



World Food Programme

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# WFP's Work in Enabling Social Protection Around the Globe

Highlights of the World Food Programme's Contributions to Social Protection in a New Normal **February 2021**

Richard



# Contents

WFP’s enabling work in social protection at a glance .....4

WFP’s contributions to social protection .....9



**Building social protection systems in fragile contexts ..... 11**

- A new social protection and promotion policy to guide assistance programmes in Haiti ..... 12
- Establishing a nationwide social protection programme in Somalia ..... 14



**Inclusive social protection to leave no one behind ..... 16**

- Extending social protection to Venezuelan migrants and other affected groups in Colombia ..... 18
- Enhanced complementarity leads to better coverage in Kenya ..... 20



**Shock-responsive social protection ..... 22**

- A synergetic social protection response in Madagascar ..... 24
- Equipping Mauritania with the systems and tools needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic ..... 26



**Enhancing the food security and nutritional impact of social protection ..... 35**

- Safeguarding food security and nutrition in times of crisis in the Dominican Republic ..... 36
- Using blockchain to improve tracking and promoting nutritious diets in Bangladesh ..... 38



**Digital advisory and solutions services ..... 41**

- Modernizing delivery systems in Jordan to reach new beneficiaries through digital services ..... 42
- Deploying WFP’s digital tools to support government social assistance in the Philippines ..... 44

Looking ahead to 2030 .....46

Acronyms ..... 48

Photo credits ..... 48

# WFP's enabling work in social protection at a glance

**This report looks back at WFP's work in social protection after an unfathomably complex and tumultuous year.** At the beginning of 2020, chronic and acute hunger had been on the rise for several years, driven largely by conflict, climate shocks, and economic downturns. The arrival of COVID-19 and the ensuing socio-economic fallout of the pandemic combined with that already toxic mix put more than 270 million people directly at risk of acute hunger. An additional 83 to 132 million people were also at risk of entering the ranks of the chronically undernourished, which prior to the pandemic counted nearly 690 million people. Now, as the COVID-19 crisis becomes protracted, it is increasingly challenging to

separate the food security needs generated by COVID-19 from the aggravating and compounding impact that the crisis has had on pre-existing drivers of hunger.

**Governments around the world responded promptly to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic and protect the most vulnerable segments of their populations.** Countries expanded their social protection programmes, increased their coverage and payment amounts, suspended conditionalities, and put in place new measures to meet the needs of those populations not covered by existing social protection systems. By December 2020,



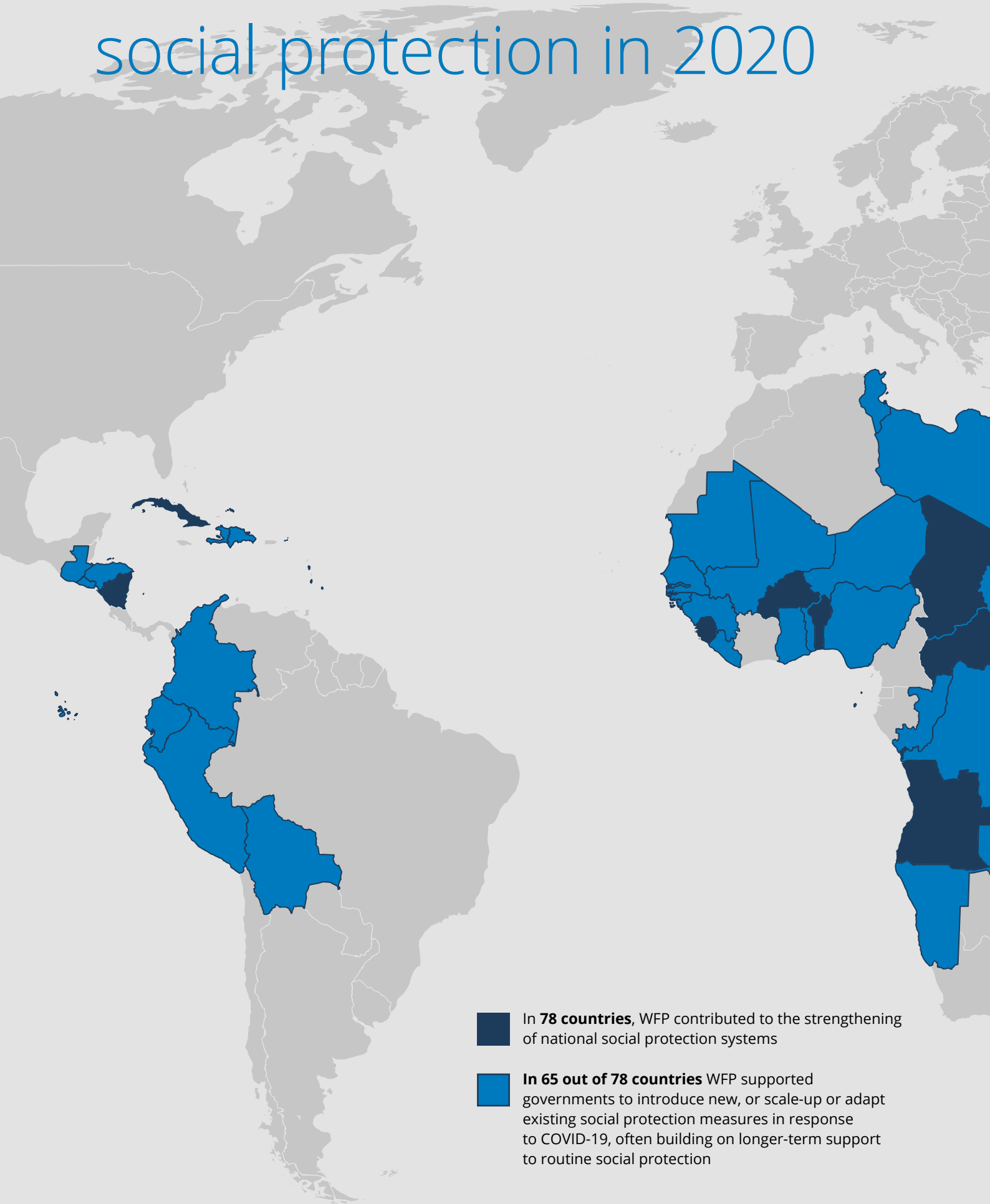
some 1,414 measures had been adopted by 215 countries and territories to cushion the shock. Most of these were in the form of social assistance, such as in-kind or cash-based transfers.


