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Social Protection Strategy

World Food Programme | Latin America and the Caribbean



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Foreword

In Latin America and the Caribbean, social protection platforms represent a huge opportunity to catalyse inter-sectoral efforts to reach Zero Hunger and Malnutrition by 2030, given the high coverage and scope of national programs. For instance, national cash transfer programmes cover 130 million people in 20 countries in the region (ECLAC 2017); 85 million children receive daily school meals (WFP 2017). WFP has a unique capacity to support national governments to use their social protection systems to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2. This Regional Strategy revolves around four priority areas of engagement, which combined, contribute to achieving SDG2: nutrition-sensitive social protection, shock-responsive social protection, social protection and climate change, and systems strengthening.

Over the last years, the region has seen an unprecedented number of disasters, both in terms of intensity and frequency. The potential for serving crises-affected people through the adaptation, expansion and use of national systems is a topic of increased attention globally as well as in the region, where safety nets cover more than 200 million people and disasters have affected more than 67 million people in a decade. As social protection systems advance and consolidate their administrative capacity to provide social assistance, their potential to support emergency response increases exponentially. However, preparedness investments are crucial to ensure systems are shock-proof, flexible to expand/contract, and ready before a crisis hits.

The double burden of malnutrition imposes a significant social and economic toll on all

countries in the region, as shown in the recent study on the Cost of the Double Burden of Malnutrition carried out in seven countries (WFP and ECLAC 2017; 2019). Responding to the growing threat of overweight and obesity, while at the same time facing the unfinished agenda of eradicating undernutrition requires multi-sectoral action. Nutrition-sensitive social protection platforms, including national school feeding programmes, can be leveraged to achieve better nutrition outcomes for vulnerable groups, in particular young children, mothers and adolescent girls.

Protecting the livelihoods and helping the most vulnerable to adapt in the context of a climate crisis is a new frontier for WFP's work in the region. Carefully designed social protection policies and instruments will help achieve these objectives, provided they serve a long-term, climate adaptation function. Effective conditional cash transfers, public work programmes and productivity enhancing safety nets linked to climate services, such as forecast-based financing, climate information and analysis, climate risk insurance and environmental services, can enhance households' ability to adapt in a changing environment.

This Regional Social Protection strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean builds on several years of intensive work and active engagement at regional and national level through capacity strengthening, technical assistance, South-South and Triangular Cooperation and evidence generation linked to policy advocacy. It provides a broad framework and vision for a coordinated social protection agenda based on a people-

centered and rights-based approach. WFP's vision is one of inclusive, equitable and gender transformative national social protection systems, prioritizing the most vulnerable and marginalized groups to effectively and sustainably contribute to reach Zero Hunger and Malnutrition in LAC.

Social protection is an important corporate priority for WFP. From its first Safety Nets Policy in 2004 to its current Strategic Plan 2017-2021, WFP has demonstrated its commitment to strengthening social protection systems as a mean to reduce hunger and malnutrition, protect livelihoods, build human capital and

increase resilience in the face of recurring shocks.

This Regional Strategy is an adaptation of the corporate vision to the specificities of the regional context. But new challenges are emerging (migration, urban poverty and youth unemployment) threatening to reverse the gains made in the past decades. Hunger is now increasing again globally and regionally. WFP in LAC will continue to seek innovative approaches to address these challenges and inform the global practice, to contribute to accelerated efforts towards Zero Hunger and Malnutrition, leaving no one behind.

Miguel Barreto

Regional Director, Regional Bureau Panama.

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We would like to extend our thanks to all for their valuable contribution to shape this living document.

Background documents and the Concept Note that provided the basis for this regional strategic vision are available upon request. Please contact giulia.baldi@wfp.org or marcandre.prost@wfp.org for any additional information.



Fotografia: Deivid Torrado

Introduction

Guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the World Food Programme (WFP) increasingly supports national social protection systems and programmes that contribute to hunger eradication and long-term food security and nutrition results, in a wide variety of contexts. From its first Safety Nets Policy in 2004 to its current Strategic Plan 2017-2021, WFP has demonstrated a strong commitment to and belief in social protection as a mean to reduce hunger and malnutrition, protect livelihoods, build human capital and increase resilience in the face of recurring shocks. WFP's role is two-dimensional: 1) service delivery in countries limited by capacity or resources and

2) technical assistance, capacity strengthening, advocacy and policy support to advance country-owned programmes. The latter is WFP's most prominent role in the Latin America and the Caribbean region (LAC) and in other middle-income country settings worldwide.

The purpose of this document is to briefly summarize WFP's main areas of investment in social protection in the region and inform the formulation and implementation of WFP's Country Strategic Plans, complementing other corporate and regional documents. It intends to provide few guiding principles, a quick-reference vision and the next steps for WFP's work in social protection.

Process

This regional strategic vision is grounded on the work that WFP Regional Bureau Panama (RBP) and Country Offices (COs) undertook on social protection in 2015-2019, and on the priority areas that emerged from these initial investments. First, WFP created an internal Regional Programme Policy Advisory Group to validate an internal Concept Note on social protection and identify main pillars of work.

The Concept Note provided the basis for this Strategic Vision, the regional context, relevant examples, and much of the practical and theoretical underpinnings for WFP's engagement.

In addition, this document is based on findings and lessons learned from a series of WFP initiatives and consultations with a wide number of stakeholders over 2016-19, in particular:

- 1) the *Learning Journey on Social Protection 4 Zero Hunger*: all trainees, WFP management and external experts contributed to the strategic discussions on WFP's role in social protection;
- 2) the *Study on Shock-responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean* with Oxford Policy Management (OPM), and the first Regional Seminar convened by WFP on this topic, with 20 governments, partners and social protection experts;
- 3) other WFP studies such as *Smart School Meals and Gender-Sensitive Social Protection for Zero Hunger*;

- 4) the RBP Social Protection Innovation Fund and other country-level initiatives to advance WFP's support to national social protection systems;
- 5) the consultation and formulation process for Country Strategic Plans in the region, which showed the prominence of specific social protection themes relevant for WFP and zero hunger;
- 6) discussions with the RBP Social Protection Community of Practice and selected external partners.
- 7) the Social protection and climate change: WFP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean's vision to advance climate change adaptation through social protection, study developed in collaboration with Oxford Policy Management (OPM).
- 8) The WFP Step-by step approach: Providing technical assistance to host government in Latin America on social protection and safety nets by facilitating South-South cooperation.

Finally, this document is also inspired by WFP's corporate vision on social protection, cash-based transfers and country capacity strengthening, discussions with senior WFP management on these topics and exchanges with other Regional Bureaus.

This comprehensive process has led to a set of unifying themes that stand out as the most crucial for WFP's investment in social protection in the region in the coming years.

Rationale for WFP's engagement in Social Protection



National social protection systems: The most effective route for WFP to contribute to zero hunger?

Source: SWC 2018, ILO 2017, WFP Data (2018).

WFP believes that its direct assistance in the region - increasingly provided through cash-based transfer modalities in partnership with governments and accompanied by capacity strengthening, while still crucial for millions of people, is not in itself sufficient to make a substantial contribution to zero hunger results.

National social protection systems and programmes in LAC are - overall - mature systems which provide a much wider platform to contribute to the SDGs, are country-led and increasingly cost-efficient and effective in reaching poor and vulnerable populations. WFP is already supporting these systems in LAC.

Social protection and food security and nutrition are interlinked and there is a large body of evidence on how social protection programmes have had positive impacts on food security and nutrition. By definition, governments provide social protection to ensure that people can meet their basic needs, including their ability to eat adequate food to maintain a healthy and active life. The current

WFP Strategic Plan commits the organization to 'strengthen countries' capacities to provide social protection measures that protect access to adequate, nutritious and safe food for all'.

Social protection has a strong role to play in providing access to adequate and nutritious food all year round, advancing inclusion and gender equality, supporting smallholder agriculture and resilience, supporting nutrition-related behavior change, and establishing sustainable food systems. Leveraging social protection systems to achieve countries' food security and nutrition goals, build human capital and reach the most food insecure and vulnerable populations is crucial. Finally, social protection systems can be used in times of crisis to assist affected populations and help them recover from shocks and adapt to climate change. The above illustrates the opportunity for WFP to work through and with existing social protection schemes to achieve zero hunger and malnutrition in the region, saving lives and changing lives.

Through the generation of evidence on the social and economic impact of food insecurity and the double burden of malnutrition WFP can support governments in their efforts to redesign their policy framework, including social protection systems as a platform to impact food security and nutrition outcomes in the population, creating opportunities for country offices to participate in this policy dialogue.

In this light, it is vital to build systems and strengthen coordination between social protection and different sectors such as health, education, disaster risk management and climate change sectors, in order to achieve a holistic strategy.

