



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

FAO SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

PROMOTING RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL



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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome 2017

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABND	Social Protection Assessment Based National Dialogue
AGRIS	Agricultural and Rural Integrated Survey
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CGP	Lesotho Child Grant Programme
CBC	FAO Climate and Environmental Division
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESA	FAO Agricultural Development Economics Division
ESD	FAO Governance and Policy Support Unit
ESN	FAO Nutrition and Food Systems Division
ESP	FAO Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division
ESS	FAO Statistics Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIA	FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy and Resources Division
FOA	FAO Forestry Policy and Resources Division
FSN	Food Security and Nutrition
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HLPE	High Level Panel of Experts
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISPA	Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment
LEG	FAO Legal and Ethics Office

- LFSSP** Linking Food Security to Social Protection Programme
- LSMS-ISA** Living Standards Measurement Study - Integrated Surveys on Agriculture
- NRM** Natural Resources Management
- OED** FAO Office of Evaluation
- OHCHR** Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- OPM** Oxford Policy Management
- PAA** Purchase from Africans for Africa
- PW** Public works
- RAF** FAO Regional Office for Africa
- RAP** FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
- REU** FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia
- RIGA** Rural Income Generating Activities
- RLC** FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
- RNE** FAO Regional Office for Near East and North Africa
- SDG** Sustainable Development Goals
- SOFA** State of Food and Agriculture
- SP** Social Protection
- SPF-I** Social Protection Floor Initiative
- SPIAC-B** Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board
- SPL1** FAO Strategic Programme Leader for Food Security and Nutrition
- SPL3** FAO Strategic Programme Leader for Reducing Rural Poverty
- SPL5** FAO Strategic Programme Leader for Resilience
- SPPOT** Social Protection Policy Options Tool
- TCE** FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Division
- TCI** FAO Investment Centre Division
- UN** United Nations
- UNICEF** United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
- WFP** World Food Programme
- WHO** World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FAO Social Protection Framework presents the Organization's vision and approach to social protection. FAO recognizes the critical role social protection plays in furthering and accelerating progress around food security and nutrition (FSN), agriculture development, rural poverty and resilience building.

Three quarters of the chronically undernourished and those living in poverty reside in rural areas. Many of them are not covered by adequate social protection, rely predominantly on natural resources for their livelihoods, and are particularly vulnerable and exposed to multiple risks. Yet, they play a critical role in ensuring global food security in the long term, and in sustainably managing the natural resource base in the most fragile ecosystems. *Ensuring their access to social protection is not only a social imperative, but it is critical to ensure their participation as partners in development and economic growth.*

FAO commitment to helping national governments to eradicate hunger and poverty of present and future generations through social protection is reflected in the **FAO VISION ON SOCIAL PROTECTION**: *People and communities living in rural areas as well as those whose livelihoods depend on natural resources are supported by social protection systems that help to: ensure their food security and improved nutrition, protect them before, during and after shocks and stresses, promote resilient livelihoods and sustainable management of eco-systems, and stimulate pro-poor growth and inclusive rural development.* In this context, and to achieve such a vision, FAO is committed to promoting a **SYSTEMS APPROACH** to social protection to avoid fragmentation of interventions, together with partners, build, and strengthen **NATIONALLY OWNED SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS** that are well integrated in broader livelihood promotion and rural development strategies.

FAO approach to social protection adopts a comprehensive outlook encompassing all four social protection functions – protective, preventive, promotive and transformative – and is guided by three cross-cutting principles: **SOCIAL INCLUSION, GENDER EQUALITY** and **SUSTAINABILITY**.

The Framework presents FAO forward-looking contribution to maximizing the impact of social protection on hunger, rural poverty and resilience by building and strengthening nationally owned social protection systems that are well integrated in broader livelihood promotion and rural development strategies. In particular, FAO aims to promote linkages between **SOCIAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE, FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, DECENT RURAL EMPLOYMENT AND RESILIENCE BUILDING**. As part of this work, FAO is committed to contributing to the global and regional social protection agendas by strengthening the **ECONOMIC CASE TO EXPAND AND SCALE UP SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS**.

FAO supports governments and other stakeholders through five key areas of engagement: (1) providing policy support to improve coherence between social protection and FSN, agriculture and rural development policy-making and effective operational design of social protection programmes; (2) acquiring and disseminating knowledge and evidence on these linkages at all levels; (3) building institutional capacities at local, national and international level; (4) advocating for the rights to food and social protection, including the effective reach of social protection to the rural poor, in global fora, platforms and agenda-setting; and (5) facilitating strategic partnerships to promote inclusive and transformative social protection systems.

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda identifies poverty eradication as one of the greatest global challenges facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. Despite efforts to combat both poverty and hunger, the overall numbers remain high. Almost one billion people still live in extreme poverty,¹ and 793 million are estimated to be chronically undernourished (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2015a). In addition, differences across regions and within national contexts with regards to income and opportunities undermine poverty reduction efforts and stretch capacities to create and maintain livelihoods.

Social protection is a specific target of the 2030 Agenda, under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 (Poverty Eradication), as well as seen as a key strategy to achieve other related goals, such as end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, decent employment, gender equality and reducing overall inequalities, and promote sustainable agriculture among other.² The 2030 Agenda also calls for a new framework for action in terms of agricultural structural transformation.

¹ According to the World Bank (2015), about 900 million people or 12.8 percent of the global population were living in extreme poverty in 2012, using the new benchmark of \$1.90 a day. 388.7 million lived in sub-Saharan Africa, 309 million in South Asia and 147 million in East Asia and Pacific, while fewer than 44 million of the extremely poor lived in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe and Central Asia combined. Data available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>.

² The SDGs include a dedicated target on social protection (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), and explicitly mention it in SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality, empower all women and girls) and SDG 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries).

A vibrant rural sector requires supporting enhanced productive and development of markets, but also increased prioritization to supporting small rural family farmers, resilience building, and enhancing the economic and productive capacity of the rural poor. Social protection is now being recognized as instrumental in both poverty eradication and rural transformation, as well as an integral component of effective humanitarian response and resilience building efforts.

Social protection is not new to FAO. The Organization has engaged in rural and agricultural development work that has been shown to serve socially protective functions. It has also undertaken emergency and disaster risk reduction with instruments similar to those that are used in social protection. However, social protection is now framed as a corporate priority, contributing to realizing FAO core mandate as stipulated by the FAO Council in December 2013 (FAO, 2013a).

FAO Social Protection Framework will help guide the Organization's work on social protection. Its purpose is to: (1) make the case for the role of social protection in poverty reduction, food security and nutrition (FSN), and rural development outcomes; (2) present FAO approach and principles of engagement in this area, advocating for more integrated social protection systems that effectively address rural poverty and FSN issues; and (3) delineate FAO value-added and contribution to providing more effective support in strengthening countries' social protection systems and their alignment with agriculture and rural development approaches. To this end, the Framework:

- 1 stipulates **FAO SOCIAL PROTECTION DEFINITION, VISION AND MISSION**;
- 2 spells out the **RATIONALE OF FAO ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL PROTECTION**; and
- 3 outlines how **FAO APPROACH TO SOCIAL PROTECTION** aims to put the Council Note into action;
- 4 by **TRANSLATING PRINCIPLES INTO PROGRAMMATIC WORK**;
- 5 using **KEY STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT**.



1

FAO SOCIAL PROTECTION DEFINITION, VISION AND MISSION



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Worldwide, the majority of the food insecure and poor, the part of the population most in need and lacking social protection, lives in rural areas. Their insufficient access to social protection significantly limits their capacities to ensure their own food security, to build sustainable livelihoods and to contribute to local and national economic growth.

FAO recognizes the critical role social protection plays in strengthening its work in food security, nutrition, agriculture, poverty eradication and rural development, as well as in its efforts to enhance the resilience of livelihoods to shocks and stresses. FAO is therefore committed to expanding coverage of social protection systems to the most vulnerable, in line with the 2030 Agenda's commitment to expand the reach of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all by 2030.

In its support to Member States, FAO adopts a comprehensive outlook on the potential of social protection, encompassing all four of its functions. As discussed by the 2015 State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) (FAO, 2015a):

*“Social protection can play a **protective** role in providing means (cash or in-kind) to access food and mitigate the impact of shocks. It can have a **preventive** function in averting deeper deprivation by strengthening resilience against shocks [and stresses] and preventing loss of incomes and assets. It can support the accumulation of resources to sustain livelihoods (e.g. through asset transfers and public works). Social protection can also play a **promotive** function by directly supporting investments in human resources (nutrition, health, education and skills development) and by reducing liquidity constraints and income insecurity to induce investments in farm and non-farm activities. It can also have a **transformative function** in the lives of the poor through reorienting their focus beyond day-to-day survival towards investments for future, by shifting power relations within households (as social protection can empower women) and by strengthening the capabilities and capacities of those living in poverty to empower themselves.”*

The complex interplay between the direct causes of food insecurity as well as the intricate and yet broad nature of factors that create, maintain and transmit poverty (e.g. depletion of natural resource bases and climate change; lack of



access to land and water; poorly resourced rural infrastructure and state-run social and extension services; limited access to market and credit systems; gender or social exclusion – all of which are core issues in FAO mandate) have led FAO to define an operational focus to that will cover the wide net of economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities.

Therefore, in terms of FAO engagement and support to countries, social protection comprises a *set of policies and programmes that addresses economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities to food insecurity and poverty by protecting and promoting livelihoods.*

In line with this *operational* definition, FAO Social Protection Vision and Mission are presented in box 1.



BOX 1 FAO SOCIAL PROTECTION VISION AND MISSION

VISION

People and communities living in rural areas, as well as those whose livelihoods depend on natural resources, are supported by social protection systems that contribute to:

- > ensuring their food security and improved nutrition;
- > protecting them before, during and after shocks and stresses;
- > promoting resilient livelihoods and sustainable management of ecosystems; and
- > stimulating pro-poor growth and inclusive rural development.

MISSION WITHIN FAO MANDATE

FAO is committed to supporting government to eradicate hunger and poverty of present and future generations, and recognizes the role of social protection in achieving its goals. In this line, FAO recognizes the transformative capacity of social protection and its contribution to enhancing the economic and productive capacity of even the poorest and most marginalized. FAO supports governments and other stakeholders in promoting greater policy coherence between social protection and FSN, agriculture and rural development policy-making and programming. Informed by the knowledge and evidence acquired at global, regional and national levels, FAO also aims to build institutional capacities to promote and maintain inclusive and transformative social protection systems.

2

RATIONALE FOR FAO ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL PROTECTION



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Three quarters of the chronically undernourished and those living in poverty reside in rural areas (IFAD and UNEP, 2013). Most of them are not covered by adequate social protection, and many rely predominantly on agriculture and related activities as a source of livelihood. Agriculture growth and productivity have contributed to creating secure livelihoods and reducing poverty. However, particularly small rural farmers continue to function in the context of multiple market failures. Small family farms are particularly exposed to natural risks, as well as man-made and economic risks and shocks, and face difficulties in accessing resources, public services, functioning markets and local institutions. As a result, their production and consumption decisions are highly interdependent, as the risks and challenges they face in their income-generating activities affect their consumption decisions. Such decisions include: disinvesting in education and health in order to spend more on healthy food or more time producing it; producing cash versus food crops; and/or undermining their natural resource base to sustain their livelihoods in the short term. As a result, poor households often adopt “low-risk, low-return” livelihood strategies, reducing their future income-earning potential, trapping them in a cycle of poverty and further increasing their vulnerability to future risks (Dorward *et al.*, 2006). At the same time, these households play a critical role in ensuring global food security in the long term, and in sustainably managing the natural resource base in the most fragile ecosystems. *Ensuring their effective access to social protection is not only a social imperative, but it is critical to ensure their participation as partners in development and economic growth.*

Accordingly, FAO engagement in social protection is based on:

- > Solid evidence on the critical role that social protection plays in maximizing FSN and rural development outcomes;
- > FAO commitment to address multiple social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities to promote sustainable, resilient livelihoods by strengthening the capacity of households, communities and institutions to prevent and withstand threats that have an impact on FSN and rural development;
- > FAO role in supporting countries to realize the right to food and the right to social protection.

