthquakes or other natural events like hurricanes, cyclones and flooding. Vulnerable people can therefore find themselves with no recourse if they lose their main source of income or their home, or if they have to pay out-of-pocket expenses.

2.2 ENTRY POINTS FOR UNDP'S SUPPORT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

To tackle these three connected sets of issues, UNDP will collaboratively support countries with a **systems approach** aiming at the following social protection objectives:

1. Improve family and community resilience by supporting the design of inclusive, promotive, effective and risk-informed social protection systems;
2. Strengthen social protection systems through adequate institutional, legal and administrative architecture and programmes.

UNDP will also collaboratively support countries in the production and management of data and CRVS systems and the collection of data and assessment of evidence (especially through robust impact evaluations) to inform design and to measure progress and impact.

⁹ For example, in Pakistan, 78 percent of poor women risk being excluded as direct recipients of the Ehsaas Emergency Cash payments programme due to large gender gaps in mobile phone ownership and national ID possession, two conditions for access to the grant.

¹⁰ For such an analysis, see International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (2013) Technical Paper #6.

FIGURE 1. Objectives of UNDP's support for social protection

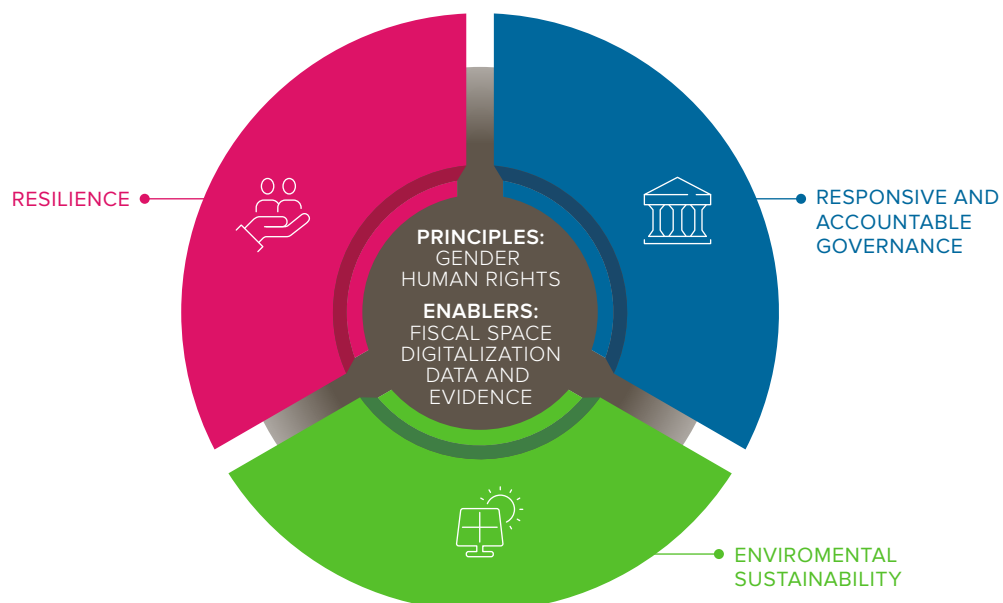


UNDP will approach these objectives through three thematic areas in which it has strong expertise (Fig. 2). These areas will work as entry points for UNDP work on social protection:

1. Responsive and accountable governance;
2. Strengthened resilience;
3. Environmental sustainability.

There are two cross-cutting principles – gender equality and women’s empowerment and human rights – and three cross-cutting enablers – financing/fiscal space, innovation and digitalization, and data and evidence.

FIGURE 2. Thematic areas and cross-cutting principles and enablers



Responsive and accountable governance

The three thematic components are mutually supportive. For addressing the insufficient, inadequate and/or lack of social protection coverage, the offer will focus on supporting more **responsive and accountable governance through collaborative work with those supporting the strengthening of social protection systems**. Responsive and accountable governance has an important role to play in ensuring effective checks and balances and removing the explicit and implicit barriers that prevent people from benefiting fully from social protection. The governance work will focus on: (a) increasing governments' management capacities and making systems and programmes more transparent and accountable for results; (b) support to governments to be more cohesive and coherent in their approach to social protection by promoting national social protection strategies, policies, whole of government approaches (at least across key ministries) and joined up systems for better coordination; and (c) support to inclusive social registries,¹¹ improved targeting and delivery mechanisms that can be achieved through digitalization which allows for good data collection and analysis as well as speedy payment/delivery. Furthermore, the governance component will support government processes to identify administrative efficiencies and coordinated delivery to effectively utilize resources and advocate for financing of social protection programmes. This work will also focus on promoting information flows both from the government to the population and vice versa as well as coordination between and within government departments and levels. To be responsive, grievance management mechanisms will be strengthened to address how social protection programmes are delivered.

Likewise, civil society participation should be encouraged for greater ownership as well as accountability and transparency.