**Despite the leadership of governments and strong collaborative efforts with the international community, it is clear that most countries' social protection systems were not ready for this pandemic.** Faced with a disaster on a scale unprecedented in most of our lifetimes, even countries with the most sophisticated and well-funded formal social protection systems have inevitably been unable to accommodate all needs; for those with less mature systems and/or facing greater resource constraints the challenge has been even more daunting.

**The world's reliance on national systems to deliver responses of an unprecedented scale also brought social protection to the forefront of WFP's work.** WFP's ability to provide immediate support to governments' social protection responses in this unique situation has been made possible by our long-standing engagements with national actors. WFP has supported government-led social protection effectively for decades, providing technical expertise to enable governments to design and deliver social protection solutions that meet people's essential needs and strengthen their resilience to shocks and stresses. In 2020, WFP contributed to strengthening national social protection systems in 78 countries, and supported governments in 65 of these to introduce new, or scale-up or adapt existing social protection measures in response to COVID-19.

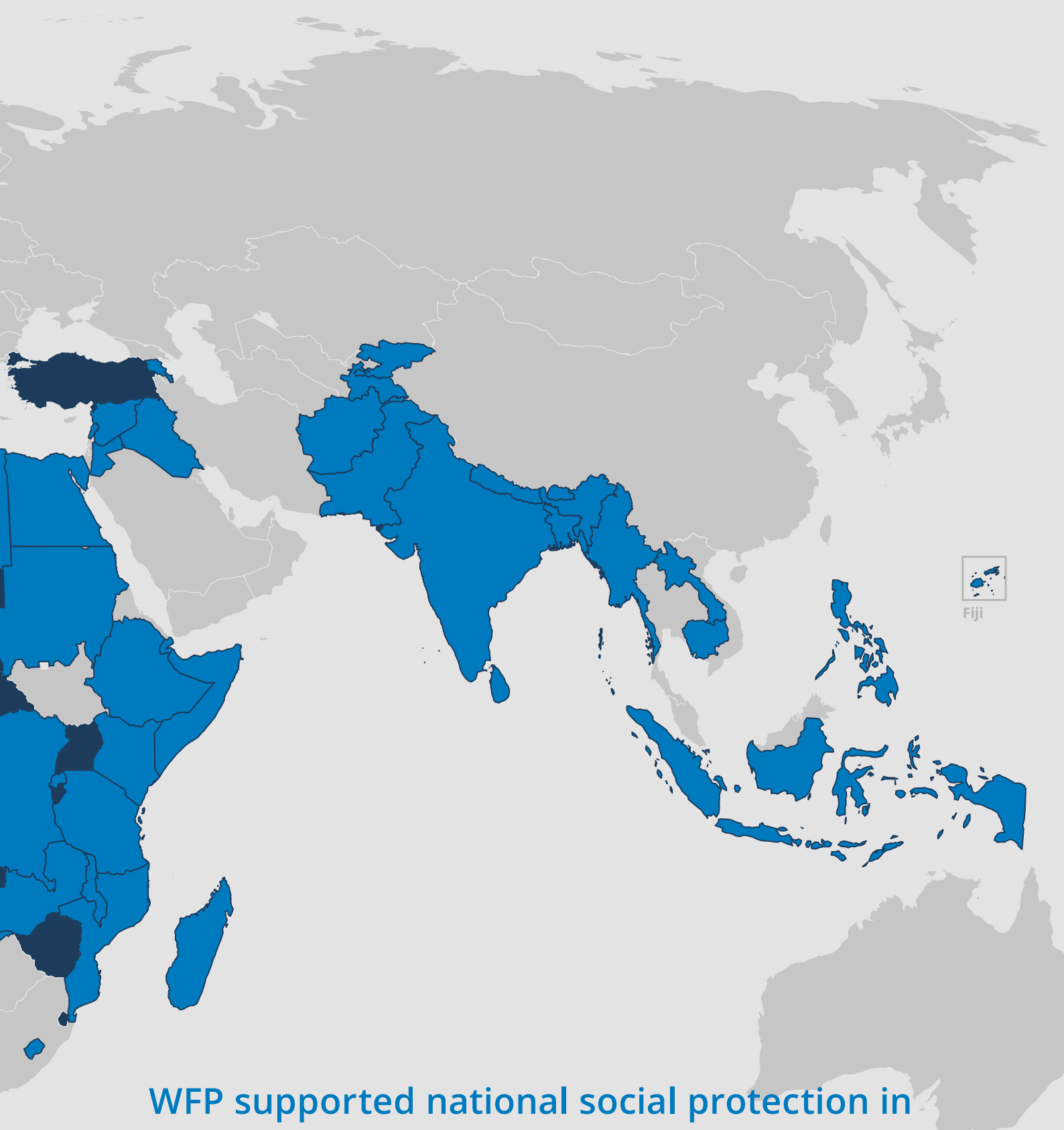


# WFP's contributions to social protection in 2020



 In **78 countries**, WFP contributed to the strengthening of national social protection systems

 In **65 out of 78 countries** WFP supported governments to introduce new, or scale-up or adapt existing social protection measures in response to COVID-19, often building on longer-term support to routine social protection



WFP supported national social protection in

**78 COUNTRIES**





# WFP's contributions to social protection

Through a collection of 10 country examples, we unpack how WFP's long-term support to governments enabled better coverage, comprehensiveness, adequacy and quality of social protection in a year faced by unprecedented challenges to development.

Highlighting experiences from Latin America, and the Caribbean, Eastern Africa, Western Africa, Southern Africa, the Middle East and Asia, we focus on five areas of work that we believe have merited particular attention.

Building social protection systems in fragile contexts



Inclusive social protection to leave no one behind



Shock-responsive social protection



Enhancing the food security and nutritional impact of social protection



Digital advisory and solutions services





Yaree khatartaada  
infekshanka  
coronavirus

Dhaq gacmahaaga

Waxaan galmay  
waxshubashadiisa.



Waxaan galmay  
waxshubashadiisa.

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# Building social protection systems in fragile contexts

A strong national social protection system requires two layers: first, the framework that provides the structure for the social protection sector as a whole, such as policies, strategies, and institutional arrangements; and second, a range of high quality programmes offering adequate benefits, designed and delivered in a way that effectively meets identified needs and objectives.

The two country examples below demonstrate WFP's support to the establishment of both these layers of a social protection system.

## A new social protection and promotion policy to guide assistance programmes in Haiti

In June of 2020, the National Social Protection and Promotion Policy (NSPPP) was officially adopted by the Government of Haiti after three years of technical support from WFP.