BOX 2 FAO VALUE ADDED IN THE AREA OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

- > FAO research and the evidence acquired continues to strengthen the economic case for social protection, highlighting that *social protection is an investment, not just a cost*.
- > FAO is advocating for expanding social protection coverage by *effectively reaching* the rural poor in all agricultural subsectors (SDG 1.3).
- > FAO is contributing to maximizing the impact of social protection – from protection to production – by *operationalizing linkages (social protection+)* between social protection and agriculture, FSN and rural development.
- > FAO engagement is *widening the audience* of social protection: it is facilitating dialogue between social and agriculture, natural resource management and resilience-related sectors.
- > FAO can help to build and strengthen *nationally owned* social protection systems that are well integrated in broader livelihood promotion and rural development strategies.

A. The critical role of social protection in food security, nutrition and rural development

New estimates suggest that eradicating world hunger sustainably in the next 15 years will require investments in rural and urban areas as well as commitment to social protection in order to ensure that those living in poverty are able to access to food and to improve their livelihoods (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2015b). It is therefore critical to build capacities of member countries to foster an enabling environment for equitable and sustainable rural development, where social protection goes hand in hand with agricultural and rural development planning. The contribution of social protection is clear in terms of improving consumption – through removal of financial and social barriers to access food, education and health services, for example – which in turn leads to improved food security and human capital. However, social protection also plays an important role in stimulating resilient and sustainable rural livelihoods and in achieving FAO three global goals of hunger eradication, poverty reduction and sustainable natural resources management, by:

- > providing direct income and/or productive assets, and supporting income-generating activities, including decent farm and non-farm employment opportunities, to increase impact on individual and household FSN and poverty;

- > equipping households with the resources needed to overcome liquidity constraints and cope with market failures, shocks or stresses, thus allow them to invest in their livelihood activities and enable better decision-making and management of risks where insurance and financial markets are not sufficiently available;
- > promoting labour productivity and employability of beneficiaries through impacts on education, health and human capital formation, thus addressing the intergenerational poverty trap and vulnerability to food insecurity;
- > stimulating local economic development with positive feedback loops on food consumption, production, employment and poverty reduction; and
- > supporting sustainable management of natural resources to strengthen resilient livelihoods (FAO, 2013a).

FAO is significantly contributing to making the *economic case for social protection* by building the evidence on these five roles (see Box 3), and is thus playing a critical role in the global, regional and national social protection agendas.

BOX 3 FAO CONTRIBUTION TO BUILDING THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION: FROM PROTECTION TO PRODUCTION

FAO, in partnership with the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), national research institutions and national governments of seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa, has led the generation of evidence on the economic and productive impact of national cash transfer programmes in the region. The development of rigorous impact assessments was carried out in close coordination with government counterparts and embedded in national policy processes and platforms. This contributed to strengthening the case for *social protection as an investment, not just a cost*, while addressing public misperceptions around dependency and labour disincentives. It provided a solid base to show how cash transfer can help poor and marginalized families to build assets, empower themselves and generate economically productive activities.

Evidence coming from country-level impact assessments and learning agendas has contributed to increase the understanding among policy makers of social protection as an effective measure to combat hunger, reduce poverty and foster rural development. It has also contributed to concrete policy and operational changes: adjusting the transfer size; strengthening community structures; improving targeting and thus access, also by linking complementary activities. Building the economic case for social protection is FAO concrete contribution to country-level policy discussions and actions around expanding coverage of social protection, developing social protection systems, (SDG Target 1.3), and allocating domestic investment for expansion in countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho and Zambia.

Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America shows the clear and consistent positive impact of social protection programmes, such as cash transfers, on food quantity and quality and on dietary diversity.³

In addition, social protection interventions have helped poor rural households to overcome liquidity constraints, while also contributing to alleviate barriers to access credit, savings and other financial services (Barrientos, 2012). For example, the evidence reveals increased credit-worthiness among households enrolled in social cash transfer schemes, increased savings in Ghana, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia, and increased ability to pay off debts in Ghana and Zambia. These programmes are also helping households to take decisions regarding investment, production, labour allocation and risk-taking (Tirivayi, Knowles and Davis, 2013).

The impacts of social protection on education, health and human capital accumulation are well documented.⁴ FAO and partners have been contributing to enhancing this evidence base, showing the potential of social protection to address some of the underlying economic causes of malnutrition,⁵ as well as to increase labour productivity, long-term employability and labour market participation. Evidence suggests that in areas where livelihoods predominantly depend on agriculture and rural labour markets, social protection has the potential to influence the productive dimension directly. For example cash transfers have shown to increase the use of agricultural inputs, ownership of livestock, and participation in non-farm family enterprises among subsistence and small-scale farmers in sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2014a).

³ In Kenya, Malawi and Zambia, the participation in a cash transfer programme not only led to an increase in food expenditure, but also larger amounts of animal-based foods. See The Transfer Project (2014) *The Broad Range of Cash Transfer Impacts in sub-Saharan Africa: Consumption, Human Capital and Productive Activity* available at <http://unc.live/1pjjGQd>. In several Latin American countries, increases in food expenditure were also found as well as diversification of the diet. See FAO (2013) *Panorama of Food and Nutritional Security in Latin America and the Caribbean. Hunger in Latin America and the Caribbean: Approaching the Millennium Goals* available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/019/i3520s/i3520s.pdf>.

⁴ For a summary of documented impacts in sub-Saharan Africa, see The Transfer Project (2014) *The Broad Range of Cash Transfer Impacts in sub-Saharan Africa: Consumption, Human Capital and Productive Activity*; and for Latin America, e.g. Adato and Hoddinott (2010) *Conditional Cash Transfers in Latin America*. International Food Policy Research Institute.

⁵ Ibid.; Department of Social Development (DSD), South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and UNICEF (2012) *The South African Child Support Grant Impact Assessment – Evidence from a Survey of Children, Adolescents and their Households*. Pretoria: UNICEF South Africa.

BOX 4 COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES TO MAXIMIZE PRODUCTIVE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN LESOTHO

FAO is contributing to increasing the evidence base around combined interventions, particularly linking social cash transfer with productive activities. In Lesotho, a team from FAO, Oxford Policy Management (OPM) and UNICEF conducted an impact evaluation of the country's flagship social cash transfer, the Child Grant Programme (CGP). This unconditional transfer, which targets poor households with children, was found to have significantly increased food security, school enrollment, spending on children, use and purchase of crop inputs, and informal food sharing arrangements in the local community.

In order to further encourage investment in productive activities, the CGP was combined with the FAO supported *Linking Food Security to Social Protection Programme* (LFSSP) in 2013. The LFSSP included the distribution of vegetable seeds to 799 CGP-eligible households in combination with demonstrations and hands-on training on the construction and upkeep of keyhole and trench gardens, as well as knowledge transfer on food preservation and production practices to achieve better nutrition. An evaluation of this approach found positive impacts that appear to have been driven by the combination of the two programmes: it allowed for greater investments in more substantial productive items among non-labour constrained families than in the previous two years of CGP transfers, and also appeared to have assisted households facing labour constraints in homestead gardening activities (Dewbre *et al.*, 2015; OPM, 2012).

Moreover, this evidence has pointed to the role of social protection in stimulating local economic development: as beneficiaries spend transfers on goods and services, the impacts of cash transfer programmes are being transmitted to providers of these good and services inside and outside the local economy (Taylor *et al.*, 2013; Kagin *et al.*, 2014; Taylor, Thome and Filipiski, 2014; Thome *et al.*, 2014). Cash transfers provide stimulus in the form of increased demand for consumption goods, inputs or assets, and in some cases also increased demand for diversity of goods. These findings are supported by the tendency of people with limited resources to spend locally, and on locally produced rather than imported goods (Barca *et al.*, 2015).

Despite the significant impacts of *social protection*, it is also recognized that *social protection by itself will not be enough to move people out of poverty*. The 2015 FAO State of Food and Agriculture stresses the need for coordinated multisectoral food security and rural development strategies to ensure that social protection and agricultural interventions are made compatible to sustainably move poor rural households out of poverty. Despite a comprehensive body of evidence on the impacts of social protection, there are still gaps with respect to complementary

interventions, as existing evidence is mainly based on evaluations of single programmes, such as cash transfers and school feeding. FAO is committed to help fill this gap and to promote the evidence-based development and scale up of integrated social protection approaches.

B. Comprehensive approach to addressing multiple vulnerabilities

An integrated approach to tackling hunger and poverty will require joining forces in social and developmental policy-making and programming. In practice, this implies aligning rural development approaches with strategies that would strengthen the capacity of poor households to better cope with and manage risk and increase access to resources and critical services. FAO is committed to strengthen its support to countries in forging links and promoting greater policy coherence⁶ and synergies between social protection, food security, agricultural development and rural poverty reduction.

Moreover, governments and development partners have recognized the need to establish strategies that address both early response and rapid recovery/transition, while helping to prevent and minimize the negative impacts of crises. Such a comprehensive approach aims to bridge the gap between emergency response and long-term development.

⁶ The FAO *Framework for Analysis and Action on strengthening coherence between social protection and agriculture* (2016), defines coherence as “a systematic promotion of complementary and consistent policies and programmes across sectors, thereby creating synergies to combat rural poverty and food insecurity more effectively”, including ensuring that potentially conflicting interactions between policies and programmes are avoided and/or minimized. The document is available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5386e.pdf>.

BOX 5 SOCIAL PROTECTION AND RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING

The 2030 Agenda's central theme – “leave no one behind” – has provided a clear framework for action. FAO recognizes that particularly in the context of crises many of the most vulnerable are at risk of being left behind (FAO, 2016b).

It is therefore critical to identify new, innovative and efficient approaches, moving from “addressing short-term, life-saving needs” towards a commitment to investments in prevention and reduction of people's vulnerabilities to multidimensional risks, as called for by the Secretary-General Report to the World Humanitarian Summit.⁷ Flexible social protection systems are one of the strategies that contribute to preventing or minimizing the negative impacts of crises. They support early response, and also contribute to rapid recovery and transition.

The poor and politically marginalized are disproportionately affected by crises. The 2015 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report highlighted that in 2013, 93 percent of people living in extreme poverty were living in politically fragile and/or environmentally vulnerable contexts. Limited assets and/or an absence of protection mechanisms can lead households and communities to resort to negative coping mechanisms that increase their vulnerability to risks and crises.

Social protection helps break the vicious cycle of social and economic deprivation, increased vulnerability to poverty and exclusion, and heightened exposure to shocks and stresses, by:

- > protecting households from the negative impacts of shocks and corresponding negative coping strategies (e.g. selling assets, withdrawing children from school, reducing food intake);
- > helping to build the capacity of households and communities to withstand and overcome shocks and stresses through social transfers that allow families to increase and diversify their asset base and increase their savings;
- > addressing some of the underlying causes of crises (e.g. political distress, economic causes of violence and conflict) and thus serving as a key component of peace-building strategies;
- > progressing towards a lesser state of vulnerability by providing economic and productive interventions that help families go beyond their status quo.