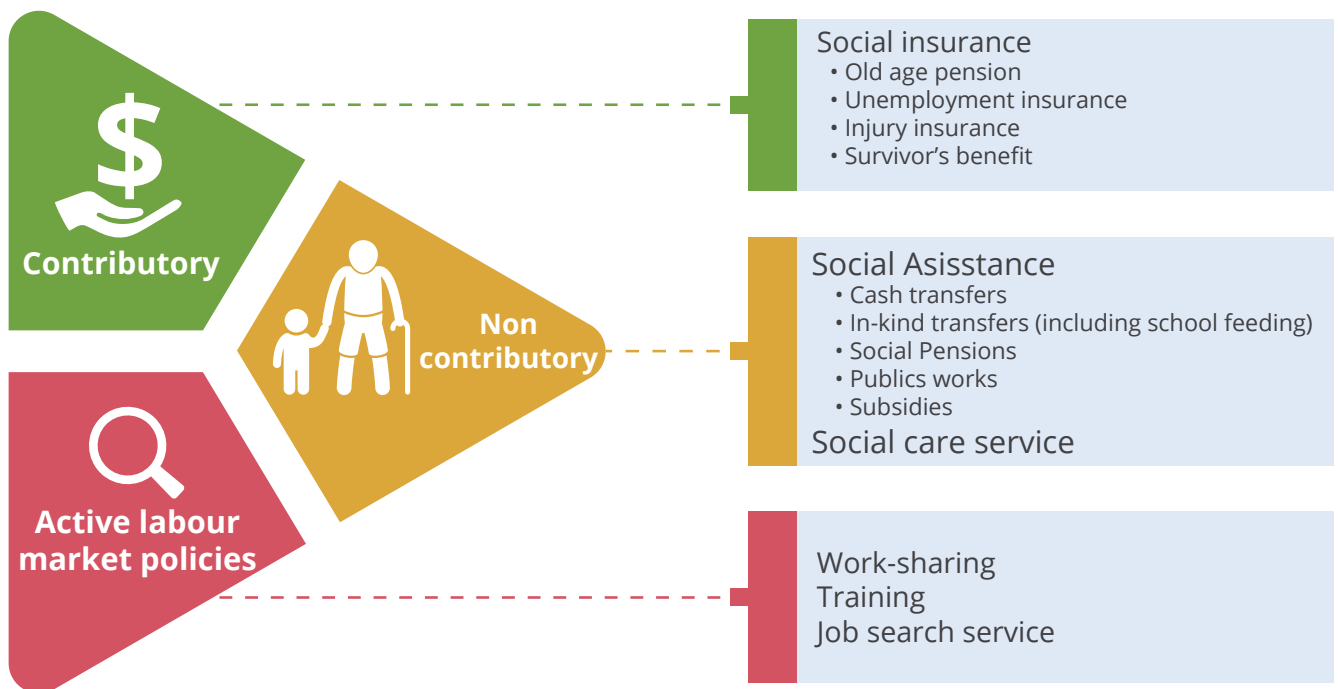
Definitions (WFP Safety Nets Guidelines 2014):

Social Protection refers to a broad set of arrangements and instruments designed to protect members of society from shocks and stresses over the lifecycle. It includes social assistance for the poor, social insurance for the vulnerable, labor market regulations and social justice for the marginalized. At a minimum, social protection systems include safety nets, labor market policies, insurance options, and basic social services. Overall, the components of social protection are often underpinned by rights and legislation, such as minimum wages.

There are four main functions of social protection: **Protective** measures guarantee relief from deprivation; **Preventive** measures avert deprivation in various ways; **Promotional** measures enhance income and capabilities; and **Transformative** measures to address concerns of social equity and exclusion.

Safety nets are one component of social protection systems. They are formal or informal non-contributory transfer programmes designed to provide predictable support to people who are vulnerable to or living in poverty or who are facing malnutrition or other forms of deprivation. The terms "safety nets", "social transfers" and "social assistance" all refer to **non-contributory transfers**.

Range of social protection instruments



We distinguish between contributory programmes and non-contributory programmes because of the distinct set of risks and population groups they are designed to target. Transfers are fully paid for in the case of non-contributory programmes, whereas

participants make regular payments to a scheme to cover costs related to life-cycle events in the case of contributory programmes. In the case of the latter, costs are matched by the provider (for e.g. employer).

Source: Barca et al forthcoming Shock-Responsive Social Protection in the Caribbean: Literature Review. OPM with WFP.



Guiding Principles

PRINCIPLE 1. STAY FOCUSED ON THE PEOPLE WFP SERVES

In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, WFP aspires to universality¹ and works towards the implementation of “nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable” (SDG 1.3). This aspiration is also grounded in reality and on a **needs-based** approach that values social protection as a guarantee, but is differential in practice as accounting for the different contexts and needs of various population groups:² the most food insecure, poor, vulnerable and marginalized people including people living with HIV that sometimes are being left behind by the same social protection systems. WFP can and should be their advocate and voice at all times in its social protection engagement. WFP in Latin America and the Caribbean will continue to support national systems and more inclusive, protective, preventive, promotive and transformational approaches that contribute to Zero Hunger.

PRINCIPLE 2. INCLUSIVE & GENDER-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION: MOVE FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Leaving no one behind and incorporating a transformative gender approach are not just labels and wishful statements. WFP can unpack these concepts and support governments in their operationalization and is already doing it in some countries in the region. These two lenses should be always embedded in any type of engagement in social protection, focusing on those furthest behind. This also applies to HIV-sensitive social protection where financial protection, including social transfers are essential, along with social health protection and inclusion of antiretroviral therapy in a universally accessible essential package of health-care services would assist in ensuring

treatment access and adherence (Cash and Care)³.

PRINCIPLE 3. CONTRIBUTE TO THE TRIPLE NEXUS IN PRACTICE THROUGH SOCIAL PROTECTION

WFP adheres to the humanitarian principles and is committed to accountability to affected populations⁴. Latin America and the Caribbean provides the perfect context to contribute to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in practice and prove that humanitarian and development actions can be better integrated to transform lives of vulnerable people and support peaceful communities. Social protection can be an important tool for governments to achieve this, thanks to its inherent systemic and long-term approach that seeks to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and hunger - in both normal times and times of crises.

PRINCIPLE 4. ADOPT NEW LENSES & ANTICIPATE EMERGING NEEDS.

WFP will need to look more systematically at a number of crucial emerging issues related to social protection for zero hunger in the region. In particular, **the current regional migration crisis⁵** is likely to impact radically national systems and prompt important paradigm shifts both at the source and at destination areas. It also brings new and different vulnerabilities. How will national social protection systems adapt and what can WFP do to support the current migration crises?

PRINCIPLE 5. GETTING INTO THE CONVERSATION: INTEGRATING COMMUNICATION FOR MAXIMIZING SOCIAL PROTECTION'S IMPACT

Social and Behavioral Change Communication (SBCC) has a catalyzing impact for people-centered social protection designs, considering behavioral challenges and enhancing social

1 *In the words of ECLAC (2015), 'conceiving social protection from a rights-based perspective as a universal policy providing all citizens with egalitarian access does not mean providing uniform services for a heterogeneous population, but adapting services to cover differentiated needs and guarantee the enjoyment of rights for all. The universalist orientation, then, is not at odds with targeting. Rather, the latter is placed at the service of the former, in recognition of the different situations people find themselves'*

2 *Embracing the vision of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and also in line with the UN-wide Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I).*

3 *See [here](#) the WFP paper on Gender-sensitive Social Protection for Zero Hunger, which is an integral part of this regional vision.*

4 *See <http://www.wfp.org/content/humanitarian-principles> and <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000013057/download/>*

5 *Occurring at an unprecedented speed and magnitude, the migration from Venezuela to neighboring countries (Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Chile), the Human caravans from Central America's Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador y Honduras) and the migration from Nicaragua, involve unparalleled regional migration crises.*

protection programmes' potential to improve ownership, social dialogue and cohesion. WFP believes that communication with beneficiaries is very relevant to inform programme design and implementation, while laying the ground for creative and community-based improvements. SBCC is an important complementary activity to support households to make nutritious food purchases in the marketplace, use healthier food preparation methods at home, and ensure equitable intra-household food allocation. SBCC may also accompany school feeding programmes, as schools offer a unique platform to engage school-aged children and adolescents. For social protection and climate change, SBCC can support smallholder farmers' behavioral change for adaptation to embrace new adaptive strategies.

PRINCIPLE 6. EVIDENCE & KNOWLEDGE TO INFORM PRACTICE

WFP believes in evidence-based social protection policies and programmes. The body of evidence on social protection has been steadily growing in the region and globally. Yet, surprisingly important evidence gaps still remain in a number of areas essential for decision-makers and for social protection systems to evolve to meet different needs. WFP is already generating evidence and systematizing knowledge to inform practice. It will continue to do so in partnership with research institutions and others, regarding links between social protection and food security, as well as other gap areas and emerging aspects.