Strengthen resilience

The resilience work will aim at reducing vulnerability at the individual, household and community level, enabling them to manage risks and face shocks with improved capabilities for recovering sooner and stronger and to face future shocks. To that effect, social protection should be more risk-informed and shock-responsive. For example, UNDP will support countries to design and implement systems programmes and reforms that take into consideration the different risks faced by communities as well as how households manage risk. The focus will be on identifying options ranging from more universal/rights-based programmes to design features (e.g., national household registries) that will facilitate flexibility across the system to expand vertically (increasing benefits) or horizontally (including more beneficiaries) in case of shocks. Alternatively, new programmes can also be adopted to respond to a shock, building on the existing systems to address needs that were not previously covered. This requires having social protection systems that are well designed and managed and thus are grounded in sound governance systems. It is also recognized that empowerment and inclusion of all marginalized population groups contribute to resilience-building at the individual, household and community levels.

Environmental sustainability

The offer will focus on the intersections between social protection and climate, environment and energy with a view to mutually reinforcing resilience in these areas. This is an innovative approach, and one UNDP is well-placed to take on with a solid practice in environmental sustainability, focus on adaptation, including at the community level, and support to mechanisms such as adaptive social protection, amongst others. This area of work will help countries in addressing vulnerabilities to risks and shocks when they emanate from exposure to climate change risks or other natural hazards. It could even address protection for people affected by resource-based conflicts. Likewise, for the environmental component, there can be actions that support people whose income generation is affected by the transition to green energy, the 'green transition'. Efforts are needed to smooth the transition and address trade-offs for different groups over time and to support them with social protection instruments such as cash transfers and re-skilling to access jobs in the new green economy. These efforts are closely connected to the resilience component. Similarly, social protection interventions will help offset the loss of income or the negative effect on livelihoods that unsustainable consumption and production can generate. But most importantly, social protection benefits can generate incentives for more sustainable practices increasing awareness in beneficiaries as well as the community at large. Lastly, solid governance is a key aspect here both from the angle of protecting

the environment and the management of natural capital, as well as designing and managing social protection programmes connected to environmental sustainability.

The three entry points are areas where UNDP has a solid track record and are established practices within the organization. This offer rests on these areas to add value to our work on social protection. The offer is integrated in the sense that social protection is interacting with other policy areas such as environment, governance and humanitarian work. This offer proposes social protection interventions towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment results, labour market results or environmental objectives, for example.

2.3 CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLES AND ENABLERS

Principles

Gender equality and women's empowerment

Social protection programmes and systems should be designed, strengthened and analysed through a gender lens to ensure they are truly gender responsive. Identifying gaps including in legal frameworks, access to documents, responsiveness of institutions, financing and other gaps that national social protection systems should address is a critical component of the design of these systems. This requires addressing entrenched social norms that prevent a positive change in gender roles. It is also necessary to identify intra-household power dynamics to ensure individual women and men will benefit from the social protection programmes. At the institutional level, norms and practices based on patriarchal values can have an adverse influence on the equitable design and delivery of social protection. Furthermore, social protection programmes need to include actions to reduce women's unpaid care work and promote shared responsibility with men, the state, market and the community. This requires calculating and taking full account of the economic and social cost of reproduction and of caring for dependents, as well as establishing it as an essential element of social protection and not just a prerequisite of the labour market or welfare programmes. Gender-responsive social protection programmes should address gender-related constraints such as women being overrepresented in informal employment, women displaying different patterns in contributory schemes and women having different social protection needs along their life cycle. It is also important that social protection systems include an intersectional and multidimensional perspective, considering differentiated needs of women and of men from rural areas, of different races and ethnicities, with disabilities, girls, boys, and older women and men, as well as persons of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Special protection should be considered for survivors of gender-based violence. UNDP, in partnership with UN Women, UNFPA and ILO, has developed significant expertise in this work, including in the Latin America and Caribbean region.

Human rights

The State's duty concerning social protection is enshrined in Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).¹² Furthermore and more recently, Recommendation No. 202 of the International Labour Conference (14 June 2012) calls upon governments to adopt nationally determined sets of basic social protection guarantees aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion (the 'Social Protection Floors Initiative').¹³ The UN system has translated Recommendation No. 202 into a UN-wide effort, also entitled the 'Social Protection Floors Initiative'.

Within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the commitment to 'leave no one behind' – understood as a principle that “no goal should be met unless it is met for everyone” – is one of its key elements.¹⁴ The need to prioritize vulnerable groups is also encapsulated in international standards and national jurisprudence. The UNCESCR, for example, has interpreted Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 as requiring State parties to give “due priority to those groups living in unfavourable conditions by giving them particular consideration.”¹⁵

¹² According to Article 22 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, “everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national efforts and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.” The right to social security is also enshrined in Article 11 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 26; the Convention for the Protection of Migrant Workers and their Families, Article 27; and the Commission on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 28.

¹³ International Labour Organization, 2012. Recommendation 202 Concerning National Social Protection Floors.

Enablers

Financing

Social protection needs sustainable financing that ensures the implementation of programmes in the long term. While funding remains a major challenge due to tight fiscal space, more and more countries are recognizing that social protection is a long-term investment in social cohesion and human development, rather than an expenditure, and therefore should be prioritized in budgeting plans. The current momentum should be seized by building on the strong willingness of countries to address the structural issues driving inequalities.