⁷ World Humanitarian Summit (2016) *Chair Summary – Standing Up for Humanity: Committing to Action* available at <https://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/5171492e71696bcf9d4c571c93dfc6dcd7f361ee?vid=581078&disposition=inline&op=view>.

Figure 1 presents social protection embedded in rural development through its four functions – prevention, protection, promotion and transformation.⁸ It places the comprehensive twin-track approach,⁹ which aims to respond to the immediate needs of vulnerable populations and to future risks by promoting longer-term resilience,¹⁰ within a circular continuum of development.

Poverty and hunger have similar structural drivers, and are dynamic phenomena with no guarantee of permanent thresholds or milestones for security, given the vulnerability to natural hazards and the unpredictability of global markets and political landscapes. Through its twin-track approach, FAO acknowledges the dynamic nature of poverty and hunger and their context-specificity, and contributes to bridging the gap between humanitarian response and long-term livelihoods support.

With its institutional expertise in agriculture and rural development, its capacity to provide policy and programmatic advice and to develop and apply analytical tools for inquiry, and its corporate support to knowledge exchange platforms and partnerships, FAO is well placed to support countries as they enhance the interface between social protection, agriculture, rural development and food security. FAO recognizes social protection's role in *transforming the economic and productive capacity of even the poorest and vulnerable households*, and thus seeks to support countries to: maximize the linkages between social protection and

⁸ Social protection encompasses: **preventive** measures, which aim to prevent vulnerable people from falling (deeper) into poverty, safeguard livelihoods by mitigating shocks, and reduce the risk of their negative impact should they reoccur; **protective** measures, which include social assistance schemes to ensure basic subsistence of the poor; **promotive** measures, which provide livelihood support to simultaneously protect and enhance livelihoods, thus reducing the incidence of chronic poverty; and **transformative measures**, which promote social inclusion by focusing on realization of social and economic rights through legal frameworks supporting gender equality, minimum wage, land rights for women, child labour eradication, as well as regulations and practices promoting anti-discrimination and grievance mechanisms for claiming rights and entitlements. See Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) *Transformative Social Protection*. Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Working Paper 232.

⁹ In November 2009, the World Summit on Food Security in Rome adopted the “Five Rome Principles for Sustainable Global Food Security”, which include the commitment to a twin-track approach to food security, as promoted by FAO: to help households overcome undernourishment by providing them with direct access to food or means to buy food, and subsequently or simultaneously increase agricultural productivity growth, improve livelihoods and nutrition, and promote social inclusion in the long term. See the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action (2010).

¹⁰ The capacity to prevent, anticipate, absorb, accommodate or recover from shocks and stresses in a timely, efficient and sustainable manner, per FAO's *Resilient Livelihoods – Disaster Risk Reduction for Food and Nutrition Security Framework* (2013) available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2540e/i2540e00.pdf>.

FIGURE 1 Embedding social protection within FSN, agricultural and rural development strategies



agriculture as well as rural development; promote the incorporation of social protection into poverty reduction strategies, risk management and contingency plan, as well as national development plans; build capacity of stakeholders for coherence in planning and designing social protection systems alongside rural development plans; and coordinate its efforts with investments in rural and urban areas.¹¹

¹¹ Social protection along with investment in rural and urban areas can eliminate hunger by 2030. Social protection itself can enhance investment prospects. For example, a selected group of people, such as landless workers or marginalized smallholders in rural areas, when supported by guarantees of predictable and regular income through social protection systems, can be reinserted into productive sectors even as the transfers to cover their poverty improve their nutritional and food security status. See discussion of scenarios of investment and social protection in FAO, IFAD and WFP (2015b) *Achieving Zero Hunger: The Critical Role of Investments in Social Protection and Agriculture*.

3

FAO GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION



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FAO approach to social protection builds on various social protection conceptual frameworks¹² to reflect the critical role social protection plays in fighting hunger, malnutrition, poverty and resilience, particularly in the context of agricultural and rural development. It is based on the *solid evidence* on the impacts of social protection across sectors; specifically on the contribution of social protection to transforming the economic and productive capacity of poor and vulnerable households and communities.

Three cross-cutting guiding principles, which are derived from the rationale for FAO engagement in social protection, will guide planning and operations in this work area:

- > **social inclusion;**
- > **gender equality;** and
- > **sustainability.**

These guiding principles reflect FAO commitment to the 2030 Agenda and specifically its target to expand coverage of social protection systems for all, including the most vulnerable – particularly the food insecure and poor that mainly live in rural areas.

FAO endorsement of the UN Social Protection Floor Initiative¹³ further affirms its continued commitment to promote the right to adequate food and social protection for all. FAO intends to apply its knowledge of rural development to help governments define national and context-specific Social Protection Floors that expand social protection to rural areas, while promoting coherence between investments in social protection, FSN and agriculture.

¹² The conceptual frameworks on which this approach builds are reviewed in the FAO publication *Social Protection for Rural Poverty Reduction* (Devereux, 2016). These include Social Risk Management (World Bank), Transformative Social Protection (IDS), Adaptive Social Protection, the Social Protection Floor (ILO), the life cycle approach and the graduation model.

¹³ The Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I) was adopted by the High Level Committee on Programmes of the UN Chief Executives Board in 2009 as one of its initiatives to address the global financial and economic crisis (Chief Executives Board Communiqué 2009). Social Protection Floors are nationally defined sets of basic guarantees to all in need of social protection to prevent or alleviate poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion, as defined by the *Social Protection Floors Recommendation No.202*. See ILO (2012) Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202 available at: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:3065524.

BOX 6 THE RIGHT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD

FAO recognizes the particular link between the right to social protection and the right to food, as part of the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of an individual and his/her family (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 25.1).

Social protection was given formal recognition as a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948. The 160 State Parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) of 1966 also recognize the right to social security, including social insurance (articles 9 and 10). The Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202), adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2012, expresses the commitment of Member States to realize the right to social protection and universal access to a minimum set of basic guarantees, including essential services and social transfers.

The *right to food* is also legally binding on the States Parties to the ICESCR (Article 2), which obliges them to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food. In 2004, FAO Member States adopted the Voluntary Guidelines to support progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security (FAO, 2004). These right to food Guidelines cover the full range of actions in order for people to feed themselves in dignity, calling on States to accompany food assistance in safety nets with complementary activities, including access to health care and education as well as measures to promote livelihoods through provision of resources and assets (Morlachetti, 2015; FAO, 2014b).

A. Social inclusion

FAO promotes the principle of social inclusion both as an outcome of social protection interventions and as a necessary process within policy making, programme delivery and monitoring. By definition, social protection can contribute to more inclusive results in terms of access and opportunities. While economic growth (including agricultural development) has been critical in contributing to poverty reduction, especially in rural areas, it has been slow in many contexts, or not inclusive. Limited access to economic opportunities, social discrimination and spatial disadvantage further exacerbate vulnerabilities to poverty and exclusion. Excluded households lack income, assets, access to social services, credit or insurance or social networks which can play a powerful role in mediating risks, promoting economic and social inclusion (Barca *et al.*, 2015). Social protection has the potential to address these market and policy failures, redistribute benefits of progress, and enhance opportunities (Holmes and Jones, 2009).

From an operational perspective, there are three core dimensions of inclusive social protection: inclusive coverage, normative guarantees and effective participation. Inclusive design should aim to progressively ensure equitable access to basic guarantees to all, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability status or geographic location. Approximately 70 percent of the population still does not have adequate access to social protection, and the majority of these people lives in rural areas. A priority role for FAO is to work with partners to actively advocate for the comprehensive coverage of social protection (FAO, OHCHR and ECLAC, 2011).

There are some interventions that can promote and ensure equitable access to or use of resources and entitlements. As suggested by the transformative approach to social protection, policies that address power imbalances in society as well as those that promote fair distribution of resources within households are key in the promotion of social inclusion. Institutionalizing the right to food or the right to basic education in legislation, minimum wages, food safety legislation, gender-sensitive inheritance and land rights legislation, and maternity/paternity laws are some examples of normative mechanisms that can serve critical social protection functions, helping to reduce inequality in access to entitlements. FAO will continue to support national governments to ensure that normative frameworks and legislation promote the access to critical productive resources, services, organizations, markets, and decent employment to those living in rural areas, with a special focus on women.

The integration of inclusive and participatory accountability mechanisms is critical to ensure that stakeholders are able to effectively participate in and influence the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of social protection. This requires not only inclusive policies, but also the institutionalization of participation, case management, complaint, and feedback mechanisms at all levels, and communication strategies that will increase (potential) beneficiaries' awareness in terms of social accountability, responsibilities and the need for civil society and beneficiaries to proactively participate in the decision-making processes that affect their own lives.¹⁴

¹⁴ See discussion on the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) Linking Social Protection and Human Rights resource platform for practitioners and policy-makers: Chambers, R. (2014) *Good Practices for Effective Participation in Social Protection Design and Implementation*.

B. Gender equality

Rural women have less access than men to productive resources, services and opportunities needed for agricultural production and socio-economic development, as they suffer systematic discrimination (FAO, 2011). This gap is one of the main reasons for the under-performance of the agriculture sector in many developing countries. Although women make substantial contributions to agricultural production and the broader rural economy, the structural and societal failure to value their work limits their bargaining power in economic transactions, the allocation of household resources, and wider community decision making.

The principle of gender equality refers to women and men enjoying equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life.¹⁵ For FAO, this translates into policies and programmes that reduce the gap between rural women and men in access to productive resources and services, ensuring that women and men have the capacity to influence decision making at institutional levels, and ensuring that rural women and men can have sufficient agency to use economic opportunities to improve their well-being (FAO, 2012a). In the context of social protection, FAO goal is to support countries to adopt measures that would contribute to achieve *equality between women and men* in access to social protection, as a way of promoting more sustainable pathways to food security and poverty reduction. FAO also seeks to reinforce the linkages between social protection and women's economic empowerment, recognizing women's productive and reproductive role. This includes complementing and reinforcing the linkages between social protection schemes – particularly cash transfers and public works programmes – with additional livelihood interventions and services designed especially for rural women. Finally, FAO supports the roles of rural institutions and organizations in the gender-sensitive design and implementation of social protection schemes. In doing so, FAO plays a role in social inclusion, disseminating knowledge about the rights of rural people living in poverty and ensuring that social protection benefits reach both women and men.

¹⁵ See FAO “Why Gender” Web site (2015) available at <http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-why/why-gender/en/>.

C. Sustainability

Sustainability is a multidimensional concept encompassing environmental integrity (environmental sustainability), social well-being (social sustainability), economic resilience and good governance (economic sustainability).¹⁶ Social protection systems can contribute to environmental sustainability by: (1) minimizing negative coping strategies in the event of crises, which may have detrimental impacts on the environment such as the over-exploitation of lands, fish resources¹⁷ and forests; and (2) providing an opportunity to enhance household capacity to invest in sustainable, climate-smart interventions that progressively promote environmental and social well-being.¹⁸

Social sustainability goes hand in hand with social inclusion, as it pursues equity and the fulfillment of everyone's needs, as established in international treaties on human rights. The rural-urban income gap and the high concentration of poverty in rural areas can contribute to conflict, humanitarian emergencies and aggravate vulnerability to man-made and natural disasters. Well-managed social protection systems can counteract this dynamic and also mitigate the acceleration of rural-urban migration. A sound legal framework can support institutional and socio-political sustainability for right holders, and thus create social sustainability.

Economic sustainability refers to the capacity of governments to develop and maintain national social protection systems at scale. Investment of domestic resources in social protection, mainly social assistance programmes, is key. The

¹⁶ See FAO definition of sustainability at <http://www.fao.org/nr/sustainability/home/en/>.