WFP's technical assistance leading up to the NSPPP grew out of initial technical support to the government's vulnerability database and to the implementation of social protection initiatives that began in 2013. The Information System of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (SIMAST) that evolved from this early work currently holds vulnerability data on 20 per cent of the Haitian population (430,000 households).

In 2017, the Haitian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MAST) convened a Drafting Sub-Commission with the key objective of realizing the NSPPP. WFP, with its established support for the Government's safety net activities, agreed to assist the Drafting Sub-Commission. Under this sub-commission, WFP played the role of technical lead in drafting the NSPPP, and assisted in putting in place the national governance structure for social protection in the country. WFP also acted as the secretariat in key committees on targeting and cash

transfer working groups, and continued to support the transition of the beneficiary database to a national social registry.

In addition to facilitating the policy development process, WFP was active in creating a coalition of stakeholders to be involved in capacity-building and in advocacy for the NSPPP. This drew in expertise of the IMF, the EU, the USAID, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), WHO/PAHO, ILO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and UN Women.

During COVID-19, these advocacy efforts resulted in several funding initiatives (from the IADB and the World Bank) for emergency cash transfers and the strengthening of SIMAST including its geographical expansion (from 20 to 25 per cent of the Haitian population). WFP has been identified as the main partner for implementation.

A national social assistance programme, the Adaptive Social Protection for Increased Resilience (ASPIRE), which will receive \$75 million in funding from the World Bank, was made possible by the development of the NSPPP and will be implemented from 2021 to 2027.





WFP is positioned to support MAST to design and operationalize the ASPIRE safety net while building the capacity of the Government to gradually implement the programme independently.

The success of WFP's intervention in Haiti built on a few significant factors:

1. WFP was present and engaged when other social protection actors were absent. Specifically, Kore Lavi, a USAID food insecurity program (2013-2019) implemented by a consortium of three organization (WFP, CARE, Action Against Hunger) was the entry point for WFP to invest in the development and roll-out of safety nets while further strengthening and developing technical and analytical capacity at the national level.
2. The Country Office put in place a high-profile team of national and international staff who had experience across social protection, capacity strengthening, economics, and policy development, positioning them as a key resource for government.
3. Strong collaboration was established with donors and government partners, including creation of the social protection stakeholder coordination group, early on in the policy development process.

Under the current country strategy, WFP will continue to emphasize upstream policy and the strengthening of capacities at the operational and system levels.

Over the coming years the country office will continue supporting the national vulnerability database to complete its coverage countrywide and improve its functional capacity, and will assist in building local government capacity to institutionalize social protection and promotion as a stepping stone to rolling out the NSPPP nationally.

## Establishing a nationwide social protection programme in Somalia

Somalia is one of the world's most fragile nations; it suffers from an ongoing insurgency by Al-Shabab, two separatist states maintain aspirations for independence, and a fledgling government struggles to maintain authority across the country. In this context, WFP has been a leading actor in social protection, supporting the Federal Government of Somalia in shaping the social protection environment and in the development of social protection policy and frameworks. In 2020, WFP was able to support responses to COVID-19, floods and desert locust invasions by drawing on the learnings from almost a decade of providing assistance to vulnerable Somalis through cash-based transfers.

Over the past year, WFP, in close partnership with the World Bank and UNICEF, has been assisting the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in establishing a delivery mechanism for the social protection system in Somalia. The collaborative effort led to the launch of the first nationwide cash-based poverty alleviation programme: the Shock-Responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project (SNHCP), also known as Baxnaano. This is a significant achievement for the Government, and is the culmination of years of work by WFP and UNICEF in supporting the Government to develop a social protection framework and plan for Somalia.

WFP's role in 2020 focused on many of the practical aspects of delivering national social assistance, namely the development of mechanisms for registration and delivery of support to two hundred thousand households, or 1.2 million people across Somalia. WFP has implemented the SNHCP programme on behalf of the Ministry, while working closely with government officials in the programme implementation unit, in order to enable an eventual hand over to the Ministry. The experience of this collaboration and WFP's support overall will help to shape the next steps for Somalia's social protection system.

WFP's experience and resources to operate at scale in the fragile and politically unstable context saw it uniquely placed to provide this support to government.

The organization's ability to adapt and find solutions enabled the Government to navigate the difficulty of reaching people with social assistance where limited government services exist.

WFP was also able to assist the government in a vertical and horizontal expansion of the SNHCP programme when the population of Somalia faced the triple shocks of floods, COVID-19 and locusts in 2020. To facilitate these efforts, WFP and the Government received a US\$40 million contribution from the World Bank, enabling additional support to affected communities. WFP aims to reach 600,000 locust affected people (or 100,000 HHs) in 45 districts



## BUILDING SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS



over six months through the safety net expansion. Complementary efforts to reduce the impact and control the locust outbreak also continue in close coordination with FAO and the Government.

In the context of COVID-19, WFP shifted the SNHCP payment delivery system to mobile money transfers to allow beneficiaries to receive transfers in remote areas and where banking facilities are not present, reducing travel distances and contact risks. This facilitated an ability to expand the programme in response to the increased needs of the pandemic, floods, and locusts.

Relationship building and collaboration between social protection partners has been key to the success, not only of the SNHCP programme but also for the longer-term objective of building a strong, national social protection system.



WFP and UNICEF supported the government in developing the 2019 Somalia Social Protection Policy and the Social Protection Implementation Plan, and WFP, UNICEF and ILO, have coordinated to provide capacity strengthening support to the government in the journey towards government-owned and implemented social protection programmes. Collaboration between WFP, UNICEF, ILO and the World Bank has amplified what could be achieved with the Government by one agency alone.

The organizations together are drawing on their relative expertise to rapidly build a social protection system in Somalia where none existed before. This has already shown distinct value in the COVID-19 response and will continue contributing to peace and stability in the years to come.







# Inclusive social protection to leave no one behind

Leaving no one behind means addressing people's needs in both stable and fragile contexts. All people are susceptible to specific risks and experience differentiated needs according to their stage in life and their situation. They also face different combinations of disadvantages deriving from their social and socio-political, geographical and economic circumstances.

People who were already in vulnerable situations have been some of the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. These include migrants, informal workers in the grey economy, or the urban, indigent poor, who are oftentimes not covered by social protection systems.

As COVID-19 pushed population groups into hunger (or back into hunger), WFP partnered with governments to strengthen the coverage and inclusiveness of social protection systems.

## Extending social protection to Venezuelan migrants and other affected groups in Colombia

That migrants have been amongst the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic is evident when turning attention to the Venezuelan migrants across Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, whose food security has significantly deteriorated since the start of the pandemic.