Estimates put the social protection financing needs for middle-income countries on average at 1.6 percent of GDP and for low-income countries at 5 percent of GDP.¹⁶ Continued implementation of existing social protection programmes and their expansion (increased coverage and level of benefits), or creation of new ones requires a strategy for creating an adequate fiscal space and a careful examination of intra-budget allocations. This strategy needs to start by assessing the financing needs for the social protection objectives pursued and then examining all sources of financing available to the state, be they public, private or Official Development Assistance.¹⁷ Some UN joint programmes have also focused on this issue in the context of the Integrated National Financing Frameworks for the SDGs (INFF). Financing may come in different forms, sometimes in combination, such as raising revenues from taxes; including earmarked taxes or replacing subsidies benefiting the non-poor primarily with targeted transfers; reducing tax avoidance; improving expenditure efficiencies, including through consolidating/rationalizing social protection programmes; curbing illicit financial flows; redirecting general price subsidies and, as a last resort, even going into debt. Raising funds from innovative sources can also be explored. For example, subsidies on fossil fuels could be progressively phased out and permits can be auctioned for carbon emissions and generate substantial financial resources. According to the IMF, fossil fuel subsidies amounted to just over \$5 trillion in 2017 (IMF, 2019). Furthermore, partnerships with the private sector and even non-governmental organizations are another potential source of financing or at least partnering for delivery of benefit. It is important that financing decisions come after serious study and social dialogue so each country can best choose among financing options. UNDP possesses tools (e.g., microsimulation toolkit to assess the redistributive effects of fiscal policies in Latin America and the Caribbean), structures (financial sector hubs and Insurance and Risk Finance Facility), and initiatives (INFF, Tax Inspectors without Borders, Alliance for Anti-Corruption, Transparency, and Accountability (ACTA) in Health” and others) that position it well to collaboratively assist countries in instituting strategies for sustainable financing of social protection.

Digitalization and innovation

Digitalization offers promising options for the management of social protection programmes and systems and offers solutions at the most macro and micro levels. At the macro level, digital solutions will be developed for collecting, cross-referencing and managing data to improve the effectiveness of targeting and identification of beneficiaries, as well as the definition of benefit levels. Likewise, digitalization will be leveraged to better connect fragmented programmes and lend cohesion to social protection systems. At the micro level, a key entry point is digitalization of legal identity systems such as national ID cards. Digitalization also plays a key role in modalities for delivery of benefits, from mobile phone payment systems (preferably linked to national ID systems) and electronic wallets to ATM or debit cards, generation of national identification cards for beneficiaries, biometric identification modalities, postal system delivery, as well as systems for verification of benefit delivery. Finally, digitalization will be used not only to deliver payments, but also receive contributions of individuals, even informal sector workers, to their own social protection plans, such as pensions. Due consideration will be given to the existing digital divide because of gender, age, location, disabilities, or income. Consideration will also be given to data protection. UNDP has developed expertise in this area working with specific projects, but also through the SDG Acceleration Labs.

¹⁴ See United Nations, “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>, accessed 1 August 2016.

¹⁵ General Comment No 6 (1995) paragraphs 20, 21, 26, 27, 28 and 30, and General Comment No 4 (1991) paragraph 11.

¹⁶ Examples of middle-income countries: Brazil spent 9.5 percent of its GDP on health, India 3.53 percent and Mongolia 4 percent. Among low-income countries: Afghanistan 11.7 percent, Niger 7.7 percent and Zimbabwe 6.6 percent (Source: World Bank Data Bank).

¹⁷ For examples, see Durán-Valverde et.al. 2020, and International Labour Organization (2019b).