¹⁷ In Myanmar, a 2015 report found that in fishing communities households experienced significantly higher rates of vulnerability compared to non-fishing communities (38 percent vs. 24 percent), higher rates of food insecurity and poorer asset profiles, especially for livelihood assets. Workshops to present the initial research findings from a nation-wide survey and analysis on social protection and poverty dimensions in support of rural development and poverty reduction in Myanmar. Nay Pyi Taw And Yangon, Myanmar, 29–30 September 2015. FIAP/R1126 (En). Béné, Devereux and Roelen (2015) available at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/56ab2afc-0c43-49d0-9540-5485032742d2/>

¹⁸ The *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* (2012) and the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication* (2014) are key policy frameworks endorsed by FAO that are important starting points to strategically link social protection with sustainable resources management.

allocation of domestic resources can not only contribute to institutionalize social protection as a state policy, but also signals political commitment to poverty reduction, food security and inclusive growth.

However, concerns around the affordability, cost and financing of social protection remain at the centre of the debate, particularly in low-income countries. FAO supports the global, regional and national advocacy efforts that promote the promotion and development of nationally owned and led social protection systems that are financially, technically and institutionally sustainable. In contexts of budget constraints and competing priorities, two (interlinked) messages are key: (1) **social protection is affordable**, even in low-income contexts; and (2) **social protection is an investment and not just a cost**.

In terms of affordability, UN partners are supporting countries in identifying multiple financing options and strategies that would allow them to engage in sustainable social protection programming. From a technical perspective, the cost will depend on the short-, medium- and long-term national objectives ranging from: (1) prioritizing reaching those at the lowest quintiles (i.e. 20 percent of the poor population), which is estimated to cost between 0.1 and 2 percent of gross domestic product on average (Transfer Project, 2014); (2) financing a minimum base of benefits, in line with Social Protection Floors; and (3) creating fiscal space through context-specific measures, such as expanding a solid tax base, re-allocating inefficient investments or restructuring debt.¹⁹ The affordability discussion not only needs to take into account technical and political arguments regarding cost but, perhaps more critically, also returns on investment.

Evidence contributes to strengthening the case for the multiple and broad effects of investing in social protection, in terms of household well-being, human capital and labour productivity, but also in terms of enhancing the productive and economic capacity of those living in poverty. *FAO contribution to this process lies in the generation of solid evidence of the economic and productive impacts of social protection investments, and in supporting governments to integrate these investments as components of their agricultural and rural development policies.*

¹⁹ See Chapter 6 of the latest World Social Protection Report for a comprehensive discussion on financing options for social protection systems: ILO (2014) *World Social Protection Report. Building Economic Recovery, Inclusive Development and Social Justice* available at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_245201.pdf.

BOX 7 FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection programmes can enhance the financial and human capacity to invest in climate change adaptation and effective natural resource management, as outlined by the 2012 High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) Report on climate change and food security (HLPE, 2012). This requires that social protection programmes are aligned with complementary interventions around awareness raising and technical training among smallholder farmers on sustainable practices.

Targeting of social protection interventions as an instrument for alleviating poverty and exclusion tends to include mainly economic (wealth and income) criteria. In order to be able to respond to both socio-economic and environmental risks and vulnerabilities, a multidimensional approach also needs to include environmental targeting criteria, and combine income poverty and food security maps as well as climate-related risks. Effectively linking social protection management information systems with early warning systems can be critical to address predictable hazards, and also ensure that the former are able to integrate additional beneficiaries in times of crisis.

Other important implications for social protection design include:

- > designing sustainable public works programmes and productive safety nets in such a way that they contribute to increasing household income, engage communities in sustainable natural resources management and generate “green jobs” in areas such as waste management, reforestation and soil erosion prevention;
- > combining social protection with access to key financial services, such as credit and weather indexed (crop or livestock) insurance to reduce uncertainty and impacts of climate variability;
- > ensuring that social protection support the capacity of vulnerable groups to withstand, adapt and effectively cope with the negative impacts of climate change;
- > build on the capacity and role of local and community structures to provide protection in the event of crises, particularly when formal structures are not in place.

D. Social protection for whom?

FAO supports the Social Protection Floor Initiative, and therefore aims to promote *social protection for all* as a basic set of rights enabling all members of a society to access a minimum of goods and services. By virtue of its focus on hunger, rural poverty, and resilience, FAO would support comprehensive social protection guarantees and services – including those that address social vulnerabilities such as health insurance, school feeding, pension schemes, decent employment guarantees, and other, as well as those that can help to protect livelihoods and assets, such as cash transfers, crop and harvest lost insurance - available in rural areas and also delivered to those whose livelihoods depend on natural resources, such as through agriculture, livestock, fisheries or forestry.

In rural areas, the working poor are often subsistence producers, family farmers, pastoralists, forestry-dependent labourers, small-scale fishers, fish workers or landless agricultural workers. Their livelihoods are subject to natural disasters, climate change and economic shocks (e.g. in food prices). As they are often employed in the informal economy, they usually lack sufficient access to social protection. Many of them are women with particularly limited access to productive means.



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To align its activities with its comparative advantage, FAO work on social protection will support global, regional and national efforts to ensure coverage of social protection for all. In particular, it will strive to support countries to ensure that social protection interventions reach the following groups:

- > those whose livelihood depend on natural resources such as farming, livestock, fisheries (Béné, Devereux and Roelen, 2015) or forestry or, more generally, on food systems;²⁰
- > those whose sources of *production-*, *labour-* or *transfer-based* income²¹ and food are too limited to sustain resilient livelihoods; and
- > those whose food security is highly vulnerable to risks, be they natural (droughts, earthquakes, floods, etc.) or the result of human activity (e.g. conflict or inflation); correlated (e.g. market price fluctuations, social and ethnic discrimination, lack of rainfall, etc.) or uncorrelated (e.g. illness, loss of job, death of breadwinner).

FAO, working together with its partners, will play a key role in advocating for ensuring comprehensive coverage and support to rural areas and populations under-served by social protection schemes, as well as to define the most appropriate interventions, based on the differentiated needs of rural population.

²⁰ See FAO (2013d) *The State of Food and Agriculture "Food Systems for Better Nutrition"* available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/i3300e/i3300e.pdf>, in which food systems are defined to also involve the people and institutions that initiate or inhibit change in the system as well as the socio-political, economic and technological environment in which these systems take place.

²¹ As disaggregated in FAO *Social Protection for Rural Poverty Reduction* paper (Devereux, 2016), (1) *production-based* income or entitlements refer to the right to own what is being produced by one's own (or hired) resources; (2) *own-labour* income describes all trade-based and production-based entitlements derived from "selling" one's labour power; and (3) inheritance and *transfer-based* entitlements indicate the right to own what is willingly given by others, including private gifts and remittances as well as transfers by the state.

4

TRANSLATING PRINCIPLES INTO PROGRAMMATIC WORK



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FAO acknowledges the role social protection plays as a critical component of rural poverty reduction as well as the eradication of hunger and resilience-building. Therefore, FAO believes that the impact on rural poverty and food security will be maximized if social protection policies and programmes: (i) are effectively designed and implemented; (ii) are coherent with agriculture, natural resources management (NRM) and FSN interventions; and (iii) are developed with an adequate rural enabling environment.

A. The Scope of FAO work on social protection

Figure 2 provides a list of instruments that, although not exhaustive, highlights that not only social assistance and social security, but also some agricultural interventions can have a social protection function in rural settings. The use and function of these instruments will vary from country to country, depending on the institutional context, including the responsibilities of different line ministries, the country's development agenda and priorities, and the level of support the country receives from development partners.

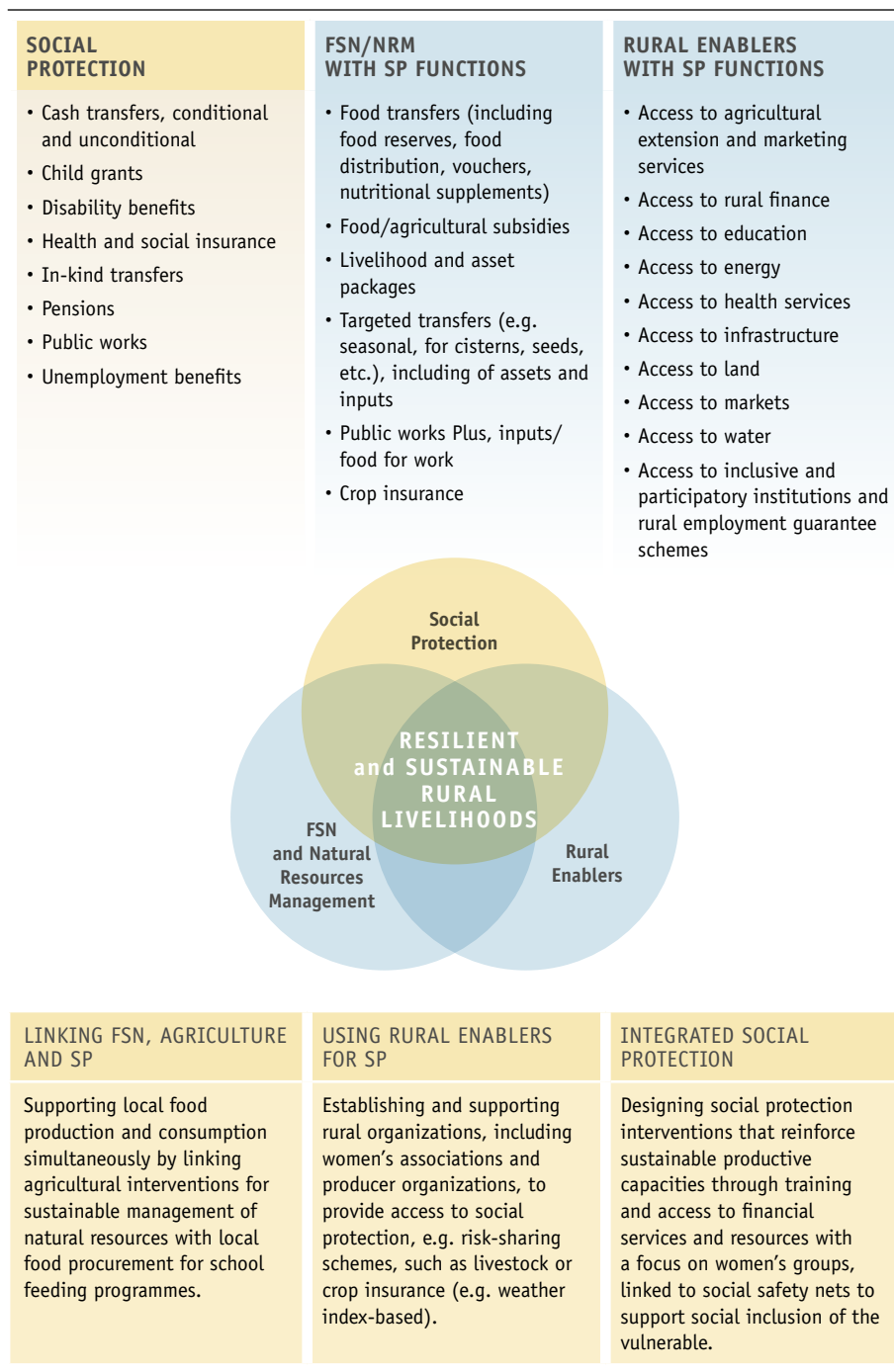
The first column provides examples of social protection interventions that are classified as “social assistance” or “social security”,²² and that are traditionally managed accordingly by social ministries, such as health, education, welfare or labour.