A lasting solution to halting the increase in poverty and hunger for migrants and other vulnerable groups is to strengthen the inclusiveness of national systems by incorporating these populations into social protection programmes. With the support of WFP, this is exactly what the Government of Colombia started to do in 2020.

Already during the early days of the COVID crisis, the Government of Colombia and WFP joined efforts in designing and launching an innovative shock-responsive social protection pilot programme in Arauca, one of the departments bordering Venezuela, with a high concentration of migrants.

This programme was specifically aimed at complementing and expanding the capacity of the existing national social protection system so

as to ensure that more Venezuelan migrants and Colombian host communities living in extreme and moderate poverty in the border region of Arauca could be included as beneficiaries of the national social protection system.

Through the pilot programme, which was jointly designed by WFP, the Colombian social protection leading agency 'Prosperidad Social', the National Disaster Management Authority and the National High-Level Mechanism to coordinate the response to the migration crisis, WFP managed to rapidly reach over 46,000 new beneficiaries through cash assistance. In addition, WFP provided in-kind food baskets to 25,000 people for whom cash was not a feasible or appropriate solution, such as indigenous communities or irregular migrants.

For targeting, the intervention piggybacked on the national database SISBEN, which is a registry of potential beneficiaries of social protection programmes. To ensure full coherence with national standards, the value of transfers was aligned with the government's emergency cash transfer programmes.





Effective and close collaboration with national and local institutions allowed WFP to reach all targeted beneficiaries with assistance that ensured their food and nutrition security during the difficult crisis period escalated by COVID-19. Seen in perspective, the Arauca shock-responsive social protection pilot programme provides an excellent example of an effective model of collaborative, coordinated and inclusive social protection response – a model that can be integrated more permanently into the existing social protection system. Likewise, the Arauca experience allowed for the opening of new lines of collaboration on strategic, operational and technical challenges affecting the system.

At the time of writing, WFP and the Government of Colombia are documenting the experience and identifying lessons that will help inform future social protection responses, with a view to making national systems stronger, more inclusive and more responsive in the face of shocks.

## Emerging field practices on COVID-19 in refugee contexts

WFP and the Government of Colombia jointly presented lessons learned from the shock-responsive social protection intervention in the border region of Arauca, as part of a socialprotection.org-hosted webinar on emerging field practices about COVID-19 in refugee contexts.

**A recording and all the materials from the event are available here:**



socialprotection.org



## Enhanced complementarity leads to better coverage in Kenya

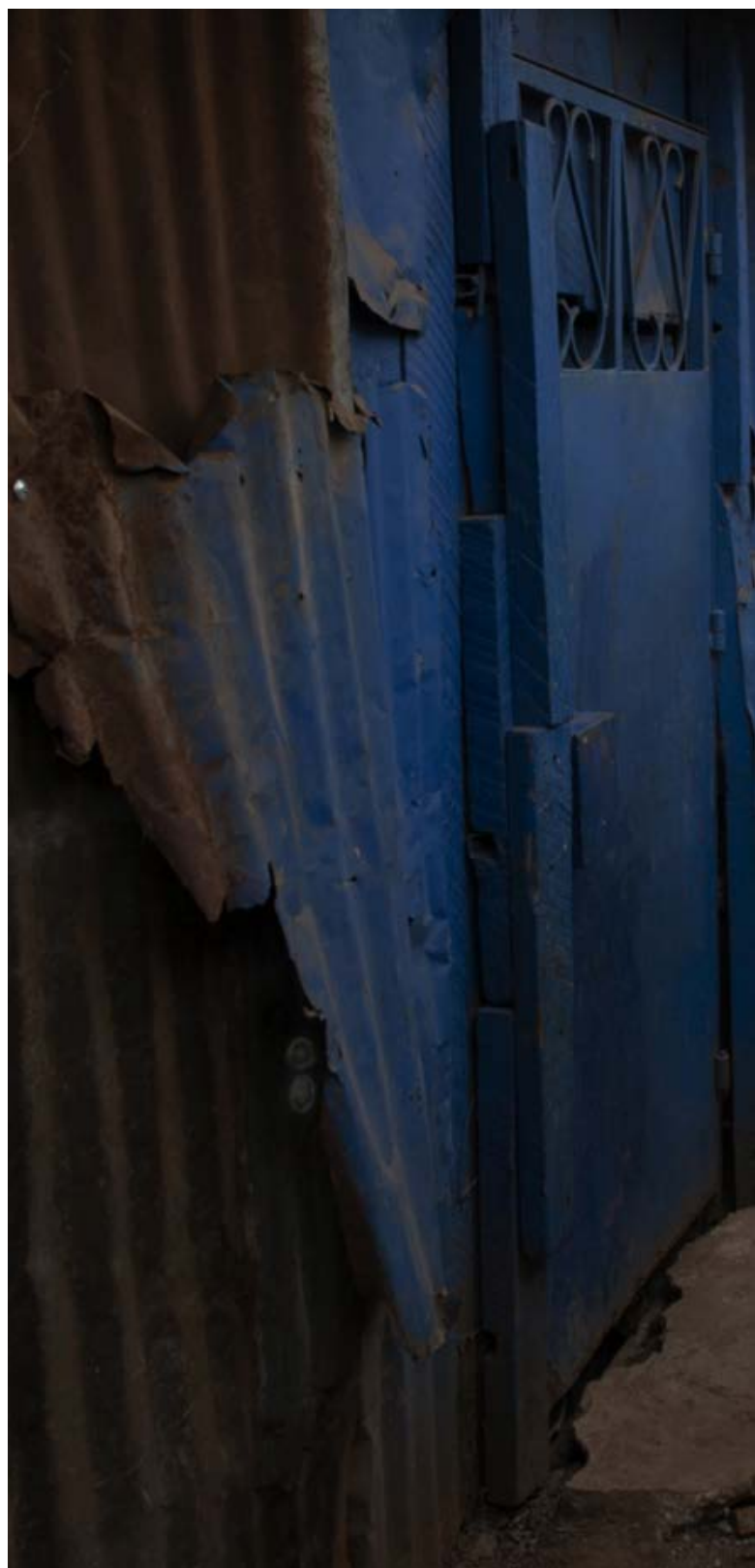
In Kenya, the urban poor have been amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic. Some 56 per cent of Kenya's urban population live in informal settlements, many of whom rely on informal day-to-day employment. The Kenya Emergency Appeal estimated that at least 84 per cent of people living in Nairobi's informal settlements have lost all or part of their income due to COVID-19.