Data and evidence

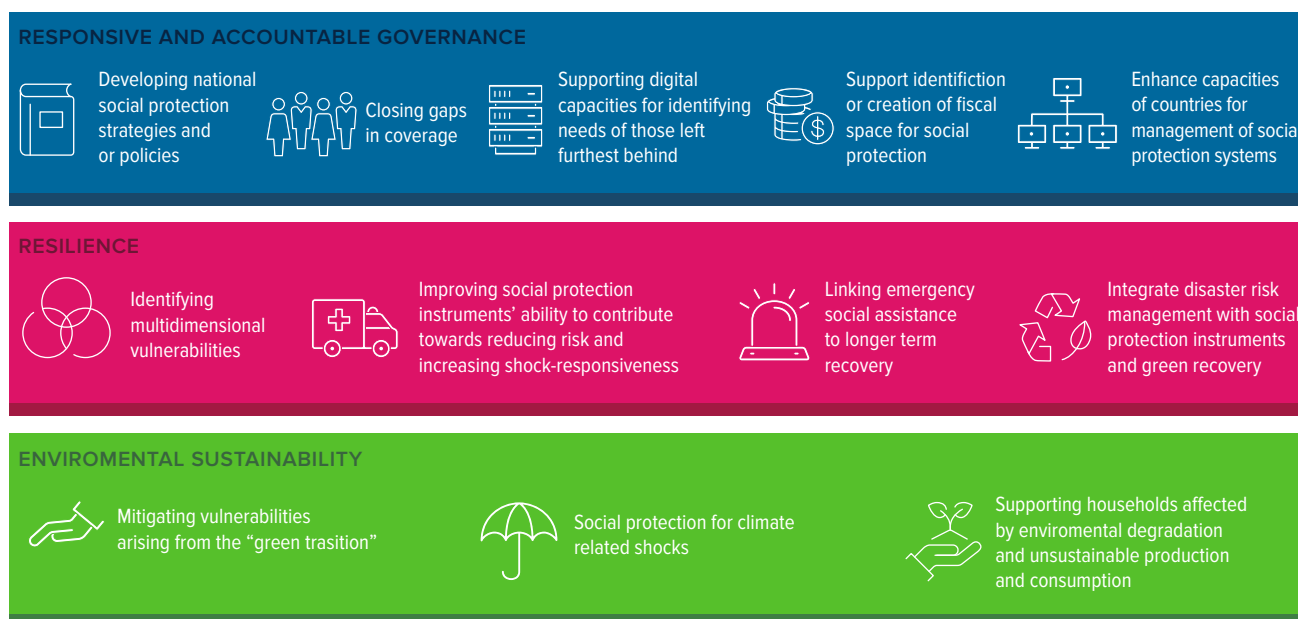
Disaggregated data and evidence are critical elements for measuring progress and informing design of social protection interventions. Data and evidence are generated through the interventions proposed in each entry point and at the same time the interventions require data and evidence for design and for determining their adequacy in addressing the issues they are meant to address and reach the people they are meant to reach. To name a few, UNDP has developed significant expertise in supporting countries construct data sources such as Multidimensional Poverty Indexes and as the lead agency in the socio-economic recovery of the UN's response to COVID-19, it has also supported 93 countries in conducting Socio Economic Impact Assessments (SEIAs) and 128 countries in developing Socio Economic Response Plans (SERPs) which are being fed into a global data insight platform to enhance evidence-based design and policy interventions. UNDP and UN Women also co-created the ground-breaking [COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker](#) – coordinated by UNDP with substantive technical leadership from UN Women – which monitors, among others, the social protection measures developed by 205 countries and territories, analyses them from a gender perspective, and highlights good practices for replication and scalability. It currently includes more than 5000 measures (based on updated data from the gender tracker) on social protection, employment policies, care and gender-based violence. Building on the large-scale investment in social protection, UNDP and IPC-IG have mapped 961 measures across regions in “Next practices: Innovations in the COVID-19 social protection responses and beyond”(UNDP and IPCIG 2021). The report documents inclusive innovative measures in beneficiary identification and registration, payment mechanisms, communication, case management and grievance redressal mechanisms (GRMs). It also showcases financing approaches and coordination mechanisms.



III. The Offer

The offer is articulated around 12 social protection solutions that cut across the three key thematic components with the aim of supporting 120 countries by 2025.

FIGURE 3. Integrated offer



3.1 RESPONSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

Vision

Responsive and accountable governance is key to extending social protection coverage and reducing vulnerabilities as well as supporting effective implementation with proper targeting and reducing or minimizing exclusion and inclusion errors. When institutions have well-defined roles and functions and work in coordination it is possible to detect where gaps and overlaps or corruption are happening and correct those problems to make better use of public resources and extend coverage of social protection to all. For this it is important that there is, at the very least, a national social protection strategy that delineates the roles and functions for each relevant government entity and each level of government, including anti-corruption institutions, and that has clear goals, targets and indicators. Ideally, this strategy would help the different entities and programmes work as a system. This will help to make governments more effective and more accountable for results in the area of social protection. It will also be important to support the Ministry of Finance in setting up systems and procedures to optimize the government budget as well as distribute the resources.

To support this, investing in capacities for disaggregated data collection and analysis including gender analysis, and management and other technical and digital skills can improve the effectiveness, openness and transparency of social protection governance systems. Setting up and strengthening information flow and coordination mechanism between relevant ministries and actors is key to achieve the cooperation necessary to make the system run smoothly. Grievance management mechanisms and information outreach campaigns will ensure more responsive systems that are able to identify gaps and reach those that need it the most.

UNDP's vision is that by 2030, countries have functional social protection systems and extend coverage of social protection, including access to health care, in an inclusive and gender-responsive manner, reaching out to all those in need, and in particular those who are furthest behind. This vision is based on national development priorities and rests on the premise that it is a good investment for social cohesion and for human development.

Ambition

- a. **Promote inclusive and gender-responsive national and subnational social protection strategies and/or policies:** By 2025, support 10 countries in developing cohesive and coherent national and subnational social protection strategies and/or policies.
- b. **Close gaps in coverage:** By 2025, support 10 countries in increasing coverage by closing gender and other gaps in an effective, accountable manner, including advocacy activities and decision-making in the design of programmes.
- c. **Support digital capacities to identify the needs of those left furthest behind:** By 2025, support 10 countries in developing digital capacities and manage data on those left furthest behind.
- d. **Support identification and creation of fiscal space for social protection:** By 2025, support 10 countries in identifying and developing sustainable fiscal space to finance inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems.
- e. **Enhance capacities of countries for management of inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems:** By 2025, support 10 countries in developing administrative and managerial capacities for social protection systems.