The second column covers a wider range of policies and programmes that are generally adopted to ensure availability of and access to food to increase utilization, and that may also fall under the guidance of ministries of agriculture, food, rural development or related areas of responsibility.

The third column gives examples of interventions that aim to provide an enabling environment for social protection to be effective in not only ensuring FSN in rural areas, but also rural development (FAO, 2013e). Interventions to improve access to extension, irrigation or input technology can lead to higher

²² See e.g. World Bank categorization of social protection under ASPIRE.

FIGURE 2 Focus of FAO work on social protection (SP) and examples of SP instruments and related interventions



risk-taking and the accumulation of durable assets as well as an increase in household consumption and overall food security levels. Such interventions can serve social protection functions depending on how they are implemented, their timing, and their appropriateness to rural conditions.

The rationale of this approach is that when social protection is aligned with broader rural development efforts and complemented by FSN and agricultural strategies and interventions, it can have more positive impacts on FSN and contribute to breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty in rural areas. Addressing the multiple vulnerabilities experienced by rural populations requires a multisector, integrated and holistic approach that takes into account social, economic as well as environmental and climate-smart interventions in order to maximize the impact of social protection on economic and productive outcomes.

B. Ensuring effective operational design of social protection interventions

FAO supports governments to ensure effective operational design of social protection programmes in line with its commitments to: (1) a rights-based approach to social protection; (2) a solid evidence base on the critical role that social protection plays in maximizing FSN and rural development outcomes; and (3) addressing multiple social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities by promoting sustainable and resilient livelihoods.

OPERATIONALIZING THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The rights-based approach to social protection (linked to the right to food) has important implications for the operational design of social protection programmes.

BOX 8 OPERATIONALIZING THE HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH IN SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

Putting a human rights-based approach into practice through concrete programme design can determine access to entitlements and protection for the poor and vulnerable living in rural contexts. It can also provide sustainability and social legitimacy of social programmes, especially at local level. In order to analyse and act on the linkages between social protection and the human rights approach, FAO Regional Office for Latin America initiated cooperation partnerships with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) with the support of the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. The objective of this collaboration was to bring together a group of international experts from other UN agencies, academia and civil society to prepare assessment guidelines²³ for the implementation of the human rights approach in conditional cash transfers programmes.

This simple tool for public officials gives concrete guidance by providing the following recommendations for social protection and conditional cash transfer programmes in particular:

1. adequate legal and institutional frameworks to ensure sustainability;
2. reasonable and non-discriminatory criteria applied to eligibility, selection and the administrative admissions process;
3. design and execution of co-responsibilities based on recipient needs, capacities and socio-economic context, safeguarding human rights protection above all;
4. preventing gender violence and discriminatory treatment of indigenous and/or vulnerable populations;
5. establishing acceptable and adaptable amounts, according to progressiveness criteria, while also aspiring to cover all of the target population living in poverty;
6. generating mechanisms for interinstitutional coordination at operational and technical levels;
7. guaranteeing participation of recipients and the community;
8. guaranteeing adequate access to public information; and
9. providing effective accountability and redress mechanisms.

This instrument helped strengthen the analytical capacity of managers of social programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean. As a public good, it was also made available to practitioners, academia and the general public to share best practices and lessons learned. In addition, it served to enhance and strengthen specific aspects of social protection agendas, and promote a common understanding of the consequences of a human rights approach in social protection among international agencies²⁴ and governments, while also strengthening FAO own capabilities in social protection and human rights.

²³ Available at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-as557e.pdf>.

²⁴ See for example <http://blogs.worldbank.org/governance/rights-accountability-and-social-programs>.

Table 1 shows how to operationalize FAO three cross-cutting guiding principles.

TABLE 1 Operationalizing the principles guiding FAO work on social protection for a rights-based approach

		POLICY LEVEL	PROGRAMME LEVEL	EXAMPLE
SOCIAL INCLUSION	FAO promotes social inclusion as a necessary process within social protection policy-making, programming and delivery, and as an outcome of institutionalized equitable access to or use of resources and entitlements.	Social protection and related sectoral policies are designed to enshrine social protection and food as a right – with the aim to progressively achieve an adequate standard of living, including universal coverage of social protection.	Programmes apply inclusive and participatory approaches to decision-making, delivery and monitoring, and promote equitable access to and use of resources and entitlements.	Accountability mechanisms institutionalized at local level that allow beneficiaries to monitor the delivery of cash transfers and identify potential irregularities.
GENDER EQUALITY	FAO promotes the adoption of measures to achieve <i>equality between women and men</i> in access to productive resources and services, in the capacity to influence decision making in institutions, and agency to use economic opportunities to improve their well-being.	Gender-sensitive social protection policies take into account gender concerns and priorities at household, community and institutional levels.	Programmes provide equal access to women and men to services and productive resources, and target those excluded from decision making and economic opportunities through social and economic empowerment and gender-sensitive education.	Public works (PW) programmes that consider non-labour- intensive interventions as part of their activities, and provide effective options for women’s engagement in PWs, while fulfilling their care responsibilities (e.g. child care centres at PW sites).
SUSTAINABILITY	FAO promotes financially, technically and institutionally sustainable social protection systems and measures that promote environmental integrity and social well-being, progressively build economic resilience, and ensure good governance.	Policies across sectors support financially, technically and institutionally sustainable social protection systems that prevent negative long-term social and environmental effects and progressively contribute to healthy eco- and food systems.	Programmes prevent negative environmental and related social effects, promote sustainable management of natural resources, contribute to healthy eco- and food systems, and build and maintain self-reliance of livelihoods and long-term stability of responsible institutions.	Complementing cash transfer interventions with adequate training and information on sustainable natural resources management.

APPLYING THE EVIDENCE BASE

There is a solid evidence base on social protection interventions to which FAO is contributing and which provides a number of important lessons for making the (re-)design of social protection measures more effective, as evidenced by experiences from Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. The size of a benefit/transfer, predictability and regularity of benefit/transfer and service delivery, profile of beneficiaries and messaging can significantly influence the impact of social protection interventions.

Benefit/transfer size matters, particularly when looking at economic and productive investments, as evidence from PtoP and the Transfer Project has shown (Transfer Project, 2014; FAO, 2016a). For example, in the context of cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa, changes in food consumption, economic and productive impacts as well as impacts on the local economy can be observed when the transfer size is at least 15-20 percent or more than household food consumption.

Regular and predictable delivery of benefits/transfers facilitate planning, consumption smoothing and investment (Barca *et al.*, 2015). The protection and risk management function of social protection, including of cash transfers, is maximized when beneficiaries are able to meet immediate food and other basic needs, as well as plan how to invest incoming resources and manage risk better, including engaging in credit and/or investment activities. The ability to plan and manage predictable and recurrent shocks also minimizes the likelihood of engaging in negative coping strategies, such as selling assets, pulling children out of school, and reducing food consumption and/or quality. Periodicity of transfers also needs to take into account local needs and the environment. This can be exemplified by seasonal transfers, e.g. supporting farmers during the hunger season or protecting animals during spawning or breeding season. In addition, the frequency and regularity of payments will have an effect on the perception and support of the programme at local level. Irregular and lumpy payments, combined with low size of transfer (as in Ghana at the time of its programme evaluation), resulted in no impacts on consumption. In contrast, in Zambia, the 24-month evaluation of the Child Grant showed that payments were distributed in a timely manner (bi-monthly) in all districts. As result, the programme had a significant impact on increasing the average consumption of beneficiary households (AIR, 2013).



The *profile of beneficiaries* and their households has also been shown to influence the type of impact that can be expected. Countries define eligibility criteria of programmes based on their definition of poverty and social vulnerabilities. These criteria will then influence the scope and type of impact expected. For instance, programmes targeting households with young children during the first 1 000 days can be expected to lead to impacts on nutrition, early childhood development or mortality rates. Programmes that reach households with older children can generate impacts on secondary enrolment, youth employment and reduction in HIV-risk behaviour.

Messaging can also affect the use of the transfer. Specific messages linked with the programme design and communication strategy have been found to result in investments mostly on education as well as basic needs, and in some cases even agricultural inputs. Thus, social protection programmes, such as cash transfers, can serve as an important entry point to messaging around livelihood issues, including improved nutritional practices, good sanitation and hygiene, or gender equity (Barca *et al.*, 2015).



ADDRESSING MULTIPLE VULNERABILITIES

Social protection, including income transfers, can contribute to all four FSN dimensions: access, availability, stability and utilization. However, maximizing and sustaining impacts requires complementary interventions²⁵ *linking transfers to livelihood promotion* in order to simultaneously address multiple social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities and create sustainable and resilient livelihoods.²⁶ Therefore, FAO aims to support countries to ensure effective operational design of social protection programmes that are not only based on *transfers*, but also support other sources of income, namely *production* and *labour*, as described in the section that follows.

²⁵ Income security can only provide access to food and lead to effective utilization if the other two FSN dimensions are ensured: availability and stability. See also HLPE (2012) *Social Protection for Food Security*. A report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the CFS available at <http://bit.ly/1YRCcLW>.

²⁶ In Rwanda, it was found that even in a setting where linkages between farmers and markets remain weak, the provision of training with asset transfers had permanent and economically significant impacts on earnings and asset accumulation, as household milk production and livestock productivity increased. See Argent *et al.* (2014) *Livestock Asset Transfers With and Without Training: Evidence from Rwanda*. In Bangladesh and Ethiopia, among several other countries, the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee (BRAC) approach combined cash transfers with asset transfer and training or so-called “livelihood packages”, thereby increasing the number of people who developed sustainable livelihoods. See Alderman and Yemtsov (2012) *Productive Role of Social Protection*. Background Paper for the World Bank 2012-2022 Social Protection and Labour Strategy; Berhane *et al.* (2013) *Evaluation of Ethiopia’s Food Security Programme: Documenting Progress in the Implementation of the Productive Safety Nets Programme and the Household Asset Building Programme*. Ethiopian Strategy Support Programme (ESSP) II – Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI) Report.

C. A Systems Approach: Aligning Social Protection with Livelihood Promotion Interventions

Production-based income refers to earnings derived from agriculture-based livelihoods, including cash from sales of produce, livestock or fish, and food from cultivated crops, livestock, other animals and wild products. *Production* can be boosted using instruments such as input transfers or credit and weather-indexed insurance. *Labour-based income*, on the other hand, refers to earnings from microenterprise or large-scale, formal or informal employment (salary, a daily wage, or erratic returns from informal microenterprises), provided in cash or in kind, and can be supported using instruments such as skills development, employment-based safety nets or protection of informal agricultural workers (Devereux, 2016). Ideally, interventions address several of these income sources, such as livelihood packages that combine the provision of assets with complementary skills training. This section highlights the linkages between social protection and agricultural interventions as well as between social protection and decent (rural) employment, and their potential to address wider vulnerabilities and risks as part of a systems approach to enhancing FSN.

Such a systems approach embeds and combines all social protection functions under a coordinated portfolio of interventions to address different vulnerabilities, risks and needs along the life cycle of all social groups and collectives (Rawlings, Murthy and Winder, 2013), including the rural populations and households whose livelihoods depend on natural resources. FAO is committed to promoting a systems approach to social protection in order to avoid fragmentation of interventions, and, together with partners, build and strengthen nationally owned social protection systems that are well integrated in broader livelihood promotion and rural development strategies.

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE

Social protection and agricultural interventions,²⁷ which target small-scale farmers, pastoralists, forest keepers and fishers, often cover the same geographic areas and target the same households. This creates opportunities for synergies and complementarities that would strengthen the livelihoods of rural households living in poverty.