PRINCIPLE 7. CASH PLUS & BEYOND: BE INVOLVED, RAISE THE BAR

In its direct operations in the region, WFP has increasingly been adopting cash-based transfer modalities as the preferred option and has introduced a number of innovations for better results. This global and regional expertise in designing and implementing large-scale cash transfers can help to support governments in their transition from traditional Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) developed in the 90s, to Cash Plus interventions and other integrated approaches that strive to be more inclusive, less prescriptive and less burdening on women. From multipurpose & unconditional cash for

essential needs to digitalization to financial inclusion for the poorest, the cash world is rapidly evolving, and WFP is at the forefront and able to accompany this important transition.

PRINCIPLE 8. BE A PIONEER: INVEST IN INNOVATIONS FOR SCALABLE SOLUTIONS & BETTER RESULTS

WFP is committed to innovation, including programme innovations and technical advances as well as supporting an enabling environment to share experience and knowledge among governments with the aim of improving social protection systems (e.g. digital transformation, interoperability, innovative financing solutions, targeting, data and information systems, delivery systems, etc). WFP's IT expertise can also support several local solutions and WFP can use its direct interventions to test them and showcase results to the governments. WFP can act as a facilitator of partnerships with research institutions or the private sector, to co-create innovative solutions. WFP's supply chain expertise should also be better leveraged: for instance, support to retailers could greatly enhance the (sometimes limited) value of the transfer provided by national social protection programmes, improve the purchasing power of families and hence the outcomes of the programmes.

PRINCIPLE 9. INTERNAL CAPACITIES: EMPOWER WFP SOCIAL PROTECTION CHAMPIONS

WFP should continue to invest in strengthening its internal capacities at all levels in the region, to move forward social protection for zero hunger and provide the best possible support to governments. The WFP LAC Social Protection Community of Practice already incorporates a strong cohort of "WFP Social Protection Champions" who can help to build new generations of officers with social protection expertise and passion. Exchanges between Country Offices as well as with Headquarters and other Regional Bureaus should continue to be fostered, as well as innovative learning initiatives, on-the-job training and webinars with external partners.

PRINCIPLE 10. SYSTEMS BUILDING AND WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY APPROACH

WFP puts systems building at the centre of its work, for more sustainable results, and supports the broader national social protection system, hand in hand with a thorough understanding of the political economy underpinning social protection schemes. We also recognize the crucial roles of civil society, private sector, academia and other actors for effective social protection systems that contribute to zero hunger. WFP will continue working independently and with different national institutions, aiming to support sustainable and effective public policies that transcend government turnover and are embedded in national legal frameworks.

PRINCIPLE 11. PARTNERSHIPS 2.0 TO ENABLE SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR ZERO HUNGER

WFP is taking partnerships for zero hunger and malnutrition extremely seriously and is aware that social protection requires an advanced

partnership model as well as innovative financing mechanisms. UN agencies, donors, NGOs, academia, the civil society, the private sector and all the development partners have different roles in supporting social protection systems, and WFP is committed to joining forces and avoiding duplications or inconsistent advice to governments. Regional partnerships like those established with CEPAL and UNICEF are an example of this effort. WFP's participation in global social protection networks and bodies such as SPIAC-B and ISPA, also supports work in the region and alignment between development partners. Finally, WFP should reinforce its facilitator and convener role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation on key social protection topics, including through regional and national seminars, exchange visits and bilateral agreements, as well as initiating regional communities of practice (on the socialprotection.org platform, for instance



One Vision, Four Pillars of Work

Fotografra: Rein Skullerud



Social Protection 4 Zero Hunger



Nutrition-sensitive
Social Protection



Shock-responsive
Social Protection



Social Protection
and Climate Change



Social Protection
Systems

WFP's overall vision statement for the region related to social protection is **"To support and strengthen national social protection systems that contribute incisively and at scale to the fight against hunger and malnutrition"**. This statement can be summarized as "Social Protection 4 Zero Hunger".

WFP's main focus and means to achieve the vision is **capacity strengthening & technical assistance** to national/sub-national institutions that develop, manage and implement social protection policies and programmes, with a specific attention to the four pillars: **nutrition-sensitive social protection, shock-responsive social protection, social protection and climate change adaptation and social protection system strengthening**. This vision also includes WFP's **advocacy & evidence generation** role to inform decision-making and policy implementation.

While mostly supporting **SDG 2** and **SDG 17** in line with the corporate Strategic Plan, WFP's work in social protection in LAC aims to contribute also to **SDG 1, 3, 4, 5** and **10**, among others⁶.

The geographic scope of this vision is the following, with three levels of action:

- First at **country-level** – with a primary focus on the 12 countries where WFP has presence, plus the Caribbean sub-region where WFP supports emergency preparedness and response⁷. This does not exclude support to non-presence countries where requested. Social protection work at country-level is led and managed by WFP Country Offices and framed within Country Strategic Plans.
- At **regional level** – for the whole Latin America and Caribbean region, particularly when convening and facilitating exchanges of experiences between countries and South-South Cooperation on topics highlighted in this strategic vision. Regional work is led by WFP Regional Bureau based in Panama.
- At **global level** – when influencing from the LAC region broader discussions on the role of WFP in social protection, informing corporate policies and tools, generating evidence that is used beyond the region, and engaging with the global community of practice and international partners on these

topics. WFP Regional Bureau liaises with WFP Headquarters on all aspects of global relevance.

In some instances, WFP might retain or be requested to take on a **direct delivery role on behalf of social protection institutions** (e.g. the National School Meals Programme in Honduras or the nutrition component of Progresando con Solidaridad in the Dominican Republic).

Any type of support to social protection is **demand-driven, context-specific** and **partnership-oriented**. It complements existing efforts by other stakeholders, based on WFP's comparative advantages and expertise. It is always part of a broader overarching strategy for WFP's contribution to national zero hunger results, as enshrined in the Country Strategic Plans.

WFP applies the highest standards in **programme quality** and believes that social protection instruments and particularly safety nets should be designed and implemented in view to maximise their efficiency and effectiveness in every way possible.

Although not a separate pillar this strategy, WFP also has a strong role to play in **HIV-Sensitive Social protection**. Under the new UNAIDS Division of Labour, WFP and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have been designated Co-conveners for the area on scaling up HIV-sensitive Social Protection. In the last few years the importance of addressing HIV-sensitive social protection has received more attention and greater political support than ever before. Social protection is recognized as a critical enabler of the AIDS response, offering opportunities for the AIDS response to reach more people, especially those left behind by the current provision of HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services. Strengthening national social and child protection systems to ensure that by 2020 75% of people living with HIV, at risk of and affected by HIV, benefit from HIV-sensitive social protection is a key target in the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, the UNAIDS Strategy 2016 – 21 and the UNAIDS Fast Track Commitments to end AIDS by 2030.⁸

⁶ See <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> for the list of SDGs.

⁷ Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Barbados. Plus all countries participating in the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), supported by the WFP Barbados Office.

⁸ See http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/20151027_UNAIDS_PCB37_15_18_EN_rev1.pdf

The sections below provide a brief snapshot of the four pillars of work prioritized by WFP, in the form of a **quick-reference fact sheet** for each pillar. It is important to mention that these pillars correspond to different objectives that social protection could help to achieve (nutrition, shock-response, climate change adaptation and systems strengthening) with the aim of reaching a World without hunger and malnutrition. Therefore, these areas of work do not correspond to different social protection programmes but instead they aim to guide an integrated WFP work on social protection.

For each of the four pillars below, the document provides a short brief with Background on the topic, Vision, Status and Priorities for WFP action. A broad set of technical assistance

entry points and phases for all thematic pillars is provided in the figure below. These are not intended to be prescriptive but rather an illustration of the non-linear nature of the technical assistance process for social protection, which needs to be adapted to specific contexts and needs.

WFP RBP is in the process of developing a series of tools to support country technical assistance. South-South and Triangular Cooperation can be a relevant tool throughout the different phases of the TA process, as described in the 2019 WFP publication “Step-by step approach: Providing technical assistance to host governments in Latin America on social protection and safety nets by facilitating South-South cooperation”.

Phases and entry points for WFP technical assistance to governments in Social Protection
(non-linear process)

Advocacy	Evidence-based advocacy to governments to prioritize and invest in social protection
Scoping	Assess needs and entry points to strengthen key aspects of the national SP system (e.g. targeting and information systems, delivery mechanisms, coordination, financing)
Roadmap development	Government identifies and agrees on entry points and options of how social protection programmes can be strengthened to deliver results for the targeted population
Standard operating procedures (SOPs)/ Programme implementation	Implementation of the programme; monitoring and evaluation. Putting in place SOPs as part of emergency preparedness (mainly for shock-responsive SP)

Source: WFP-OPM workshop, Panama City, February 2019



Nutrition-sensitive Social Protection



Pillar 1: Nutrition-sensitive Social Protection

BACKGROUND

The Latin America and the Caribbean region is experiencing a demographic, epidemiological and nutritional transition, three complementary processes that induce profound changes in dietary and physical activity patterns. The result is a sharp increase in obesity and overweight in all countries with persistently high levels of undernutrition in some countries. This double burden of malnutrition costs for countries such as Chile, Mexico and Ecuador an estimated 0.2% to 4.3% of their GDP⁹. In the case of El Salvador the costs of the double burden of malnutrition in 2017 were estimated at 10.3% of the country's GDP¹⁰. Supporting the demand for and access to adequate, nutritious and safe food is a top priority in the region and national social protection systems provide a good platform to deliver nutrition results at scale.