How we will do it: Initiatives

Developing inclusive and gender-responsive national and sub-national social protection strategies and/or policies

- Support dialogue at national and subnational level between relevant actors, including civil society representatives and line ministries to determine social protection priorities;
- Support the development of social protection strategies that are evidence-based, inclusive, gender-responsive, shock-responsive and risk-informed, transparent and accountable;
- Support governments by facilitating knowledge exchanges with other countries, sharing best practices and knowledge of international standards and initiatives such as the Social Protection Floor Initiative;
- Support the development of coordination structures across ministries and across government levels for social protection;
- Support strategic foresight and long-term planning exercises including participatory foresight and participatory planning.

Closing gaps in coverage

- Support countries in developing capacities to extend or create coverage at the individual level for informal and non-standard workers, as well as contributing family workers and low-skilled rural workers, especially women and young people, including collecting and managing disaggregated data;
- Expand inclusive Labour Market Solutions, including through training and re-skilling;
- Explore best delivery mechanisms, including community-based social protection, to reach those left furthest behind to access basic services and income security, in collaboration with beneficiaries and civil society advocacy groups;
- Increase productive capacity by linking inclusive and gender-responsive social protection programming and access to finance, digital resources training and decent jobs;

- Identify and implement social protection programmes that contribute to women’s agency and gender equality, including recognizing them as individual beneficiaries, and through different types of basic income reflective of a life-cycle approach, extension of social protection to informal workers (i.e., contributing family workers, seasonal workers, etc.), non-contributory schemes, social protection floors and innovative approaches, taking into account women’s disproportionate responsibility as unpaid care givers;
- Support the government to set up information outreach campaigns to support enrolment and ensure the benefits reach all individuals;
- Promote the exchange of experiences and good practices to promote the inclusion of populations traditionally excluded from social protection;
- Support governments to set up grievance mechanisms to strengthen delivery.

Supporting digital capacities to identify social protection needs of those furthest behind

- Scale up the comprehensive [data platform](#) on the status of social assistance in Africa to other regions and expand to include social insurance;
- Support digital solutions to track and support disadvantaged groups;
- Support the digitalization of legal identity systems, including both civil registration and national ID schemes, and support achievement of universality of access while maintaining human rights standards;
- Support the implementation of social registry management information systems and the interoperability of different Management and Information Systems relevant to social protection programmes;
- Partnerships to support digital and financial inclusion, including closing gender gaps.

Support identification and creation of fiscal space for social protection

- Support dialogues to facilitate the analysis and redistribution of expenditures to direct resources towards social protection;
- Work with finance and planning ministries sharing international experiences in budgeting and financing approaches for adequate social protection coverage and to set up systems for distribution;
- Disseminate knowledge and evidence on the economic and productive impacts of social protection;
- Provide technical support for fiscal space and financing of social protections at country level;
- Support exploring innovative sources of finance.

Enhance capacities of countries for the management of inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems

- Support the enhancement of technical management and administrative capacities, including data capacities, to implement, monitor and evaluate social protection programmes and systems including grievance management systems for effectiveness and inclusiveness;
- Support the development of management and information systems to help governments manage social protection programmes and systems.

3.2 RESILIENCE

Vision

Shocks and crises like the COVID-19 pandemic can have devastating effects on households and individuals. They reveal that when countries have robust social protection systems or programmes in place, they weather better and recover faster from the shock (ILO 2020; and European Parliament 2010 in relation to the 2008 economic crisis). We therefore need to scale-up inclusive and gender-responsive social protection, including micro-insurance, to prevent the knock-on effects of shocks and crises on millions of people's lives and help revive growth as it serves as a countercyclical policy. Having a comprehensive look at different and simultaneous sources of vulnerability and exclusion, as well as imbalanced power dynamics, using multidimensional poverty approaches for example, can better prepare social protection systems and programmes to face risks and to help households cope.

In addition, inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems and programmes need to be risk-informed and shock-responsive as well as able to link immediate relief with longer-term development interventions. This means that social protection programmes need to have flexibility to adjust benefit levels or coverage before and after a community-wide shock hits. They should be able to expand vertically or horizontally to accommodate the needs of the community that has been affected or could be affected, taking into consideration nuanced differences in the needs of different individuals. Likewise, design of inclusive and gender-responsive social protection programmes should take into account the risks prevalent in the areas where it plans to be implemented, whether it is a drought prone area or one with high levels of crime.

Social protection can be a powerful policy tool in the immediate aftermath of a shock whether there are pre-existing programmes that can be adapted or whether emergency measures are taken. Existing programmes could be adapted, or new ones launched, to ensure enhanced inclusiveness and gender-responsiveness. For example, it is common to launch cash-for-work programmes or emergency cash transfers following a shock, such as an earthquake or a flood. It can also provide a good bridge between humanitarian and longer-term development interventions if the social protection intervention promotes longer-term goals such as education or health or environmental sustainability. Building back better and differently, social protection has the power to ensure human dignity, contribute to income redistribution, and put care at the centre as everyone's responsibility.