Smallholder agricultural interventions can reduce household vulnerability and risk as measured by indicators of livelihood security. Many agricultural interventions not only increase household income. Interventions that improve access to infrastructure, irrigation, extension, input technology and microcredit can lead to improvements in household consumption, food security as well as the accumulation of durable assets (Tirivayi, Knowles and Davis, 2013; FAO, 2016a). In addition, some studies have found that interventions that guarantee access to land and/or insure against potential crop losses, and thereby increase certainty, lead to increased investments in high-return microenterprises (Tirivayi, Knowles and Davis, 2013; FAO, 2016a).

Coordinated agricultural and social protection policies and programmes can support these households in breaking out of the cycle of disadvantage and in preventing the transmission of poverty across generations. Social protection can provide liquidity and certainty for poor small family farms, allowing them to invest in agriculture, re-allocate their labour to on-farm activities, invest in human capital development, increase participation in social networks (which constitute an important source of informal risk management) and better manage risks, thereby allowing them to engage in more profitable livelihood and agricultural activities. On the other hand, agricultural interventions can also promote growth in the productivity of small family farms by addressing structural constraints that limit access to land and water resources, inputs, financial, advisory and extension services as well as markets.

FAO has developed a Framework for Analysis to strengthen coherence between agriculture and social protection, which provides examples of operational entry points to strengthen the alignment between social protection and agriculture

²⁷ Agriculture here refers to the cultivation of crops and animal husbandry as well as forestry, fisheries, and the development of land and water resources. Agricultural interventions cut across agricultural practices, investments, but also policies.

in sub-Saharan Africa (FAO, 2016a). A similar approach is currently being developed for other regions as well. The entry points identified include:

- > Mobilizing political support: based on the growing recognition of the combined role of agriculture and social protection²⁸ in reducing hunger and ongoing country-level efforts in this direction, additional political support is needed to translate global and regional commitments into concrete country-level results.
- > Adjusting policy and investment frameworks related to food security, nutrition, poverty reduction and rural development to recognize the role that agriculture and social protection can play together in achieving their goals. Similarly, agricultural policies should recognize how social protection can help support productive inclusion outcomes.
- > Strengthening coordination mechanisms at national and subnational levels to ensure that these include adequate representation of agriculture and social protection and that formal procedures for cooperation are clear and agencies have the required capacities.
- > Harmonizing targeting by coming to a shared understanding of which households should be targeted by different interventions and relevant targeting criteria, and sharing information on who is participating in which programmes.
- > Supporting programme design and implementation: selecting the appropriate instruments (e.g. subsidy and/or cash transfer); determining the benefit/transfer size commensurate with desired impact; ensuring the timely and predictable delivery of benefits/transfers; ensuring sensitivity to rural and agricultural seasonality and to the profiles of beneficiaries; messaging regarding use of the benefits/transfers and support services.

²⁸ See CFS (2013) or the 2014 Malabo Declaration.

BOX 9 LINKING SMALLHOLDER PRODUCTION WITH LOCAL PROCUREMENT OF SCHOOL FEEDING

Linking agricultural interventions with local food procurement for school feeding programmes provides a good example of how local food production and consumption can be supported simultaneously. Such interventions enhance vulnerable farmers' production methods and productivity by providing agricultural inputs, extension services and training for sustainable natural resource management. At the same time, they procure food for school feeding programmes locally from the supported farmers.

FAO has extensive experience in strengthening school feeding through local procurement under the Hunger Free Latin American and the Caribbean 2025 Initiative, in cooperation with the Government of Brazil and other national governments. The approach, which is being implemented in 11 countries in the region, aims to stimulate the participation of the community by encouraging public purchases of local foodstuffs produced by family farmers (FAO, 2014c).²⁹ In Africa, FAO also works in cooperation with Brazil, the UK Department for International Development and the World Food Programme (WFP) to support counties to link smallholder production and local institutional markets in pilot activities in Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger and Senegal under the Purchase from Africans for Africa (PAA) initiative. The PAA has targeted poor and vulnerable households living in food insecure areas, including more than 5 000 farmers and 128 000 students since 2012 (PAA, 2014). The PAA is also helping to promote access to diversified and nutritious food for school children: in Malawi, rural extension workers and nutrition specialists are working with local farmers' cooperatives to determine the ideal mix of food supplies to diversify the school menu. This is also having an impact on farmers' decision-making in terms of what to produce and trade and how to sustainably manage their natural resources.

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND DECENT RURAL EMPLOYMENT

Social protection interventions affect both labour supply and demand, and can strengthen a number of development outcomes that directly or indirectly contribute to decent rural employment.³⁰ In particular, social protection interventions can contribute by increasing the labour income and the returns to skills development among the rural population living in poverty. The evidence shows

²⁹ See also project Web site at <http://www.fao.org/in-action/program-brazil-fao/projects/school-feeding/en/>.

³⁰ Decent rural employment refers to any activity, occupation, work, business or service performed by women and men, adults and youth, in rural areas that: (i) respects the core labour standards as defined in ILO Conventions; (ii) provides an adequate living income; (iii) entails an adequate degree of employment security and stability; (iv) adopts minimum occupational safety and health measures which are adapted to address sector-specific risks and hazards; (v) avoids excessive working hours and allows sufficient time for rest; and (vi) promotes access to adapted technical and vocational training. See also FAO Applied definition of decent rural employment available at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/DRE_Applied_Definition.pdf.

that social protection has positive impacts on: (1) human capital development; (2) employment creation; (3) employment security; (4) changes in household labour allocation; and (5) working conditions. Numerous studies suggest that social protection can strengthen workers' ability to find gainful employment and tends to increase labour demand in on-farm agricultural activities, rather than creating dependency or disincentives to work, and can also stimulate investments in non-farm household enterprises (Samson *et al.*, forthcoming; FAO, 2015c). If well designed, social protection interventions can also improve working conditions, provide bargaining power or accountability mechanisms, and lead to increased rural wages (Berg *et al.*, 2012). However, labour-intensive interventions, such as public works, can increase the work burden and involve heavy manual labour if poorly designed, and thus may be less accessible to and appropriate for women or youth. These considerations result in a number of policy and operational implications in the context of FAO three guiding principles:

1. By designing inclusive social protection interventions that extend to rural areas, rural workers can be reached, and social accountability mechanisms institutionalized at local level can ensure that decent work principles included in the design are fulfilled.
2. Combining social protection interventions with complementary labour market interventions, such as trainings that target unemployed and underemployed rural workers, and particularly women, can increase human capital investments and worker productivity and consequently workers' access to better jobs.
3. Sustainability can be ensured at institutional level through national legal frameworks as well as coherence between social protection, agricultural and rural development policies and programmes that promote productivity and/or job creation,³¹ favour more dynamic rural labour markets, and provide access to gainful decent farm and non-farm jobs.

³¹ This also includes: investments in rural infrastructure (such as irrigation, roads and market facilities); improvements in rural finance; revision of restrictive labour regulations; and facilitating the development of agricultural value chains and related rural non-farm activities, as discussed in the following section.

BOX 10 LINKING SOCIAL PROTECTION TO LABOUR MARKET INTERVENTIONS IN THE RURAL CONTEXT

Combining social protection interventions with complementary labour market interventions, such as technical vocational education and trainings, can increase the sustainability of social protection interventions by: (i) enabling targeted support of unemployed and underemployed rural workers, e.g. women and youth; (ii) enhancing their human capital and productivity in the long run; and (iii) increasing their access to better jobs. These impacts can be enhanced and sustained when training is combined with job search assistance and enterprise development, or the provision of access to technologies or inputs, as mentioned in the previous section, to increase production, meet local demand and thus stimulate reinvestments and more decent jobs.

In Zambia, the country's Multiple Category Cash Transfer Programme, has been found to affect rural employment dynamics participating communities. By providing households with a modest but regular income stream, the programme allowed beneficiary households to hire labour to work their fields. This in turn permitted household members to work less, or to work in other areas, and provided capital to support further development of production activities and small trading businesses by some. The cash transfers also helped to break beneficiaries' dependency on piecework to bring in cash income, allowing them to focus on their own productive activities. For non-beneficiaries, there are now more possibilities to work on beneficiary farms, as the programme enabled beneficiaries to undertake some investments, especially asset improvements, e.g. housing, thus creating employment opportunities for (non-) beneficiaries.

NUTRITION-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection policies and programmes have the potential to address basic and underlying causes of malnutrition. With an appropriate design, these policies and programmes can have a positive impact on nutrition in several ways. *Household food consumption and dietary diversity* can be increased by providing families with social transfers, such as cash. Evidence shows that the immediate use of the cash is to increase the number of meals per day, and to diversify the diet (Transfer Project, 2014).

Minimizing negative coping mechanisms affecting nutrition and health can also be achieved through transfers. In the event of crises – e.g. drought, floods, harvest failure, family illness – families may no longer be forced to resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as reducing children's food intake or pulling them from school to support family income generating activities. *Economic and social barriers to accessing services* can be reduced, as transfers help families to afford

the indirect (e.g. transportation, uniforms) or direct (e.g. out-of-pocket health costs, health and education fees) costs of accessing such services. In addition to the direct links related to the diversity, safety and quantity of food consumed by each individual, social protection can also influence other determinants of nutrition – for example practices related to care, sanitation and education, or basic causes of malnutrition, such as inadequate access to resources.

Evidence from different studies indicates that while social protection interventions can increase food consumption and often improve dietary diversity and participation in preventive healthcare, interventions need to be implemented as part of a multisector nutrition response to ensure sustainable impacts on stunting, wasting or micronutrient deficiencies.³²

Today, despite emerging evidence on nutritional outcomes of social protection, considerable knowledge gaps and policy challenges remain. Many social protection interventions do not set out to improve nutritional outcomes, particularly relevant in contexts where high levels of malnutrition are closely linked with poverty and marginalization. The few that do, often do not have clearly defined nutrition outcomes and progress indicators in the initial policy and programme design process. In this context, there is a need to strengthen the existing evidence on what are the most effective mix of nutrition-sensitive social protection interventions to enhance nutritional objectives. FAO aims to fill this gap, and has identified the following entry points to strengthen the alignment between social protection and nutrition (FAO, 2015b):

- > Strengthening the multisectoral approach to nutrition outcomes by aligning social protection, nutrition and *nutrition-sensitive* agricultural interventions.
- > Aligning targeting, particularly in contexts where rural poverty is a key determinant of malnutrition, to include: poverty and nutrition as criteria for geographic targeting; overlapping poverty and nutrition maps; and discussions on the relevance of including nutrition and poverty indicators in constructing eligibility criteria.
- > Including specific FSN indicators to assess the impact of social protection interventions: monitoring frameworks should include a wide range of indicators,

³² See for instance, the 2013 Special Lancet edition on maternal and child nutrition. <http://www.thelancet.com/series/maternal-and-child-nutrition>

including anthropometric measurements, but also dietary diversity or meal frequency; food consumption (highly relevant, especially for improving complementary feeding in addition to breast milk); and participation in health and nutrition activities including public awareness and national health nutrition campaigns.

- > Designing joint packages of interventions (“cash plus”) that take advantage of the targeting used for social protection programmes, which aim to reach the poorest and most vulnerable, and link beneficiaries with nutrition services, while promoting nutrition-sensitive agriculture.
- > Integrating case management, not only to identify and follow up on social protection beneficiaries in terms of use of transfers and challenges in transfer delivery, but also to coordinate with community health, nutrition and agricultural social workers to provide comprehensive support.



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D.