When adequately designed, social protection can be a very effective platform to reach families and individuals at risk and affected by malnutrition, by addressing underlying determinants of malnutrition and food insecurity across the life cycle (see Figure 1 in next page).

The Figure shows indicative pathways whereby nutritionally vulnerable populations can be targeted through social protection programmes. The programmes' effects on factors such as income, prices, and household behaviors change the degree to which families choose to invest in health and how they do it. Broader social norms and values will influence this decision making, as will available technology and services that promote health and the skills of households in applying them.

Social protection programmes can be effective tools to support **people's access to food**, through **in-kind or cash transfers**, resulting in **improved consumption, both in terms of quality and quantity**¹¹. For instance, home-grown school feeding programmes increase access and consumption of quality food for

From the WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021:

'WFP will leverage all its assistance and activities **to deliver improved nutrition outcomes by strengthening nutrition-sensitive approaches**, and by working with partners using complementary approaches across sectors – such as **strengthening social protection systems**, strengthening capacity and supportive legislation for enhanced public and private demand for fortified food where necessary, building resilience, improving health and education, increasing smallholder productivity, reducing post-harvest losses, and ensuring sanitation and hygiene. **Leveraging its vast global expertise in supporting different social protection schemes all over the world, WFP will work to strengthen countries' capacities to provide social protection measures that protect access to adequate, nutritious and safe food for all.**'

From the WFP Nutrition Policy 2017-2021:

"To support national governments, WFP will identify platforms for maximizing the reach of nutrition interventions and reducing the costs of scale-up. For example, **national social protection programmes, which are implemented on a large scale and target the most vulnerable people, represent an important opportunity for delivering nutrition-sensitive programming**. Such platforms can help tackle the underlying causes of malnutrition by: i) reducing vulnerability; ii) protecting incomes, crops and assets; iii) ensuring that basic needs can be met; iv) securing access to nutritious diets; v) improving the food environment in local markets; and vi) providing access to health services, safe drinking water and sanitation."

students, free up resources that can improve food security for their families, but also create access to predictable markets and livelihood opportunities for smallholder farmers in the same communities.

Nutrition outcomes of social protection programmes can be maximized with complementary **nutrition-specific actions**, tailored to the nutrition needs of vulnerable groups, such as **provision (in kind or through the market) of specialized nutritious foods (SNF), home-based fortificants, micronutrient supplements** for children under the age of five years, or other vulnerable groups such as adolescent girls of pregnant and lactating women. **Social and Behavior Change**

9 See here the publication "The cost of the double burden of Malnutrition -Social and Economic Impact" (2017).

10 See here the publication "The cost of the double burden of Malnutrition – Social and Economic Impact – El Salvador" (2019)/

11 In the short run, however, transfer programs can exacerbate overnutrition while aiming to reduce undernutrition. For example, Fernald, Gertler, and Hou (2009) found that the CCT Oportunidades in Mexico led to higher BMI as well as higher blood pressure. Forde et al. (2012) found a similar risk for BMI in Colombia's transfer program. The one study that assessed whether in-kind distribution had a different impact on obesity than cash—in this case, in a study of women in the same Mexican programme studied by Cunha, de Giorgi, and Jayachandran (2011)—found that both forms of support led to increased weight gain relative to the control group with no significant difference (Leroy et al. 2013).

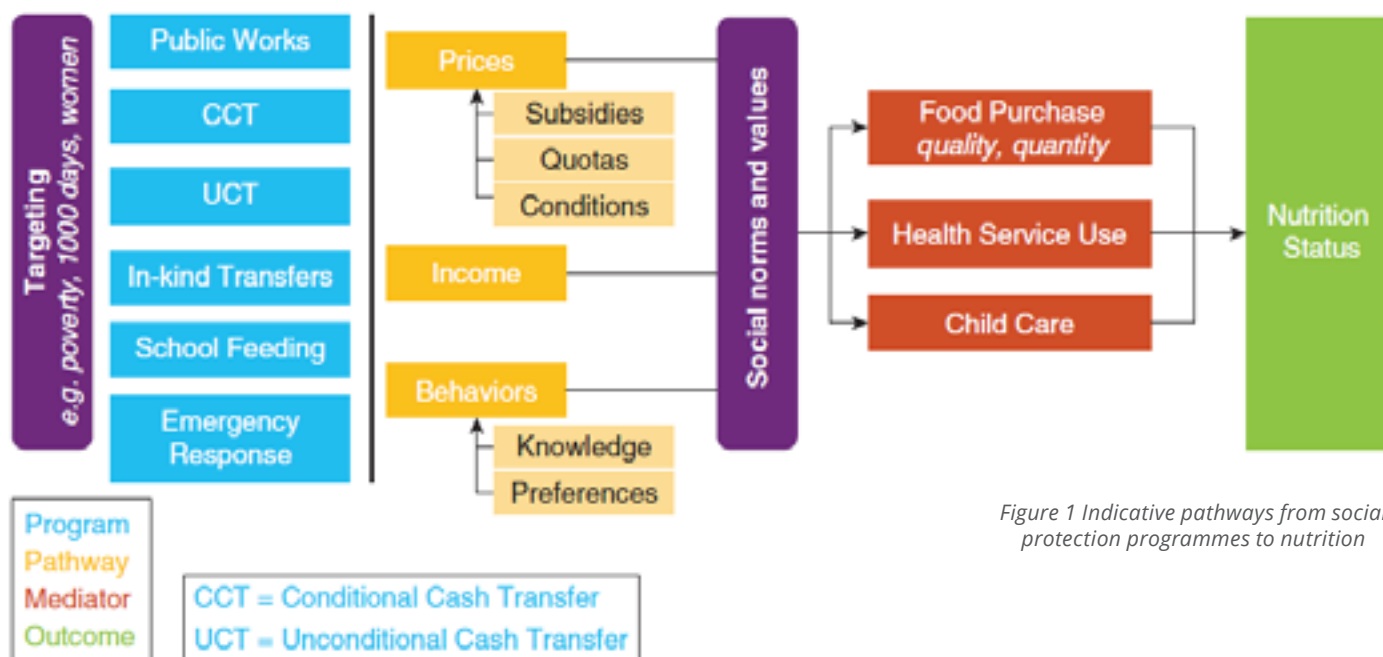
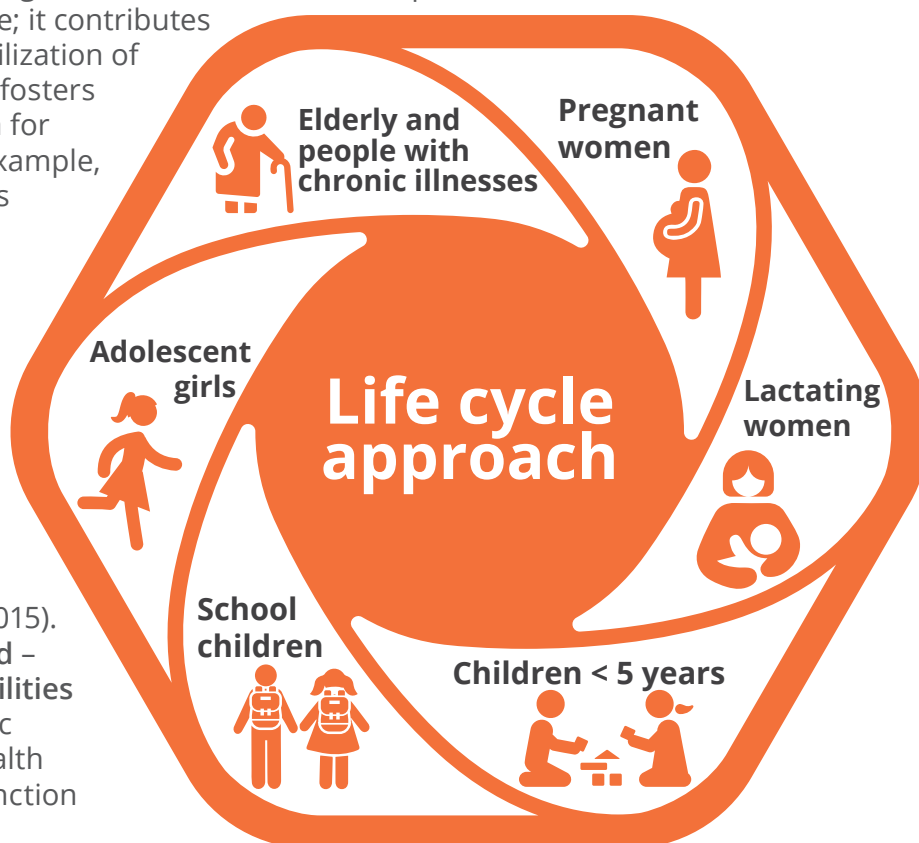


Figure 1 Indicative pathways from social protection programmes to nutrition

Source: Harold Alderman and SecureNutrition.