In response to the rising needs across the country, the Government introduced an emergency safety net to support the most vulnerable populations, while ensuring the continuity of the regular social protection programmes. The emergency response initially covered the four counties of Nairobi, Kwale, Kilifi and Mombasa and was subsequently rolled out nationwide. WFP seconded technical staff to the Government to assist in the design, implementation and monitoring of the emergency safety net and regular social protection programmes.

To further support the Government's efforts, WFP in parallel launched a complementary urban cash response targeting 94,500 households in the informal settlements of Nairobi and Mombasa, who had not been targeted under the Government's emergency safety net programme.

The assistance provided by WFP was aligned with the Government's response, covering half of the monthly food and nutrition needs of a family of four. In addition, WFP supplemented this assistance with fortified nutrition products distributed through the county-run health centres to targeted elderly, children and pregnant and lactating women affected by moderate acute malnutrition.

The strong collaboration on the national social protection response was possible thanks to WFP's sustained support to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection's leadership and coordination of the social protection sector. A key component in this endeavour has been the establishment of the government's Single Registry for Social Protection in 2015. WFP supported the software development and was the first non-government provider to link





up with the Single Registry, feeding in information from its cash programmes. In the years that followed, WFP continued to be key partner to the ministry and was closely involved in the subsequent strengthening of the platform.

The Single Registry proved invaluable during the COVID-19 response, particularly on three accounts:

- **Provision of evidence to inform policy decisions.** Because of the Single Registry, policy makers and other actors were able to compare the coverage and benefit levels of existing social protection programmes with the new needs prompted by COVID-19, thereby ensuring a more informed response.
- **Horizontal expansion.** Through its linkage to the Kenya Population Register, the Single Registry enabled the Government, WFP and other partners to verify the identities of new beneficiaries, while simultaneously confirming whether and what type of assistance beneficiaries were already receiving.
- **Vertical expansion.** The Single Registry enabled international and non-governmental actors, such as UNICEF and GiveDirectly, to identify social protection recipients in need of additional support and deliver cash top-ups accordingly.

WFP continues to support the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection to strengthen its capacities to lead and coordinate the sector. At the time of writing, WFP is providing technical assistance to the development of the Enhanced Single Registry, which is envisaged to facilitate, bridge and coordinate the delivery of social and humanitarian assistance, including in response to shocks, by storing reliable and updated demographic and socio-economic data on actual and potential social protection beneficiaries.



# Shock-responsive social protection

In present day, improving the 'shock-responsiveness' of social protection - in other words, its relevance to large-scale natural, economic and political shocks - can be an appealing concept to humanitarian and social protection actors alike.

Thanks to our long-term humanitarian experience and technical support to both disaster risk management and social protection, WFP continues to be a favoured partner for thinking through if, when and how social protection systems can be useful for emergency response.

WFP's assistance includes assessments of relative benefits of different emergency response solutions, improving contingency planning and coordination for the entire sector, promoting early decision-making, and strengthening links between disaster risk management and social protection bodies.

The two country examples below illustrate how WFP's support to strengthening the shock-responsiveness of social protection systems in preceding years has enabled governments to respond faster and better to the COVID-19 emergency in 2020.



## A synergetic social protection response in Madagascar

The distribution of cash assistance under the new 'Tosika Fameno' social assistance initiative began just a month after the Government of Madagascar had declared the need for a temporary urban safety net to support vulnerable households that had been affected by the COVID-19 containment measures. The record-breaking speed with which this safety net was put in place is only more impressive considering that this was the first time Madagascar implemented a social protection programme in an urban environment.

The rapid response was made possible thanks to the sustained collective efforts over the past two years to strengthen the shock-responsiveness of Madagascar's social protection system. In 2018, the Prime Minister, with technical support from WFP, convened partners to explore the relevance of the national social protection system to shock response and develop a roadmap for harmonizing the work of various stakeholders including government bodies, UN agencies, International Financial Institutions and NGOs.

The roadmap stood its ground when the Ministry of Population, in collaboration with WFP, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Intervention Fund for Development (IFD), successfully expanded the national social protection system in response to the 2019 drought in Southern Madagascar, which pushed more than 750,000 people into crisis levels of food insecurity.

The social protection drought response generated significant results in terms of adequacy, timeliness and cost-effectiveness, and was regarded by all the partners as a success. WFP has since continued to build on these lessons learned and support the Government to institutionalize shock-responsive components into the national social protection system through operating procedures and cooperation agreements between government agencies.







As a result, Madagascar's response to COVID-19 stands out as an example of successful coordination and collaboration of national and international actors. Less than a week after the government declared a need for the urban safety net, the national Cash Working Group, with technical support from WFP, UNICEF and the World Bank, was able to present a unified social protection intervention strategy, jointly validated by the government and its partners, in support of the implementation of the Tosika Fameno programme.

The Cash Working Group's unified intervention strategy paved the way for strong inter-agency collaboration through joint targeting and registration using the government's platform, harmonized delivery of cash-based transfers, and joint communication and monitoring of the assistance. WFP, being one of the most experienced agencies in cash-based programming in Madagascar, provided technical support to the entire process, which was built on in-depth vulnerability assessment of the capital carried out prior to the crisis by WFP and the National Office of Risk and Disaster Management.

Throughout the response, the partners have convened on a weekly basis in the Cash Working Group, the Communication Sub-Working Group and the Donor Group to enable joint identification of challenges and gaps in the response and effectively plan and coordinate activities. To date, the collective efforts have reached about 335,000 vulnerable urban households, out of which WFP has delivered assistance to a total of 103,000 households.

The COVID-19 social protection response has contributed to the overall strengthening of the system in two main ways. Firstly, by laying the grounds for a potential future permanent extension of the social protection system to urban areas. And secondly, by continuing to enhance the relevance of the social protection system to shocks, so that the Malagasy Government and its partners are able to act faster and better to future emergencies.

At the time of writing, the Government, WFP and partners are exploring ways to replicate the Tosika Fameno programme in response to the drought induced food security crisis in the south of Madagascar, which has caused many people to migrate from their villages to urban centres along the coast.

## Equipping Mauritania with the systems and tools needed to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic

Mauritania experiences recurrent cycles of drought that result in the degradation of natural resources, which structurally affects households' resilience and generates seasonal spikes in food insecurity. To address this situation, the government of Mauritania established both the Tekavoul social assistance programme in 2015 to regularly support the poorest households, and the shock-responsive El Maouna programme under the national Food Security Commission (FSC) in 2017 to provide seasonal cash transfers for households coping with drought and other shocks.