Complementing social protection with rural enablers to address the drivers of hunger and poverty

“Rural enablers” are socio-economic and/or institutional endowments or conditions whose presence directly correlate with the potential impact of social protection schemes in terms of reducing rural poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition (Sabates-Wheeler, Tefera and Bekele, 2012). Enablers can be classified in a number of ways. Typically they represent conditions specific to a community or a location, are generally socio-economic in nature, or relate to access to assets or services in the rural context. For example, location specific enablers can include the availability of and access to water/irrigation infrastructure and watershed management, or present energy or utility infrastructure. Enablers that are service-oriented can be agricultural extension or community-level investment services, credit markets, or basic social services such as health and education centres.

In developing countries, rural areas often lack enablers in the financial or investment markets. This includes: availability of banking structures and rural finance services; availability of goods and supplies for trading; and existence and maintenance of rural roads that ensure functioning markets. Yet, even functioning markets do not guarantee equitable distribution of the benefits of trade without considering those who are able to participate in the market as opposed to those who cannot. In this respect, formal as well as non-formal rural organizations that pursue common socio-economic objectives can guarantee continuous economic activity and market stability. They can provide collective arrangements for: stabilizing food prices; bargaining; risk mitigation and sharing; redistribution of resources; and provision of basic social services or loans to promote production and increase incomes. With adequate and inclusive representation and membership, they can also help to empower smallholders by providing platforms that can be used for outreach and to improve the design and delivery of social protection in rural areas (e.g. through better targeting, promotion of registration of beneficiaries and local monitoring).

BOX 11 LINKING FINANCIAL INCLUSION TO SOCIAL PROTECTION
TO PROMOTE RURAL LIVELIHOODS

Access to financial services has long been considered one of the most important constraining factors in rural development. Inclusive financial systems that offer financial services (such as credit, insurance and savings) to poor and vulnerable groups, particularly youth and women, can be articulated with social protection instruments that support rural livelihoods.

FAO has been engaged in rural and agricultural finance mainly by supporting governments in restructuring rural financial systems and promoting best practices for financing smallholder farming and rural value chains. Building on its expertise, FAO can provide support in linking innovative and inclusive financial instruments with social protection mechanisms. Exploring the linkages between financial inclusion and social protection, and identifying good practices and their impact on rural development, will contribute to improve FAO policy advice on the design of effective policies for rural poverty reduction.

Part of the effectiveness of social protection systems is in how well their design fits into the rural context and builds on the existence, complexity and contribution of rural enablers in programming and implementation. FAO aims to link social protection interventions to existing rural enablers and to support a design that maximizes their positive impact on the local socio-economic and political environment. FAO work builds on existing national and subnational capacities in rural areas, including formal and informal rural organizations, as the latter often constitute the only existing mechanisms for service provision in remote areas.



5

KEY STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT



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Based on the principles that support the case for FAO involvement in social protection, FAO aims to focus on the following key strategies for its engagement in social protection:

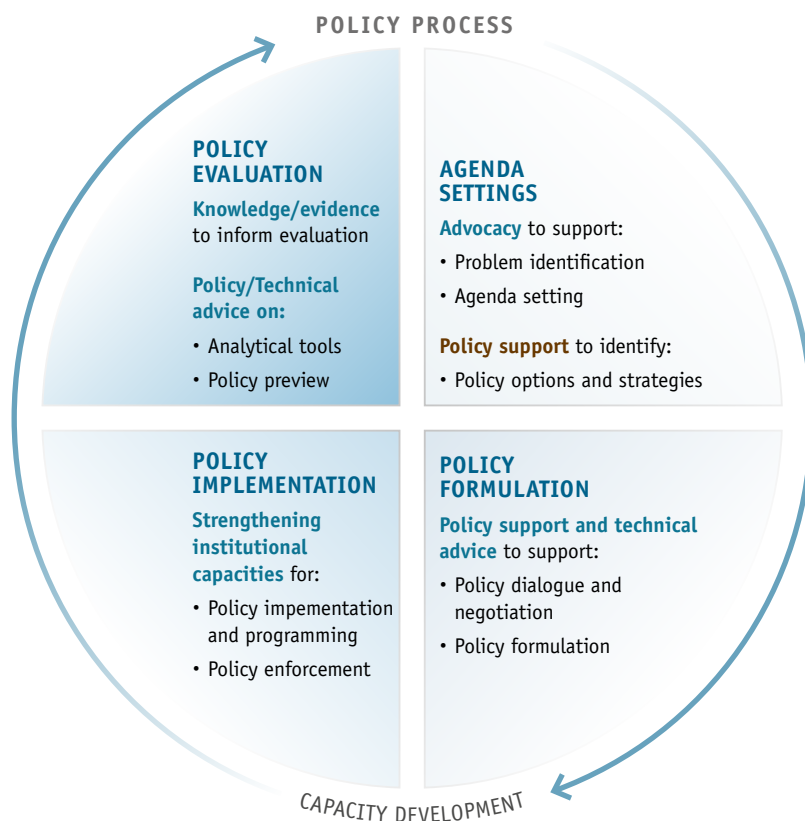
- > **promoting and supporting policy dialogue** at global, regional and country levels, and strengthening policy and programmatic coherence between social protection and other areas under FAO mandate;
- > **generating and disseminating knowledge and evidence** on the contribution of social protection to rural poverty reduction, including strengthening data collection, impact evaluation and operational research to enhance the reach and impact of social protection and its alignment with agriculture;
- > **developing capacities** at regional and country levels, including of subnational and community structures, to support the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of evidence-based policies and programmes;
- > **increasing evidence-based advocacy and outreach**, to contribute to shaping the emerging global, regional and national agendas on social protection, FSN and agriculture, while raising awareness on the critical role social protection plays in reducing rural poverty and food insecurity; and
- > **facilitating strategic partnerships** on social protection for FSN, agriculture and rural development between governments, development partners, civil society and the private sector, including south-south collaboration.

A. Implementation context

FAO is committed to ensuring the sustainability of interventions through national ownership, and therefore aligns its support to the national policy process (Figure 3), working with governments and other national stakeholders to build and strengthen social protection systems that address multiple drivers of poverty and food insecurity.

FAO is also active in contexts where such long-term engagement with governments proves difficult, either due to emergencies caused by natural hazards (e.g. drought, floods hurricanes, earthquakes, epidemics), man-made crises (e.g. socio-economic

FIGURE 3 FAO key areas of work in social protection throughout the policy process



shocks, conflicts) or protracted crises (complex, prolonged emergencies that combine two or more aspects of the above-mentioned crises). In such contexts, FAO works with households, communities and local institutions to strengthen their capacities to cope with crises while protecting their livelihoods.

In both contexts, FAO is committed to partnering with other international agencies, including the Rome-based UN agencies, UNICEF, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and others, to increase both internal and external coherence of social protection efforts.

BOX 12 OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN AND FRAGILE CONTEXTS

Social protection can help build the capacities of communities and households to prepare for and overcome shocks and stresses. In order to realize this potential, programming priorities and expected results must move beyond vulnerability reduction programming based on risks is not enough: it also needs to be oriented towards existing capacities – at national and subnational levels and, most importantly, at community level.

In order to understand the full scope of programming needed for resilience in terms of economic, social, political and environmental risks, multisector risk and vulnerability assessments and risk-informed programming are essential. Neither vulnerability nor resilience can be addressed by a single sector or agency, and joint analyses can promote effective coordination of efforts across different sectors and between multiple agencies as well as the use of these assessments to inform the design of social protection programmes.

In contexts where national social protection systems exist, it is important to strengthen their design to make the system more flexible and responsive to shocks and stresses. Social protection programmes should be able to (temporarily) absorb additional beneficiaries or increase the size of the transfer (top-up) to address the impact of the current shock – predictable or unexpected.

Governments should be enabled to anticipate, prevent and plan for crises by adapting the eligibility requirements, transfer size and delivery mechanisms of programmes, as well as by establishing contingent financing structures.³³

In contexts where emergency response has been donor-led due to limited government capacity, it is critical for programming to move from emergency response programming to social protection systems that can respond to shocks and stresses quickly. Already existing delivery structures for humanitarian response, whose feasibility and capacity have been assessed, can serve as building blocks for a medium-term adaptive system.

Building partnerships across sectors, organizations, and ministries, remains critical to bring together the different dimensions of resilience programming.

³³ For example, in Ethiopia and Lesotho, social protection schemes were developed with flexible mechanisms to respond to predictable, recurrent crises, particularly as they affected food security. In Ethiopia, the impacts of the 2011 drought were significantly reduced due to the existence of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PNSP) and this support was extended to provide three months of additional support to 3.1 million people. In Lesotho, the design of the system allowed a rapid response to food crises and a disbursement of emergency food grants to additional affected households and families. See African Union Commission and UNICEF (2014) *Children and Social Protection Systems: Building the African Agenda*. African Union Technical Discussion Paper.

B. Policy Support

Political will is decisive to advance social protection efforts and to ensure policy coherence and complementarity across sectors. FAO is working with governments throughout the policy process to inform and support policy and agenda-setting, design, implementation and evaluation processes. Figure 3 presents the most common entry points for policy support, which may differ depending on country demand and context.

Countries' needs in terms of social protection support depend on a number of conditions – such as the government's presence, its capacity at national as well as local level, the stage of the policy process or a window of opportunity for policy change. These conditions will further shape FAO strategy in a given country.

FAO work on policy support and its role as a facilitator to initiate the engagement of national and regional stakeholders focus on:

- > **informing the assessment** (through policy and legal mappings,³⁴ vulnerability assessments or other³⁵), thus providing the basis for policy options and recommendations to ensure that they accurately reflect the country's needs, policy and legal gaps, and priorities as expressed by different line ministries and stakeholders;
- > **facilitating the involvement of key stakeholders** (including local institutions and organizations, cooperatives, donors and civil society) in the consultations to ensure intersectoral coordination, while supporting the formulation and design of policies and programmes that address social protection concerns across sectors, such as in national development and food security strategies;

³⁴ Including social protection, as well as agricultural policies with potential for social impacts and social protection functions.

³⁵ For example, FAO supports the ILO-led Social Protection Assessment Based National Dialogue (ABND) as the first step towards implementing a national social protection floor (SPF). This high level consultation process involving all relevant government agencies, national stakeholders and partner agencies, is based on a thorough assessment of the country's social protection system and the identification of policy gaps in legislation and implementation issues, in order to propose a roadmap for the implementation of the social protection floor. See ILO (2014) *Social Protection Assessment Based National Dialogue* available at <http://secsoc.ilo.org/abnd>.

- > **advising countries on the operationalization of an integrated approach** to social protection for FSN and rural development in design, implementation, expansion, monitoring and evaluation, as well as linking key national with regional and global processes, partners and support mechanisms.

BOX 13 ADVISING ON INTEGRATING SOCIAL PROTECTION INTO FOOD SECURITY STRATEGIES

In Latin America, where the coverage and complexity of national social protection systems has been expanded over two decades, FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean has been a pioneer in recognizing the potential of social protection for the mandate of the FAO and promoting the integration of FSN and social protection at national level and through regional processes and platforms.

As an official member of the Inter-American Social Protection Network of the Organization of American States since 2012, FAO is supporting technical and policy dialogue on the links between social protection and sustainable FSN, and has contributed to regional strategies to fight hunger and poverty that include specific components of social protection at the highest political levels, such as the 2014 *Plan of Food Security, Nutrition and Hunger Eradication* of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

In recent years, FAO has become a regional reference in cooperation projects that strengthen school feeding programmes through the Brazil-FAO Cooperation Programme, which promotes sustainable schools while strengthening public procurement mechanisms for family farms.

By prioritizing and developing cooperation projects that integrate social and productive areas and articulate respective policies locally in a participatory way, FAO has gained experience that has informed the design and implementation of national policies in Ecuador (*Acción Nutrición* - 2009) and Peru (*Crecer* - 2009).