Communication (SBCC) helps influence social norms and behaviors driving demand and consumption for safe, nutritious foods and services; it helps managing child malnutrition by increasing referrals, reducing stigma, improving default rates, lowering risk of relapse, and widening coverage; it contributes to ensuring the appropriate utilization of specialized nutritious foods; it fosters social/community mobilization for programmes ownership (for example, Home-Grown School Meals), as well as helps create enabling spaces for behavior change at individual level. For example, Peru reformed its Juntos CCT program to stress training and service provision, particularly for children less than 36 months. Recent results from that programme point to a significant improvement in the height of boys enrolled in the programme (Andersen et al. 2015). **Linkages to other services and – to some extent - co-responsibilities** can strengthen the use of basic services such as child care, health and sanitation, which in conjunction

with improving food security, are essential to comprehensively address immediate and underlying causes of malnutrition. Ensuring the quality and availability of these services (supply), particularly in fragile contexts, is of critical importance.



VISION

- Social protection systems and programmes in LAC maximise their contribution to nutrition outcomes by including access to nutritious food at the household and individual level and addressing the underlying causes of the double burden of malnutrition, and by incorporating nutrition objectives.
- A lifecycle approach is incorporated into social protection programmes, to better address the specific nutritional needs of different vulnerable age groups within a household
- WFP increasingly supports governments in integrating nutrition-sensitive and HIV-sensitive approaches in their social protection programmes and continues to generate high quality evidence to support decision-making and advocacy (e.g. Cost of the Double Burden of Malnutrition, Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis, impact and programmatic evaluations)
- Flagship social protection programmes like conditional cash transfers are used by governments as a channel for other nutrition-specific interventions, such as improving access to specialized nutritious foods. In order to contribute to improved nutrition outcomes, the level of cash transfer must be adequate (e.g. in relation to food basket costs or contribution to household monthly consumption expenditure) and transfers must be predictable, regular and delivered over time.
- Coordination between social protection and other critical sectors for nutrition is strengthened, such as health, education, agriculture and the food system.
- Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) strategies are systematically incorporated into social protection programmes.
- National school meals programmes in the region are an integrated platform to improve nutrition and health, through diversified and culturally acceptable school menus, linked to local smallholder agriculture, and become a global reference for scalable nutrition-sensitive approaches.
- Food fortification policies are adopted and implemented by governments, including through national social protection systems.
- Explicit nutrition and food security objectives and indicators are incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation system of national social protection programmes and WFP activities.
- Social protection programmes in the region are truly gender transformative, taking into consideration key mediating factors that will determine the magnitude of nutrition improvements for women, children, men and boys.

STATUS

WFP has been working with governments to address malnutrition for many years and has gradually shifted its approach from direct implementation to an enabling role, ensuring support to national policies and programmes related to health and nutrition, as well as to social protection. WFP's expertise to integrate nutrition-sensitive approaches in national programmes is of increasing interest to governments, and WFP has already many lessons to share.

Examples that stand out include: the Dominican Republic, where the Government has entrusted WFP to design and implement with national resources and partners the nutrition component of *Progresando con Solidaridad*; Ecuador, where by request of the Government WFP conducted the **Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) analysis**¹² to inform possible adaptations of the national social protection programmes included under the "Mision Ternura" initiative, and enhance their contribution to nutrition; El Salvador and Peru, where nutrition-sensitive social protection is at the core of WFP's Country Strategic Plans; Honduras, where WFP is the main government partner in the implementation of the national school meals programmes, scaling-up nutrition-sensitive social protection. In Cuba, Colombia, Haiti, Guatemala, Bolivia and Nicaragua, WFP also has a strong nutrition-sensitive focus in its social protection role. **The Cost of the Double Burden of Malnutrition** study in Chile, Mexico, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Dominican Republic – has generated regional evidence on the social and economic impact of food insecurity and malnutrition on individuals, families, communities and countries, and will be used to advocate for increased investments.

Moreover, WFP is also implementing and supporting governments in designing, piloting and scaling up **successful models of Home-Grown School Meals**, including in Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala in Central America, Haiti and Cuba in the Caribbean, and Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia and Peru in South America. Linking social protection to 'productive' as well as 'social' sectors will all allow for a more holistic approach and have the potential to

¹² See [here](#) background information on the Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) Analysis, including a peer reviewed publication on [Maternal and Child Nutrition](#) on the concept and methodology and several country analysis reports.



Fotografía: Mariana Gonzalez

achieve bigger impacts on poverty, hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

This pillar is core to WFP's mandate and, while it is crosscutting throughout the other three pillars, it also requires dedicated focus and resources. At regional level, WFP has currently strong internal capacities to support countries on this workstream, and has already led a number of successful regional initiatives: from trainings on SBCC and nutrition-sensitive programming, to regional publications on the cost of the double burden of malnutrition¹³, nutrition-sensitive school meals programmes¹⁴ and rice fortification¹⁵, to high-level events like regional seminars focused on this topic, to organization of South South and triangular Cooperation learning initiatives, among others. This evidence-generation, knowledge-sharing, convening and advocacy role will continue to be an essential part of WFP's engagement in this area.

PRIORITIES

- 1) Investing in evidence generation regarding psychosocial barriers (gender norms, xenophobia, eating and consumption habits) for nutrition-sensitive social protection, and the role of communication to address those barriers.
- 2) Provide high-end, evidence-based technical assistance to governments on nutrition-sensitive approaches, focusing in particular on cash transfer programmes, public work programmes and school meals, to start with. Link the regional rice fortification project to social protection systems and programmes.
- 3) Maintain and strengthen partnerships with UNICEF, WHO, FAO, UNAIDS, ILO, ECLAC, IFPRI, the National Institute of Public Health of Mexico (INSP), the National Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama (INCAP), and DSM, among other UN, private sector and research partners.
- 4) Support countries and communities to better address and prevent the double burden of malnutrition through social protection programmes such as school feeding programmes.
- 5) Continue to support Home-Grown School Meals models, including smallholder farmers' access to markets, and step up WFP's involvement and efforts in productive inclusion for the poorest.
- 6) Support countries to identify and address gaps in allowing people living with HIV to access social protection schemes and co-convene the area of HIV-sensitive Social Protection with ILO, as it relates to the nutrition sensitive and other pillars of this strategy.
- 7) Continue to invest on evidence generation and advocacy at the highest levels and facilitate South-South learning and sharing on nutrition-sensitive social protection.

¹³ <https://es.wfp.org/publicaciones/el-coste-de-la-doble-carga-de-la-malnutricion-0>

¹⁴ See [here](#) the publication "Smart School Meals. Nutrition-sensitive national programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean. A review of 16 countries." (2017).

¹⁵ See [here](#) the WFP and Sight and Life publication "Scaling up rice fortification in Latin America and the Caribbean" (2018).



Shock-responsive Social Protection



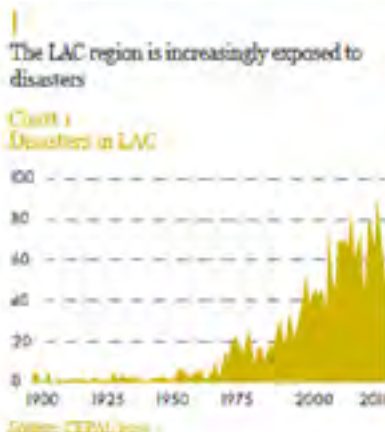
Pillar 2: Shock-Responsive Social Protection (SRSP)

What is Shock-Responsive Social Protection?
 The use of national social protection programmes and administrative capacity to provide assistance to the population affected by a crisis.



Why is it relevant for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)?

- 1 The LAC region is increasingly exposed to disasters
- 2 Social protection systems in the region are relatively advanced and with significant coverage, reaching especially the population in poverty and vulnerability.
- 3 Social protection's administrative systems have the potential for a quick, efficient and effective response. Using the existing institutional architecture avoids the set-up of a parallel delivery mechanism to support humanitarian response.



4 It strengthens the coordination between national actors for a longer term benefit.

SOME COUNTRIES IN THE REGION ARE ALREADY DOING THIS SUCCESSFULLY!

What are the main challenges?

Social protection systems have been developed for objectives different from response to shocks, and therefore they require design tweaks.

The target populations of existing social protection programmes not always coincide with the households affected by a shock, and also programmes have specific operational rules and processes.

Institutional coordination can be very complex, and there may be financial challenges as well.

Source: OPM/WFP Factsheet on Shock-responsive Social Protection in LAC (2017)¹⁶

16 See also [this video](#) by WFP and OPM.

KEY SOCIAL PROTECTION ACTIONS ALONG THE SHOCK CYCLE



Source: Beazley R., Solórzano A. and Barca V. (2019). Study on shock-responsive social protection in Latin America and the Caribbean: summary of key findings and policy recommendations. OPM in collaboration with WFP.