UNDP's vision by 2030 is to help countries to have shock-responsive and risk-informed inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems, to allow individuals, households and communities to reduce their vulnerabilities to risks, protect socio-economic development assets and bounce back faster and better after a crisis, disaster or shock. To this effect, UNDP will provide countries with technical capacity and policy advice, including on multidimensional poverty and vulnerability and how these can relate to social protection.

Ambition

- a. **Address multidimensional vulnerabilities:** By 2025, support 10 countries in mapping and identifying risk, as well as vulnerabilities in multiple and simultaneous individual, household, community and socio-economic development processes, and exclusion and deprivations in resilience capacities, including access to finance and other services.
- b. **Improving potential of inclusive and gender-responsive social protection to reduce risks and improve shock-responsiveness:** By 2025, support 10 countries in developing and implementing social protection systems that are more shock-responsive and risk-informed, including through leveraging digitalization.
- c. **Linking emergency social assistance to longer-term recovery:** By 2025, support 10 countries in fragile and crisis contexts in better linking immediate, short-term humanitarian interventions with longer-term inclusive recovery and stabilization goals.
- d. **Integrate disaster risk management with social protection instruments and green recovery:** By 2025, support 10 countries in including the development of risk-informed green recovery plans.

How we will do it: Initiatives

Identifying multidimensional vulnerabilities

- Support disaggregated data collection efforts to build multidimensional vulnerability and poverty maps;
- Support georeferencing of households for better data management and generate multidimensional vulnerability and poverty maps;
- Layer multidimensional poverty maps with risk maps (climate, disaster, conflict, health threats);
- Identify multiple and simultaneous vulnerabilities and exclusion factors for different groups of population (women, youth, elderly, informal workers, etc.) to provide better targeted and more effective benefits;
- Support the design of inclusive and gender-responsive social protection schemes to build resilience of vulnerable and excluded groups (based on the identification in step 1 above).

Improving ability of inclusive and gender-responsive social protection instruments to contribute towards reducing risks and increasing shock-responsiveness

- Support risk and vulnerability assessments;
- Review preparedness of social protection systems/programmes to help reduce vulnerabilities to risks and social protection shocks;
- Provide guidance on how to make social protection programmes/systems more flexible in the event of a shock, including financing;
- Build resilience of individuals and households identified as most at risk of becoming poor or poorer in the event of a shock, including consideration of Basic Incomes as a shock mitigating instrument.

Linking emergency social assistance to longer-term recovery

- Review existing emergency social assistance programming and identify opportunities to enhance linkages with long-term inclusive recovery needs;
- Promote dialogue between humanitarian and development actors around inclusive and gender-responsive social protection initiatives;
- Develop and expand the care economy as part of recovery programming in social protection (both through care services and support schemes to reduce unpaid care, and public-private partnerships);
- Implement inclusive and gender-responsive cash transfer mechanisms that target the stimulation of local economies and promote productive capacity without perpetuating any existing inequalities.

Integrate disaster risk management with social protection instruments and green recovery

- Implement innovative, inclusive and gender-responsive social protection schemes aimed at strengthening environmentally sensitive coping capacities at individual, household, community and sectoral levels, including micro-insurance;
- Conduct assessments to determine gender-equitable and socially inclusive green recovery capabilities and possibilities;
- Integrate social protection with provision of microcredit for advancing environmentally sensitive or green and inclusive small and medium enterprise (SME) recovery with special emphasis on women-led SMEs and promotion of economic diversification.

3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Vision

This is the moment to restore balance between people and the planet, designing and de-risking nature-based solutions as part of a new social safety net for the world. Social protection helps to mitigate the negative impacts of the dual nature-climate crisis and can facilitate transitions to more sustainable consumption and production modes. This can be done by linking inclusive and gender-responsive social protection programmes to employment programmes and by supporting SMEs to make the transition to greener practices. The transition to greener economies can catalyse new opportunities for people and economies. It is estimated that by 2030 there will be 24 million jobs in the renewable energy sector versus an expected loss of 6 million jobs in traditional energy sectors (ILO 2018). Social protection/insurance (such as climate insurance) can provide the incentive for a just transition to greener economies and benefit individuals, households and communities that depend directly on ecosystem services including indigenous people and local communities, small farmers, conservation workers, tourism employees and other workers in the formal and informal sector. Linking inclusive and gender-responsive social protection and environmental sustainability can strengthen their resilience to shocks while also protecting, restoring and sustainably managing natural capital.

Social protection is a useful policy to support building back better and greener after crises and shocks. For example, it can be used to support green public works schemes, accelerate the transition to sustainable energy sources, or extend payments for environmental services linked to instruments such as cash transfers.