Since their establishment, WFP has made a years-long commitment to advise on and support this national shock-responsive safety-net system, and to strengthening the capacity of the Government institutions operating it. Recently, WFP has helped the FSC develop core response tools (contingency planning, response triggers, coordination and decision-making), along with a predictive, satellite data-driven decision tool to support the national early warning system that can help efficiently plan and prioritize crisis responses. Efforts also focused on improving the shock-responsive features of the national social registry and a methodology for it to be used for household targeting of El Maouna and other partners' lean season interventions.

After several years of technical assistance, the key modalities for scaling up cash transfer programmes at times of shocks are now in place. They allow quick and effective scale-up, particularly in response to droughts, as well as alignment and complementary interventions by other actors. In May 2020, the Mauritanian government recognized this when it announced its national response plan to address the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. Indeed, in addition to a vertical expansion of cash transfers handled by the Tekavoul programme, the plan made provision for a rapid scale-up of seasonal cash transfers by El Maouna, WFP and other partners using interventions that had been agreed ex ante.

Working jointly with UNICEF, WFP effectively quadrupled the number of beneficiaries reached through lean season cash transfers in a matter of weeks, in line with the government's COVID-19 national response plan. Part of that assistance was delivered through the national El Maouna programme, allowing the government to quickly reach vulnerable citizens in a way that was not previously possible. This dramatic scale-up of seasonal cash transfers used the pre-developed targeting tools and delivery mechanisms – thereby demonstrating their reliability once used at scale. It effectively curtailed food insecurity and malnutrition in areas of the intervention.



## SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION



WFP is also supporting the elaboration of a national risk financing strategy to improve mobilization of resources and the transparency and efficiency of their use as one key component of the shock-responsive mechanism. At the operational level WFP has provided support to the government to manage sovereign risk insurance, which has included the signing of a drought insurance policy for the 2019 and 2020 season with the African Risk Capacity agency of the African Union. The policy gave a layer of security to protect against any major drought impacts that could have occurred amidst the already precarious situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout these contributions towards social protection system strengthening, WFP has partnered closely with the World Bank in designing complementary interventions that build on one another. Cooperation with each other is embedded in a country level agreement as well as in the organizations' respective country planning documents, and led to integrated capacity strengthening programmes, advocacy and coordination efforts. This partnership has been a critical success factor in advancing the adaptive social protection agenda across different government actors.



# Our latest top reads on social protection for managing risk

## 10 Things You Wish You'd Always Known About Shock-Responsive Social Protection

Everyone hopes that 'shock-responsive social protection' will produce better results for people in crises, and that it will also save themselves time and energy. But what is this magical idea? Can this recently named (but long practised) approach achieve all these outcomes? Is the gold standard the 'flexible scale-up' of a social protection programme, triggered by an emergency, or is there more to it than that?

Drawing on insights from recent real-life examples, WFP published 10 Things You Wish You'd Always Known About Shock-Responsive Social Protection in order to tackle some of the issues and aspects that are proving particularly complex and problematic for humanitarian and social protection actors.

## Why Does Food Security and Nutrition Matter in Social Protection Responses to Systemic Shocks in the Southern African Region?

The past two decades have demonstrated the manifold pathways through which social protection systems can enable food security and nutrition in Southern Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the importance of these systems and illustrated the kinds of crises for which social protection must strengthen more effective responses. WFP, together with the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI) embarked in a research venture to shed light on how social protection can harmonise and integrate multi-sectoral initiatives to promote food security and nutrition and strengthen societal resilience.

## What Factors Would Enable Social Protection Systems to be More Responsive to Shocks?

In 2020, WFP and Oxford Policy Management joined forces to implement a regional research programme on shock-responsive social protection in the Caribbean. The research reveals an abundant landscape of experiences and best practices driven by resourcefulness and creativity to better assist people impacted by shocks. It demonstrates that even nascent social protection programmes and systems can be successfully leveraged to safeguard people's lives and livelihoods when crises hit. It also highlights increasing investments and efforts to ensure social protection can deliver its core functions and be better placed to respond to large-scale shocks as part of broader response measures.

The research includes six case studies conducted in Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago, two case studies focused on COVID-19 responses in Aruba and Sint Maarten, a regional literature review of social protection and disaster risk management systems, and a comprehensive synthesis report.

## Social Protection and Climate Change

Given the uncertainty around the impacts of climate change, social protection represents a key form of 'low regrets' investment, where it balances the dual role of supporting poverty alleviation and addressing vulnerability to climate change. WFP can then engage in the provision of technical assistance and policy support, as well as facilitate dialogue among different institutions and partners to support more climate adaptive social protection programmes.







# Enhancing the food security and nutritional impact of social protection

Unemployment, supply chain stresses, decreased affordability, movement restrictions, reduced access to essential health services, and changes in food consumption behaviours resulting from COVID-19 all impacted the ability of many people to access healthy and nutritious diets in 2020.

Leveraging years of experience in strengthening the relevance of social protection programmes to food and nutrition security, WFP has supported governments to react to, mitigate and prevent the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's food security and nutrition statuses.

In relation to nutrition, WFP's assistance has in 2020 included analytical support to understand the factors impacting people's access to and consumption of healthy, nutritious foods, related to the pandemic, and the provision of technical advice for the adaptation of existing or design of new social protection measures to meet these challenges.

# Overcoming the food security and nutrition roadblocks in social protection responses to COVID-19

As part of the socialprotection.org-hosted e-Conference “Turning the COVID-19 crisis into an opportunity. What’s next for social protection?”, WFP brought together some of the world’s most prominent voices in social protection, food

security and nutrition to reflect on **why** and **how** governments and international society should and can overcome the roadblocks that hinder social protection from sustainably supporting individuals and societies at large.