SRSP CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Our theoretical framework guides an assessment of the preparedness and responsiveness of social protection systems to covariate shocks that represent threats to the wellbeing, health, food security, nutrition, and safety of the population.

System preparedness



System response

When policymakers consider the use of a social protection system to address emergency needs, they can employ a number of strategies to scale up the overall level of support provided by the system to vulnerable people:

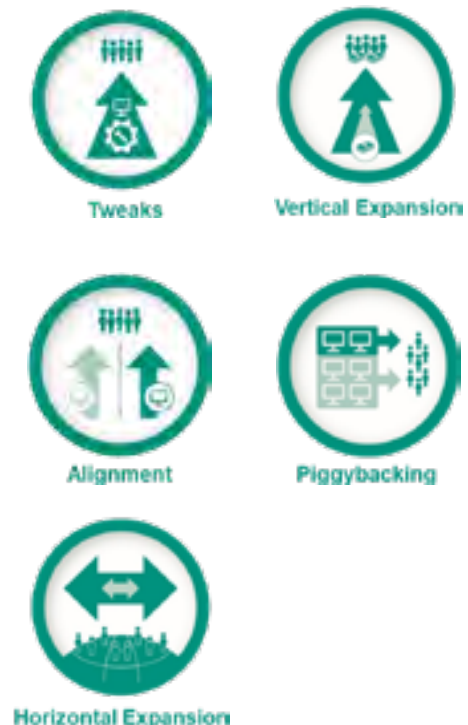
Vertical expansion: increasing the benefit value or duration of an existing programme or system;

Horizontal expansion: temporarily extending support to new households;

Piggybacking: borrowing elements of an existing programme or system while delivering a separate emergency response;

Alignment: developing a parallel humanitarian system that is aligned as well as possible with the current or possible future national social protection programme; and

Design tweaks: making small adjustments to the design of the core programme.



Sources: OPM (2015) and Beazley et al. (2016)

VISION

- Shock-responsive social protection has the potential to support a more timely, cost-effective and efficient response to an emergency.
- A number of social protection interventions have an important role to play in mitigating the effects of shocks or seasonal stresses on household food insecurity through smoothing consumption and income. Linking early actions and surveillance mechanisms with social protection system can help support the response during recurrent emergencies such as droughts.
- National social protection systems and programmes in LAC are increasingly prepared and used by national respondents during times of crises, to assist affected populations in the most efficient, timely and effective manner, and link them to longer-term programmes, whenever possible.
- Social protection systems are strengthened through this approach and are better able to meet their regular objectives, including resilience-building of vulnerable populations.
- WFP is a catalyser of partnerships, generator of evidence and enabler of south-south exchanges on shock-responsive social protection; it provides high-quality technical assistance and strengthens national and subnational capacities; it complements government response through social protection when requested and needed.
- Ensure a focus on chronic and seasonal food security, not just shocks, by ensuring an adequate dietary intake tailored to different individual needs by including nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive actions into shock-responsive mechanisms.

STATUS

This is the most advanced pillar of WFP's social protection work in the region, having been prioritized since 2015. To some extent, WFP's proactive engagement on this in the region represents a global reference and model on how to support shock-responsive social protection. WFP has so far moved this agenda forward based on a three-fold approach:

- 1) **Generate evidence to inform practice:** through a flagship Regional Study on Shock-Responsive Social Protection, conducted with Oxford Policy Management (OPM) - with a wide review of regional experiences and seven country case studies (Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Peru)¹⁷, plus a specific study about the Caribbean, including a literature review and four country case studies (Belize, Guyana, Jamaica and Saint Lucia).

- 2) **Foster inter-institutional dialogue at national level and sharing between countries:** through a high-level Regional Seminar with 20 countries, conducted in Lima in October 2017 led by WFP and the government of Peru; a Latin America and the Caribbean forum co-organized with the World Bank and the government of Peru: Strengthening social protection for disaster resilience in April 2019; the Regional Symposium on SRSP in the Caribbean organized with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the Turks and Caicos Islands Government in June 2019; follow-on National Seminars on SRSP in Ecuador (February 2018), Dominican Republic (April 2018) and Dominica (May 2018) and several shock-responsive social protection south-south and triangular cooperation initiatives such as the knowledge exchange between Peru and El Salvador.
- 3) **Walk the talk:** operationalize the concept through WFP's emergency preparedness and response actions and technical assistance activities, based on lessons learned and evidence provided from our studies. For instance, in the aftermath of the earthquake in Ecuador in 2016 the Government supported the victims with different strategies using the social protection system, including the vertical and horizontal expansion of national cash transfer programmes, with WFP's technical and financial support and piggybacking on the administrative capacity and infrastructure of the Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social (MIES).

Consequently, a few LAC countries have started to invest in preparing their social protection systems to respond to shocks. A renowned example is how a national dialogue process in Peru has led to a ministerial resolution that recognises the importance of shock-responsive social protection, and to a decree which recognizes an immediate response role to the Ministry of Social Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS). In response to the drought in 2018 in El Salvador, the Government with WFP support, developed a social protection response model which combined three different strategies, including vertical and horizontal expansions of cash transfer programmes. In Dominica in 2017, WFP and UNICEF joined forces with the Government to provide cash transfers to the people most affected by Hurricane Maria, through the national social protection system. Moreover, the return on investment study for Dominica provided a cost-effectiveness analysis on shock-responsive social protection investments. The devastating 2017 hurricane season in the Caribbean, prompted WFP to open an office in Barbados in 2018 to support the Caribbean Disaster Emergency

¹⁷ See [here](#) the link to all the products of the Regional Study with OPM.

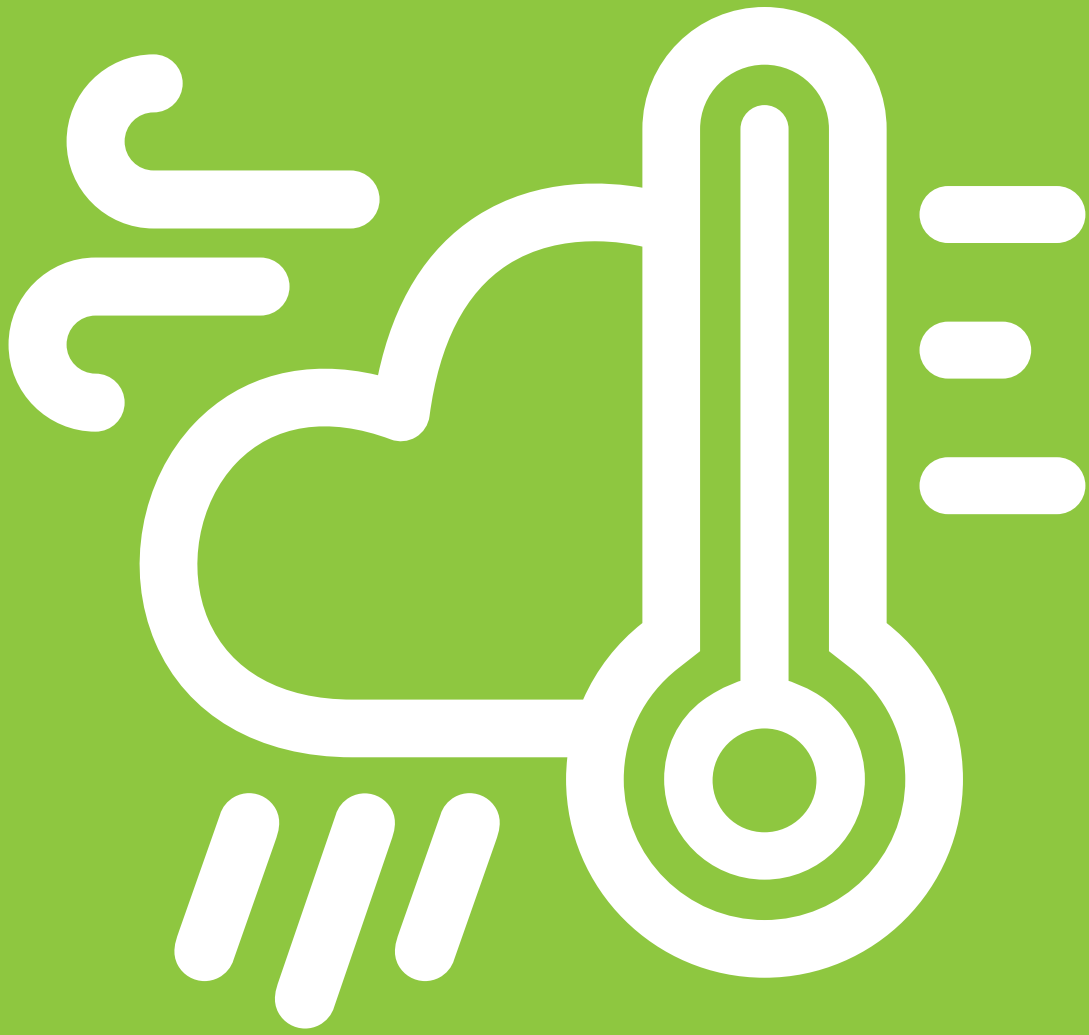
Management Agency (CDEMA) to strengthen government preparedness capacities and enable shock-responsive social protection mechanisms.