Good governance is needed to promote measures to protect ecosystems from further degradation, by regulating the use and management of natural resources. Overexploitation by businesses can have a deleterious effect on individuals and households who may depend on those natural resources for their survival. Those individuals and households need to be supported and strong regulations need to be in place, as well as the capacity to enforce them. The latter is beyond the purview of social protection, but supporting individuals and households affected by man-made environmental degradation can be done through inclusive and gender-responsive social protection interventions, such as cash transfers, or re-skilling programmes. Social protection instruments also have the potential to strengthen resilience against disasters and facilitate quick recovery from extreme weather events. For example, weather-indexed crop insurance, public works programmes and asset and cash transfers have helped build resilience to climate shocks.

UNDP's vision by 2030 is to enhance the linkages between social protection and environmental sustainability and to advance sustainable development goals.

Ambition

- a. **Mitigate risks for vulnerable groups arising from the green transition:** By 2025, support 10 countries in adapting inclusive and gender-responsive social protection systems and programmes to protect those affected by the green transition, i.e., to ensure a just transition.
- b. **Promote inclusive and gender-responsive social protection for climate related shocks:** By 2025, support 10 countries in designing adaptive social protection strategies to mitigate the risk of responding to climate-related shocks.
- c. **Support individuals and households affected by environmental degradation and unsustainable production and consumption:** By 2025, support 10 countries in identifying those most at risk from environmental degradation due to unsustainable production and consumption and the impact on their livelihoods; and to design and budget programmes to support these at-risk groups.

How we will do it: Initiatives

Mitigating risks for vulnerable groups arising from the green transition

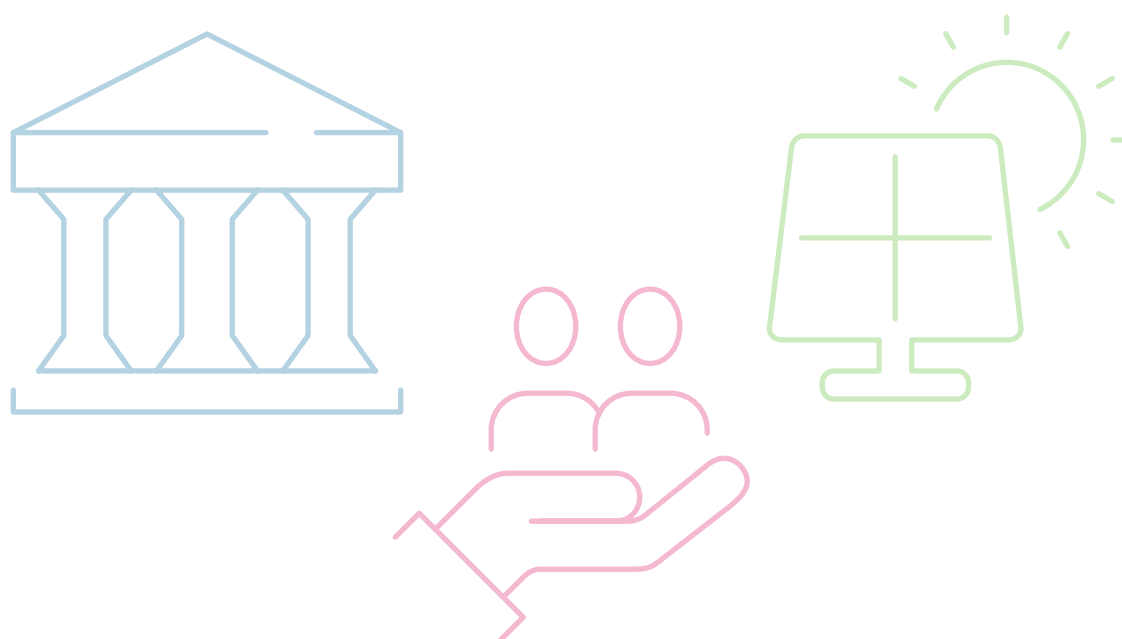
- Design gender-equitable and socially inclusive social protection for a green transition;
- Cost and finance social protection for a green transition;
- Link with productive capacity programmes to enhance sustainability of jobs and support SMEs in their transition to greener practices.

Inclusive and gender-responsive social protection for climate-related shocks

- Support the design of adaptive social protection systems to protect individuals and households in cases of climate and weather shocks, including households looking to build low-cost and safe housing in risk-prone areas;
- Develop climate-related crop insurance.

Supporting individuals and households affected by environmental degradation and unsustainable production and consumption

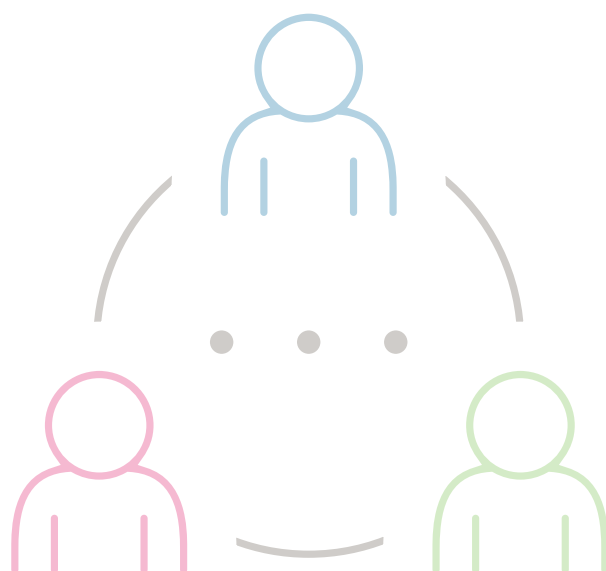
- Collect data, with a multidimensional poverty approach, on those most at risk of causing damage to the environment due to poverty, exclusion and vulnerability;
- Extend social protection coverage to at-risk individuals, households and communities;
- Support governments in designing inclusive and gender-responsive social protection programmes, such as cash-for-work programmes or payment for environmental services (PES) programmes, that promote sustainable production;
- Collect data, with a multidimensional poverty approach, on those individuals and households affected by environmental degradation;
- Design or extend inclusive and gender-responsive social protection coverage to affected households and communities.