*“Quite importantly, [the pandemic] has underscored that without placing food security and nutrition at the centre of social protection, its objectives to sustainably address deprivation and vulnerability are doomed to fail. We need to make social protection systems work for food security and nutrition as we foster synergies across sectors, policies and programmes to bring about human capital development and meaningful change for our societies at large”*

**His Majesty King Letsie III of the Kingdom of Lesotho**

African Nutrition Champion of the Assembly of African Heads of State  
Special Ambassador for Nutrition of the Food and Agricultural Organisation  
Champion for the Human Capital Project of the World Bank

*“I can tell you with conviction that during this pandemic I saw social protection as the most important tool of food security in a crisis situation. [However,] social protection is an under-appreciated policy opportunity in the food security, food systems and nutrition context. I strongly feel that we must appreciate its potential, institutionalize it and use it for interventions at scale — because it can be a very powerful tool in the quest for building back better”*

**Dr. Sania Nishtar**

Special Assistant of Pakistan’s Prime Minister and Federal Minister,  
Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Ministry, Government of Pakistan



*“Investment in social protection and nutrition is an investment in the future. We need to stop thinking in programmes and projects with a beginning and an end, and think in long-term policy and legislation systems change. It requires a new collaboration where partners are willing to leave their logos and egos at the door”*

**Ms. Gerda Verburg**

UN Assistant Secretary-General and SUN Movement Coordinator

*“An appropriate social protection strategy needs to recognise the essential role food security and nutrition play in building a prosperous society able to nourish all its people, leaving no one behind, and for which nutrition is the foundation of the capabilities that sustain this prosperity over time”*

**Dr. Michael Samson**

Research Director of the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI)







Alimentaire  
Mondial

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RAGE  
ERES

Watch the event

A video blog with some of the event's highlights



socialprotection.org

**Insight**  
by the World Food Programme

## Safeguarding food security and nutrition in times of crisis in the Dominican Republic

WFP is a long-term strategic partner for the Dominican Republic government in strengthening the nutritional impact of social protection. When the government in 2009 introduced a reform to its social protection sector, WFP provided strategic guidance for the incorporation of a nutrition component into the national flagship social protection programme 'Progresando con Solidaridad' (PROSOLI). The nutrition component included promoting the growth of children from 6 to 59 months of age in beneficiary households, through the provision of specialized nutritious foods, micronutrient powders, and preventive care through primary care clinics.

In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic was expected to cause an increase in food insecurity from 1 percent to 10 percent of the population, the continued delivery of specialized nutritious foods became one of the government's key strategies to ensure the food and nutrition security of existing social protection beneficiaries and those who had seen their income decrease during the pandemic.

The strategy deployed by the government was two-tracked: the amount of nutritious foods received by existing PROSOLI beneficiaries was increased, while new beneficiaries were simultaneously included in the programme. However, as lockdowns and social distancing measures impacted people's access to primary health clinics, where beneficiaries went to access specialized nutritious foods, the government and WFP had to quickly identify a way to continue the programme's nutrition component outside the health clinics.

The solution was the introduction of a new mechanism for distributing the specialized nutritious foods directly to households through civil society organizations. The innovative approach ensured that more than 105,000 nutritionally vulnerable people, including children under five, elderly, pregnant and lactating women, and people living with HIV, received fortified complementary foods and micronutrient powders to enable them to maintain a good nutritional status during the lockdown.





Beyond implementation support to PROSOLI, WFP engaged in various evidence generation initiatives to strengthen national decision-making processes. These assessments included the Market Functionality Index, Cost of the Double Burden of Malnutrition and a Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis (FNG). Results generated by these analyses encouraged policy dialogue across sectors, and helped policymakers focus on concrete recommendations and design solutions that optimized resources available, which proved vital for the effective immediate COVID-19 response.

The FNG analysis, for example, informed the most nutritious and affordable combinations of locally available foods that can be purchased with cash transfers provided under the new 'Quédate en Casa' programme, which provides temporary assistance to poor and vulnerable households affected by the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and the existing 'Comer es Primero' programme.

Findings further supported the government's articulation of a communication strategy aimed at promoting nutritionally smart purchases among beneficiaries through radio and social media. Meanwhile, the Market Functionality Index helped the government assess the situation and health of local markets and, together with WFP, design and implement solutions to address supply shortages, for example by expanding the social protection system's network of affiliated retailers and linking smallholder farmers and producers to these retailers.

The evidence generated will continue to help in the medium and longer term COVID response to address food security and nutrition challenges.

# Partnering to scale-up school health and nutrition in the COVID era



The closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic put at risk the futures of millions of children globally, affecting not only their ability to learn, but also their access to nutritious food and health support schemes. By May 2020, almost 1.3 billion of children were out of school. Of these, some 370 million missed out on school meals. For many children in the poorest countries, these are the only meals they can count on. In the face of this global crisis, WFP and UNICEF are working together to track, through an **online map**, this global cohort of school children, and helping national governments to find ways to support them during the pandemic.



In the face of school closures, WFP has provided - or supported governments to provide - take-home rations, vouchers or cash transfers in place of school meals to children in 57 countries.



Read more about WFP's work to scale-up school health and nutrition in the COVID era.

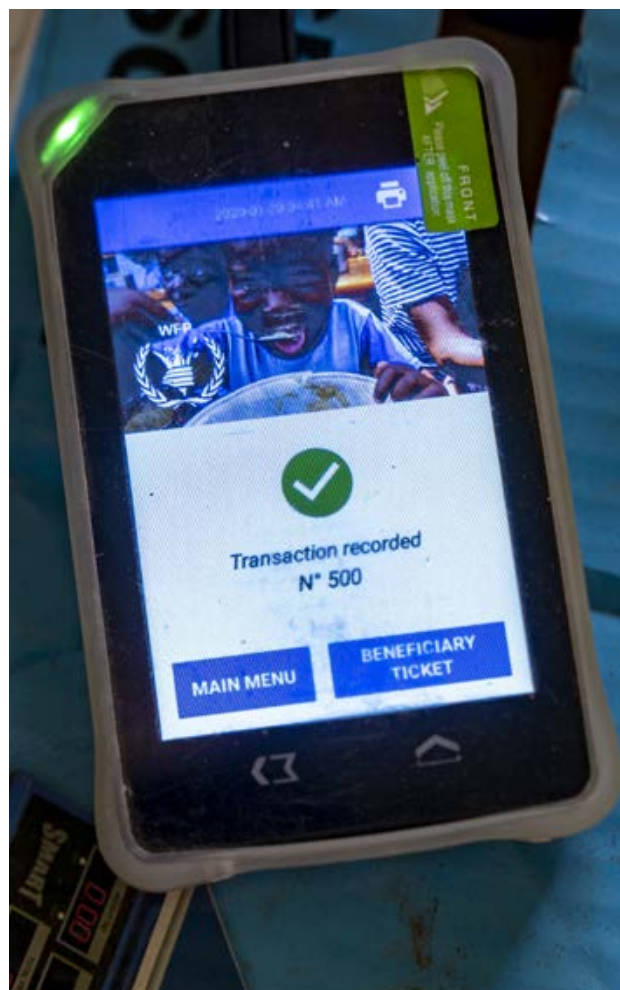


## Using blockchain to improve tracking and promoting nutritious diets in Bangladesh

In 2020, WFP continued its strong partnership with the Government of Bangladesh through capacity strengthening initiatives, engaging in policy dialogue and advocacy, generating evidence, and developing innovative approaches to disaster response. In recent years, WFP has been very successful in supporting the government in reforming different safety net programmes based on evidence generated by undertaking small-scale pilots and then rolling out these programmes at scale with government resources.