PRIORITIES

- Invest in national system preparedness and strengthen government capacities, in particular on: routine provision of social protection programmes, vulnerability assessments, data targeting systems, delivery mechanisms, information systems, coordination and financing mechanisms.
- Develop tools and guidance materials – well tailored to the regional LAC context - to enable the implementation of shock-responsive social protection at country level. Seek complementarities with longer term work on climate change adaptation and resilience.
- Support the development & follow-up of national Road Maps for shock-responsive social protection.
- Document experiences and support the monitoring and evaluation and learning on shock-response through social protection. Incorporate nutrition and food security indicators even if the social protection programmes have less direct food security objectives.
- Continue to foster South-South and Triangular Cooperation, country exchanges and advocacy at the highest levels, as part of an integrated package of tailored technical assistance to countries.
- Maintain partnerships and foster increased coordination and financing with key actors such as World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, ECLAC, etc., and contribute to the strengthening of the humanitarian–development nexus and bridging the preparedness–response–recovery gap.
- Ensure continued buy-in from WFP management, corporate support, staff capacities and resources to maintain the level of investment in SRSP in LAC.
- Explore and support different funding streams that WFP Country Offices can tap into in order to support SRSP, such as the UN pooled funds, global and regional development banks, among others.
- Explore ways to adapt SRSP approaches and better leverage social protection platforms to respond to the current regional migration crisis, in support to government demands for technical assistance. Promote evidence-based advocacy efforts in this area, including organization of regional events, south-south cooperation initiatives, etc.



Fotografía: Pendiente



Social Protection and Climate Change



Pillar 3: Social Protection and Climate Change

BACKGROUND

The impact of climate change in LAC will be considerable, owing to the region's economic dependence on agriculture, and the low adaptive capacity of its population, resulting from the multiple climate risks faced by the region, such as sea level rise, glacial melt and extreme weather and disease, combined with recent trends including population growth and urbanization, which increase the region's vulnerability. Moreover, climate change is expected to impact crop yields and local economies, and compromise food security (ECLAC 2016). Severe weather events, such as storms and hurricanes in Central America and the Caribbean, are also set to rise in frequency (during the 2000-2009 decade, there were 39 hurricanes in the Central America-Caribbean basin, compared to 15 during the 1980s and just 9 during the 1990s).

Social protection in the context of climate change needs to be carefully designed to ensure that it serves a long-term, adaptive function, and not only in relation to the current climate scenario, taking into consideration the changing patterns and new 'hotspots' of vulnerability due to climate change.

Considering the distinctiveness that climate change uncertainty, our starting point is that social protection represents a key form of 'low regrets' investment, where it balances the dual role of supporting poverty alleviation, while also addressing vulnerability to climate change.

Complementing social protection programmes with climate activities, such as forecast-based financing, climate information and analysis, climate risk insurance and social behavior change for adaptation, can help households to adapt to future climate.

VISION¹⁸

- Social protection needs to consider the changing nature of shocks and stress and future vulnerability of households and livelihoods and the uncertainty underpinning them due to climate change.
- Social protection systems and programmes incorporate specific climate change adaptation

objectives, in order to support the resilience of poor communities most vulnerable to climate change.

- Nutrition is a necessary input for resilience-building as climate change threatens the food security of individuals and households that are already poor and deprived.
- Support households' long-term adaptation strategies. Social protection has an emphasis on supporting livelihoods and helping households to adapt to climate change, rather than simply reinforcing shock response. For example, smallholder farmers are a critical vulnerable group to be targeted and provided with increased access to climate services and financial inclusion
- Social protection assessment, planning and design should integrate actions to avoid the risk of maladaptation. This includes taking into consideration any unintended spill over effects on the environment and aim for more environmentally friendly actions.
- Social protection and climate change actors should work together in developing common strategies to work towards common goals for addressing social vulnerability to climate change, identifying actors' key strengths and how their activities into wider and longer-term objectives across the development and humanitarian nexus.

STATUS

In the region, very little explicit social protection programming to advance climate change adaptation has taken place so far. There are few experiences in the region where climate activities have been linked to social protection programmes (e.g. the PROEZA project in Paraguay, Programa de Empleo Temporal in Mexico and the Bolsa Verde programme in Brazil). However, there are several opportunities in routine social protection programmes which can provide an entry point to fostering adaptation.

WFP has a number of instruments that support climate change adaptation in the region, as well as productive inclusion, economic empowerment and livelihoods. These include smallholder market support; risk management, insurance and finance (with most experiences in Africa, like the R4 Rural Resilience initiative and the Africa Risk Capacity-Replica)¹⁹; and food assistance for training.

¹⁸ See [here](#) for more information about the regional vision on social protection and climate change

¹⁹ See [here](#) for more information on the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative and [here](#) for information on the ARC-Replica.

It is important to mention that there is no one-size fits all social protection programme or strategy that will meet the adaptation needs of all households and communities. This needs to be localized to specific needs and vulnerability contexts. Even so, small impacts on adaptation from individual interventions are considered relevant. Regular social protection programmes such as social transfers, school feeding and public works programmes can provide an entry point for advancing adaptation, especially when linked to specific climate activities and services.

Furthermore, over decades of implementation, WFP has developed good practices, tools and innovative Food Assistance for Asset (FFA) programmes. These have evolved from the previous Food or Cash for Work projects toward more integrated resilience-building programmes grounded in a comprehensive context analysis that can support government initiatives, including Public Works Programmes²⁰. WFP's resilience work such as the PROACT initiative in Central America²¹ (a response to the El Niño phenomenon in the Dry Corridor), is also an example of an expertise that can be linked and provided to national social protection programmes and systems. The latter is supported by the Three-Pronged

Approach to Resilience Building (3PA), which can be used to inform many other safety nets.²²

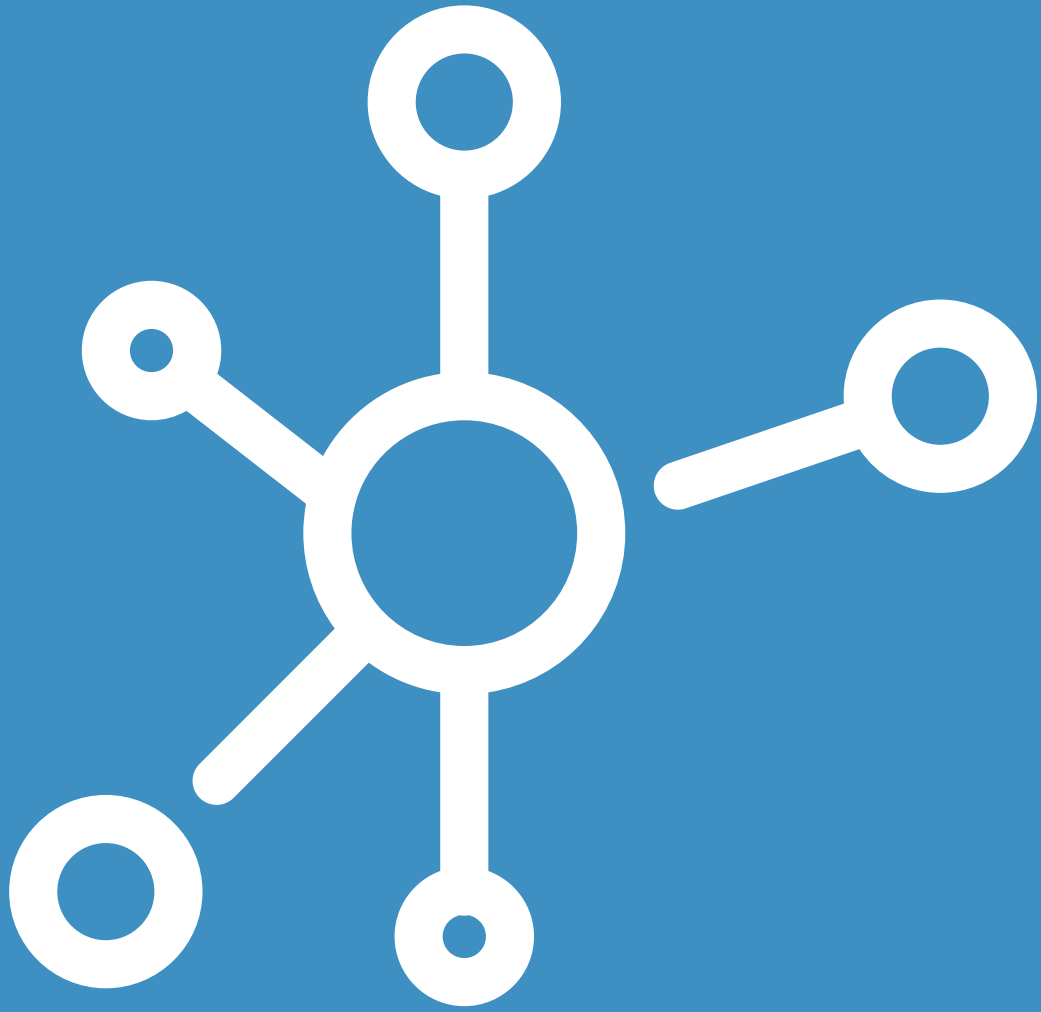
PRIORITIES

- Based on the evidence from the "Social protection and climate change: WFP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean's vision to advance climate change adaptation through social protection" carried out by WFP with OPM, disseminate findings, contribute to the international debate on the area, advocate, inform practice and identify future investment areas.
- Develop tools, training and guidance materials to enable the support of climate change adaptation through social protection at country level. Seek complementarities with shock-responsive social protection and nutrition-sensitive approaches.
- Support existing and future financial instruments such as forecast-based financing, micro-insurance schemes and other parametric models including sovereign insurance (e.g. the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility) and find innovative ways to better link them to social protection.
- Support governments to access climate financing and join forces with partners to submit proposals to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund, or other.
- Analyse social protection programmes in the region and assess how WFP could strengthen resilience and build the evidence base to continue supporting this approach.