Currently, FAO is supporting the integration of social and productive components in national FSN and social development strategies in:

- > **Paraguay** (supporting technical coordination between the Ministry of Social Action and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock);
- > **Guatemala** (*National Integral Rural Development Plan*); and
- > **Mexico** (*National Crusade Against Hunger*).

C. Knowledge generation and dissemination

FAO continuous policy support is driven and informed by the evidence and knowledge it generates and disseminates. FAO will continue to contribute to strengthening the global, regional and national learning agendas on social protection, FSN and rural development by:

- > **supporting data collection** to systematically monitor progress on social protection and generate evidence on: (i) the impact of social protection on agriculture, FSN and rural development; (ii) the appropriate combination of approaches; (iii) the operational implications of these findings for implementation; and (iv) beneficiary understanding and perception of impact;
- > **facilitating the timely and strategic dissemination of findings** of social protection research and assessments in global and regional fora to inform national policy-making, e.g. through workshops (to present research and assessment findings) or south-south collaboration exchanges and country visits (to highlight intersectoral linkages and potential pathways for intersectoral collaboration); and
- > **supporting countries to conduct their own analyses** by: (i) jointly developing analytical and policy tools to inform policy and programme design and assess the effectiveness of social protection systems; (ii) strengthening the capacity of national statistical agencies to define, collect and monitor related data (e.g. through social protection modules on food security, and agricultural household surveys to systematically collect information on coverage, financing and impact on rural livelihoods); and (iii) developing related normative public goods (e.g. methodologies, guidance material).

BOX 14 PROVIDING DATA AND INDICATORS FOR MEASURING SOCIAL PROTECTION IN RURAL AREAS

The design of effective targeting is a common challenge in social protection programming. This is particularly difficult in rural areas where economic activities are more dispersed, and in agriculture, given the large presence of informal working arrangements, unpaid labour and livelihood systems. Obtaining sound data on social protection is essential for designing evidence-based interventions. FAO supports the international and national institutions in their effort to improve the collection of data on social protection in agriculture and rural areas.

An FAO stocktaking exercise on existing data and indicators for measuring social protection in rural areas showed that the information base on social protection is rather poor, especially in agriculture and, more generally, in rural areas (Mane, Rocca and Conforti, 2015). This exercise has identified a set of social protection indicators, such as transfer amounts, coverage and relative incidence, which can be computed from data collected in households budget surveys. These indicators are included in the Rural Livelihoods Monitor, a project started at FAO³⁶ that gathers and harmonizes micro and macro level information on all aspects of rural livelihoods, including income and consumption, employment, social protection, gender, and the availability and accessibility of assets, infrastructure and markets.

Currently available data on social protection highlights, in particular, the lack of an accurate classification of programmes. This prevents the quantification of the share of social protection that accrues to agriculture and rural areas.

In order to fill this gap, the FAO Statistics Division and the Social Protection Team are developing a template questionnaire and user manual for data collection on social protection granted to households and individuals engaged in agricultural activities. This effort can provide useful input for the Agricultural and Rural Integrated Survey (AGRIS) framework and data collection tools, a project currently undertaken under the Global Strategy for Improving Agricultural Statistics.³⁷ The farm-based modular multiyear survey programme is designed as a cost-effective way for national statistical agencies to accelerate the production of quality disaggregated data on the technical, economic, environmental and social dimensions of agricultural holdings.

Social protection is a topic for which the AGRIS project may provide particularly useful information, given its approach of considering simultaneously production aspects of the holdings and the social dimensions of the household. The resulting data will contribute to enhance the global efforts to monitor progress on social protection and will allow investigating the linkages between social protection and agriculture and rural development respectively.

³⁶ The Rural Livelihoods Monitor is joining forces with the Rural Income Generating Activities (RIGA) project and other related FAO activities, and will work in close partnership with World Bank and IFAD.

³⁷ AGRIS is being developed in the context of the FAO/World Bank Global Strategy to improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. AGRIS complements other relevant initiatives such as the World Bank LSMS-ISA and USDA CARDS and aims to scale up these global efforts. AGRIS has been introduced in two countries in 2015 and is scheduled to be expanded to a large number of countries until 2017.

D. Capacity Development

In line with FAO commitment to national ownership to ensure sustainability, capacity development of national counterparts at central and subnational levels, including rural organizations and cooperatives, FAO aims to:

- > **enhance the capacity of internal and external global, regional and national partners on the development and use of analytical tools** to inform policy and programme design in coherence with agricultural, rural development and FSN policies and programmes, and to assess the effectiveness of social protection systems;
- > **establish regional learning hubs and connect government representatives to reference institutions** in “champion countries” of their region to allow for exchange of experience and expertise among countries in the region and sharing of knowledge among hubs (based on harmonized approaches and methodologies developed in the framework of international fora such as the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B)); and
- > **provide rural institutions and organizations with:** (i) **a knowledge and evidence base** to inform institutions’ provision of agricultural extension services and consultations as part of social protection interventions; (ii) **technical support** to develop and strengthen the **capacity of rural organizations** to provide, for example, access to social protection, credit, markets and resources to increase rural people’s productivity, agricultural inputs, agro-extension advice and training in related areas; and (iii) **support to develop accountability and participatory approaches** to facilitate the active participation of non-formal and community-based organization in the development of social protection systems.

BOX 15 STRENGTHENING CAPACITIES OF RURAL ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE SERVICES AND PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION

Rural organizations play a critical role in the design, accountability and delivery of non-formal social protection. They can act as service providers for governments by performing tasks within national systems through participatory mechanisms. They can represent the rural poor at higher levels and advocate for their needs, and can be approached to inform the design of social protection programmes and implement tasks within such programmes, such as targeting, registering, distributing benefits and monitoring.

In some contexts, rural organizations already provide social protection services for their members by establishing collective practices of risk management and mutual assistance. Specialized agencies, such as micro-insurance and microfinance institutions, provide compensatory payments in the event of calamities or access to credit for poor rural households, and producer organizations often run savings and loan schemes, risk-sharing schemes such as grain reserves, warehouse receipt systems and revolving funds.

FAO works to strengthen the capacity of rural organizations and their active participation in designing and implementing social protection programmes, as well as to strengthen their alignment with formal social protection systems.

FAO builds on informal groups that are embedded in the social structures of local communities in order to transform them into formal rural organizations.

The Dimitra Clubs³⁸ set up with FAO support are an example of this catalyst for launching a local development process that contributes to alleviate vulnerability and poverty. These groups of women, men and young people form “community listener’s clubs” aiming to mobilize community members, e.g. using a wind-up solar-powered radio and/or mobile phone. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the women members decided to address the issue of lack of access to cash for household needs by creating a fund (*tontine*).

The interest earned led to the joint creation of a savings and loans cooperative (*Yanonge Cooperative*), which is now formally recognized by the National Bank of Congo. Today, more than 90 households benefit from the cooperative.

³⁸ Dimitra clubs have been set up with FAO support in several sub-Saharan African countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger, Senegal, Burundi and Ghana. They aim to launch a local development process by: (1) ensuring access to information through transparency and good governance; (2) promoting social inclusion by paying special attention to marginalized groups; (3) supporting accountability, autonomy and ownership by stimulating active and voluntary participation and networking among Clubs; and (4) providing solutions that can be carried out using local resources. See also <http://www.fao.org/dimitra/dimitra-clubs/en/>.

E. Outreach and advocacy

In order to ensure that key findings and messages reach and influence the broad range of state and non-state actors involved in social protection, FSN, agriculture and rural development policy-making, FAO is promoting social protection and its critical role in the fight against hunger and poverty by:

- > **establishing and maintaining global, regional and national platforms** for the exchange of experiences and good practices on linking social protection to FSN, agricultural and rural development strategies and interventions;
- > **advocating for the rights to food and social protection**, including the effective reach of social protection to the rural poor, in global, regional and country fora, and among partner organizations, regional bodies and national policy-makers; and
- > **facilitating high level events to increase awareness and create opportunities** for collaboration and agenda-setting.

BOX 16 ADVOCATING FOR THE RIGHTS TO FOOD AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection has featured prominently in recent debates and global fora on food security and nutrition, including the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), jointly organized by FAO and the WHO, as well as the 2015 World Food Day on Social Protection and Agriculture. The ICN2 identified social protection as one of the key sectors in eradicating hunger and malnutrition. The Member States present at the conference acknowledged the potential of social protection to reach vulnerable populations and enhance their nutrition and food security status. In addition, the outcome documents of the conference – the Rome Declaration on Nutrition (ICN2, 2015a) and the Framework for Action (ICN2, 2015b) – specifically highlight the need to leverage social protection policies and programmes in implementing coordinated, coherent and cross-cutting action to combat malnutrition.

The 2015 World Food Day also placed special emphasis on social protection. The theme of the World Food Day, Social Protection and Agriculture – Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty, sought to build synergies between social protection and agriculture to ensure access to food, stimulate economic activity and boost the agricultural production of populations living in rural areas around the world.

F. Partnerships for social protection in support of food security and nutrition and rural development

FAO acknowledges the critical role of partnerships, particularly in the intersectoral area of social protection, to ensure not only internal policy coherence, but also external coherence of country support. At country level, FAO aims to coordinate social protection efforts more effectively in support of FSN and rural development by:

- > **building on its close ties with long-time partners**, such as ministries of agriculture, related line ministries/ agencies, decentralized state structures and non-state partners;
- > **expanding its existing cooperation with other line ministries** in areas such as rural or community development, gender, women's affairs, family and labour – which are often under the same ministry with social welfare and development – to strengthen its engagement with actors driving the social protection agenda at country level; and
- > **further deepening its close cooperation with other international agencies**, and drawing on complementarities with other development partners and civil society.

At global level, FAO is full member of the SPIAC-B, a coordination mechanism that responds to a request from the G20 to better organize the efforts of the international development community at the global and country levels on social protection initiatives. FAO is committed to advancing the Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) tools being developed at the request of the SPIAC-B.

In order to move towards a more standardized approach for defining and assessing countries' social protection systems and identifying potential social protection policy options and trends, FAO is currently contributing to the development of the Core Diagnostic Instrument and the Social Protection Policy Options Tool (SPPOT), and has established a working group to develop a Food Security and Nutrition-Specific ISPA tool.

At regional and global level, FAO is focusing its efforts on south-south cooperation and triangulation arrangements. An example of ongoing south-south cooperation is the Brazil-FAO Programme for International Cooperation, which is channeling more than USD36 million to support south-south cooperation in Africa and Latin America.

BOX 17 FACILITATING PARTNERSHIPS FOR COHERENT NUTRITION-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

FAO has played a critical role in facilitating partnerships and mobilizing political will among countries in the area of nutrition-sensitive social protection. In collaboration with the Russian Federation, FAO helped organize a high level policy dialogue on the nutrition-sensitive social protection policies and programmes of the BRICS countries (Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa) at the 2015 Global Forum on Nutrition-Sensitive Social Protection.

FAO is also actively supporting national dialogues on social protection, in line with Recommendations 22 and 23 of the Framework of Action of ICN2. Working alongside counterparts from national governments, UN agencies, international organizations and other local stakeholders, FAO aims to strengthen national capacities in designing, implementing and monitoring nutrition-sensitive social protection systems that benefit rural households and those dependent on natural resources. As part of these efforts, FAO is collaborating with partners to scale up school feeding programmes by linking them to local markets and to enhance their impact on FSN indicators by determining the ideal mix of food supplies and thus ensuring access to critical sources of nutrients.

In Cabo Verde, FAO is supporting the design and implementation of an integrated school nutrition programme that links with food production of local smallholder farmers. Support is being carried out with WFP and the Government of Brazil through the PAA programme.

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