IV. Partnerships

At the global, regional and country level UNDP works in close partnerships with key actors in social protection such as International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Bank, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), World Food Programme (WFP), UN Women and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and of course civil society organizations globally and at the country level.¹⁸ In partnership with UN agencies, UNDP supports the implementation of the SDG Joint Fund on social protection in 18 countries. The projects cover a range of topics, including universal social protection, adaptive (shock-responsive) social protection and social protection to improve labour market outcomes or for vulnerable groups. UNDP is also a member of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Coordination Board (SPIAC-B), where it has contributed to the design of common language and tools to foster agency coordination at the country level, for example, the Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA tools).

These partnerships are crucial for delivering coordinated responses and will continue to be deepened and scaled up. In the context of COVID-19, UNDP is deepening its partnerships on social protection. In Angola, for example, UNDP is partnering with the World Bank and UNICEF on a large-scale social protection programme, where UNDP will contribute its expertise in cash transfers. Another example is the inter-agency TRANSFORM project (UNDP, ILO, UNICEF, WFP) which supports the building of social protection floors in Africa by providing training for government officials in social protection to improve governance systems, standards and processes. In the Asia-Pacific, UNDP helps countries invest in climate-linked social protection and promotes application of Multidimensional Poverty Index measures to inform policies aimed at social inclusion. In Western Balkans/ Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS), UNDP supports the labour market integration of vulnerable groups via the delivery of integrated services that bridge social assistance and employment and by mobilizing local partners around the social contract on employment. In Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP is working with ILO and UN Women to address gender gaps and women’s needs by supporting costed action plans following a review of social protection programmes. In the Arab States, UNDP is working with partners including the World Bank on inclusive and sustainable social protectio.



¹⁸ See the Joint letter of the ILO Director-General and the UNDP Administrator to Country and Regional Offices (September 2020) on seven principal areas, including social protection.

V. Glossary

Civil registration and vital statistics

Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems are the main source of data for recording of key life moments such as births, marriages, divorces and deaths and are critical for ensuring that all people, including marginalized groups often left behind, are counted in society.

Gender-responsive social protection

Social protection systems that can narrow gender gaps in poverty rates, enhance women’s agency, women’s voice in decision-making, income security and access to personal income and economic autonomy, and provide a lifeline for poor women. These systems consider the differentiated needs of women and men and avoid unintended negative consequences on issues like gender-based violence. They place gender equality as an integral element of resilience-building. For this, the systems need to consider intra-household relations, disrupt pre-existing negative social norms and contribute to women’s economic independence. The systems also need to incorporate a robust care system that distributes the costs of social reproduction across all of society. Gender-responsive social protection systems are also inter-linked with other initiatives such as financial inclusion schemes, and take specific measures to ensure that benefits and transfers actually reach women.

Inclusive social protection

Social protection that goes beyond income redistribution to include the type of reforms that tackle social exclusion, such as legal and policy reforms, to change disempowering and discriminatory social norms and practices and to create an enabling social environment that would enable and encourage the most marginalized to help define as well as register, access and benefit from social protection throughout their life cycle (see UNDP 2016, *Leaving No One Behind: A Social Protection Primer for Practitioners*).

Non-standard workers

Workers who may work for established companies in the formal sector but whose relation to these companies is such that they are precluded from having benefits. This is the case, for example, of gig economy workers, platform workers, temporary workers, people who work from home, part-time workers, and on-call workers ([ILO, Non-Standard Forms of Employment](#)).

Risk-informed social protection

Social protection programmes that consider the particular risks a household may face given their location (natural hazard prone, high crime areas, conflict) or socio-economic composition (for example, having several unemployed youth, older adults, informal breadwinners).

Shock-responsive social protection

Social protection is intrinsically intended to be shock-responsive in that it should support people in the event of a shock or help to mitigate their exposition to shocks. We consider that the concept of a ‘shock-responsive social protection system’—one that can respond flexibly in the event of an emergency—refers implicitly to covariate shocks, those that affect large numbers of people and/or communities at once, rather than the idiosyncratic shocks such as the death of a breadwinner that may affect individual households or household members (International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, *Conceptualising shock-responsive social protection*, one pager 344, Feb 2017).

Sustainable consumption and production

The use of services and related products which respond to basic needs and create a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emission of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations ([Sustainable consumption and production policies, UNEP](#)).

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