²⁰ See [here](#) for a factsheet on FFA.

²¹ See [here](#) for more information on PROACT.

²² See [here](#) for a factsheet on the 3PA.



Social Protection Systems



Pillar 4: Support to Social Protection Systems

BACKGROUND

WFP's approach in Latin America and the Caribbean region is to support, wherever relevant, the broader social protection system, not only individual safety net programmes. While WFP's specific role is naturally more related to non-contributory social assistance/safety nets, these are closely interconnected with the contributory parts of the system like social insurance, as well as to labour market interventions. Policy and fiscal coherence, harmonization and linkages between different sectors and programmes are at the core of this systems approach to social protection.

There is a trend in the region toward the progressive construction of social citizenship. In line with rights-based initiatives, like the International Labour Organization's Social Protection Floor or ECLAC's sister concept of inclusive social protection, there are ongoing debates about a new approach to social protection, promoting equity and providing effective support in times of need. This transformative approach should tackle the underlying structural causes of poverty and inequality, rather than only the symptoms, by including social structures, institutions, politics and power.

The importance of social protection in tackling food insecurity and malnutrition requires a long-term perspective, with long-term commitments in terms of financing and also in supporting the establishment of national systems and institutions. However, many nutrition challenges are structural and are difficult to change only through social protection. While social protection is an essential platform to address food insecurity and malnutrition, it needs to be complemented with other sectoral interventions in order to address multiple drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition, based on the local context.

However, there are concerns that social protection is being overloaded with expectations about what it can achieve. In addition, the ability of basic services (health, education, social care) to meet the increasing demand created by safety net programmes, needs dedicated attention when supporting

both social protection as well as specific sectoral policies like WFP does (e.g. education, health, agriculture, climate change adaptation, disaster risk management, etc).

VISION

- National social protection systems in LAC are supported by coherent policies and include a set of instruments and programmes that are increasingly integrated and harmonized. The most vulnerable segments of the population have access to a broad range of programmes and services that can contribute to prevent, protect, promote and transform their opportunities.
- WFP works with governments and a wide range of partners to support national social protection systems, including policies, programmes, transfer mechanisms, targeting and information and delivery systems as part of an integrated package of technical assistance.
- National programme design is supported, to ensure that linkages between social protection and sectors contributing to food security and nutrition (agriculture, rural development, health, education, climate change, disaster risk management) are clearly articulated.
- Effective coordination is promoted, in order to fully exploit the complementarities between various policy instruments.

STATUS

While WFP has been supporting parts of the social protection systems for many years and in different ways, an integrated and systemic approach is relatively rare, and experiences are more recent.

The example that stands out is WFP's leading support to the nascent social protection system in Haiti, which embraces three levels: at policy level, WFP is the main government ally to coordinate the creation of the first national social protection policy. This was an ambitious task, especially given the increasing instability in the country and was successfully delivered with continuous work for more than a year, despite the fragile and insecure context.

WFP has also supported the food security and nutrition policy and the national school meals policy in Haiti. At the programme level, WFP is the main actor providing school meals across the country and scaling-up home-grown school meal models in line with national priorities;



Fotografía: Rocío Franco

it also supports the institutionalization of the Kore Lavi safety net programme. Finally, at the sub-systems level, WFP works since several years with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MAST) to strengthen capacities to better survey, register and target vulnerable households, through the development of the SIMAST. This is a multifunctional system that can be used by any current or future social protection programme in the country. It currently covers 450,000 households, or 2,250,000 people (almost 19% of the Haitian population). Due to its increasing coverage, flexibility and high potential, the SIMAST is garnering increasing interest to be used as the national social registry in Haiti. WFP integrates shock-responsive and nutrition-sensitive approaches throughout this comprehensive work, and also co-leads the cash working group.

In other countries with emerging social protection systems, WFP has continuously provided technical assistance to strengthen the social protection systems. In Guatemala, WFP in collaboration with OPM produced a case study on shock-responsive social protection

and resilience, where structural investments on the system were recommended. With support from WFP HQ, in 2018 a workshop with the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) and the different government agencies involved in emergency response took place with the aim of identifying challenges and opportunities for shock-responsive social protection. Information on social protection system capabilities was captured with the aim of providing a better understanding of the actual level of operability of the system. Additionally, a United Nations working group was established in 2019 and implemented the Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI) with the aim of identifying key areas to support national social protection programmes, and ultimately contribute to the creation of a social protection system in Guatemala. As a follow up of these different processes, currently WFP is developing a consultancy to analyse the general approach and vision of the social protection system within the Ministry of Social Development, with the aim of strengthening its role in emergencies and provide technical assistance to the new national government.

Another example is El Salvador, where WFP is supporting the government in the creation of the new Ministry of Local Development. Following WFP's in-country work and expertise on shock-responsive social protection to support households affected by the protracted drought in 2018 and the ongoing work on nutrition-sensitive social protection, WFP has been positioning as a key social protection partner. In this context, it has been providing technical assistance to develop the framework for the new Ministry, where social protection has been established as a strategic programmatic area.

In countries with varying degrees of maturity and coverage of social protection systems, WFP supports governments in identifying capacity gaps and opportunities for preparedness measures and investments to improve the overall effectiveness of national social protection systems and their ability to accommodate additional needs relating to shocks and crisis. In the Caribbean, WFP Barbados Multi-Country Office for Emergency Preparedness and Response is working with government and non-government actors, networks and organisations at the national, regional and sub-regional level to increase knowledge, improve coordination and boost cooperation for a more cohesive and integrated approach to disaster risk management, social protection, international humanitarian assistance and climate change resilience, in alignment with small island developing states' priorities and national sustainable development plans. In collaboration with OPM, WFP has conducted shock-responsive social protection research in Belize, Saint Lucia, Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

In Belize and Saint Lucia, based on research findings and government consultation, WFP is in the process of developing and implementing targeted investments in one or more of these areas: risk-informed data and information management, beneficiary targeting, delivery mechanisms, coordination and disaster risk financing. As co-lead agency of the SDG Fund on Social Protection for Barbados, Saint Lucia and the Organization of Eastern

Caribbean States (OECS), WFP will be also be implementing a range of capacity strengthening initiatives to support governments to make national social protection systems more risk informed. This includes revision of social protection and DRM policy and legislation to include SRSP considerations; designing of new financing strategies for shock-responsive social protection and to ensure better linkages between social protection and climate change adaptation; reviewing and optimizing delivery mechanisms and supply chain (cash, in kind); piloting of community-level shock-responsive social protection intervention; and analysis of livelihoods, seasonality and risks at community level.

PRIORITIES

- The ongoing in-country work on nutrition-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection provides an entry point with governments to showcase the organisation's capabilities for supporting social protection systems, tailored to the specific context and country needs. Positioning WFP as a credible social protection partner, will need to be accompanied with investments on dissemination, communication and networking with governments and key stakeholders.
- Document existing experiences of WFP's support to social protection systems as defined above and share best practices, including through cooperation and exchanges with other regions. Make sure to capture engagement in different types of contexts, such as fragile contexts (e.g. Haiti), young and evolving social protection systems (e.g. El Salvador) or more mature contexts (e.g. Peru, Colombia).
- Maintain and develop partnerships with the main actors providing this type of support to governments, such as the World Bank, IDB, ILO and UNICEF, and identify WFP's added value in each specific country context.
- Engage in policy processes and social protection working groups at national level and explore the possibility to set-up a UNDG-LAC thematic group on social protection like in other regions.
- Analyse the links between demand and offer of social protection instruments and basic services, and advocate for integration and referrals between different programmes, including through Single Window Services.
- Continue to advocate for the inclusion (and measurement) of nutrition and food security considerations within the social protection system, as well as of gender-transformative approaches.



Social Protection 4 Zero Hunger