As part of its support to contain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP started a nutrition-sensitive urban safety net pilot programme in two low-income areas in Dhaka. This programme was designed to leverage the same blockchain technology, known as Building Blocks, which had been used for the humanitarian operation in Cox's Bazar and contribute to social and behaviour change communication with cash incentives to promote dietary diversity.

This new and innovative programme – implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, North Dhaka City Corporation and BRAC – tests new ways to encourage beneficiaries of government safety





net programmes to use their cash pay outs on nutritious food, through a “cash-back” element, which has been accepted to the WFP Innovation Accelerator.

Through smartly designed incentive-based packages, beneficiaries are guided towards using their received cash for the consumption of healthy food products. Beneficiaries purchasing nutritious food from at least five different food groups will receive a 25 percent top-up of the amount purchased on their next unconditional cash transfer as an incentive to promote dietary diversity.

To make this programme succeed, WFP is working with local traders to ensure a stable supply of vegetables and other nutritious food in shops within targeted areas.

The programme also uses social and behaviour change communication to promote dietary diversity and is delivered via an app connecting to the WFP blockchain, powered by Building Blocks. Building Blocks was rolled out under this programme in November 2020, to enhance the targeting and tracking of beneficiaries, analyse purchasing patterns, and offer opportunities for an in-depth analysis of cash-back data.

On top of this, WFP has been promoting the use of no-cash payment systems, such as the mobile financial service ‘bKash’, to replace physical cash payments and minimise person-to-person contact.

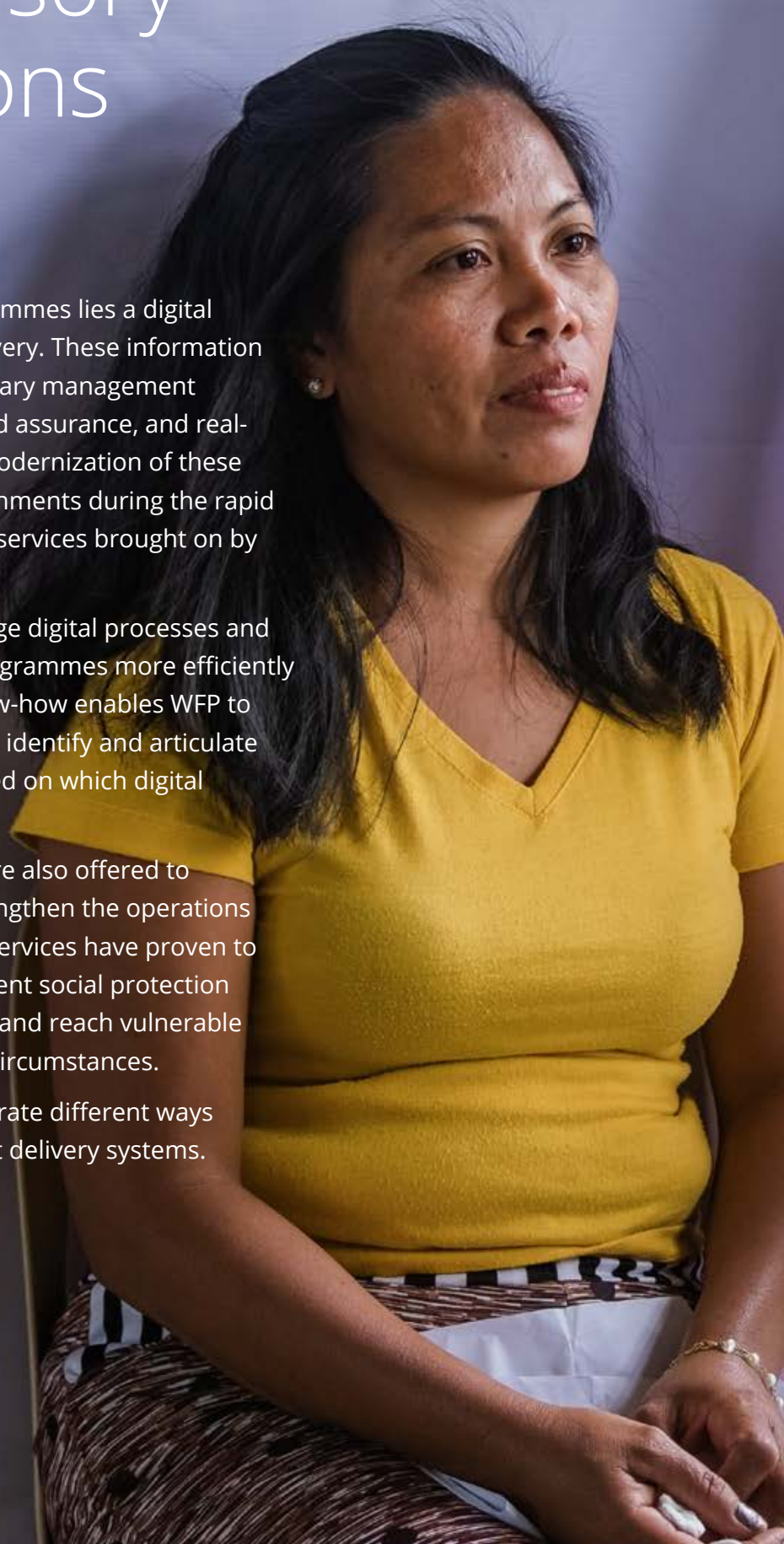
# Digital advisory and solutions services

Behind most social assistance programmes lies a digital architecture that facilitates their delivery. These information technologies function across beneficiary management systems, cash payment platforms and assurance, and real-world data collection and analysis. Modernization of these systems has proven critical for governments during the rapid changes in movement and access to services brought on by the pandemic.

WFP continues to develop cutting-edge digital processes and tools for managing humanitarian programmes more efficiently and effectively than before. This know-how enables WFP to support governments to understand, identify and articulate their programme requirements, based on which digital solutions can be developed.

Where appropriate, WFP's systems are also offered to governments as services to help strengthen the operations of national programmes, and these services have proven to be critical tools that helped government social protection programmes to continue to function and reach vulnerable households in the most challenging circumstances.

The two case studies below demonstrate different ways in which WFP is enabling government delivery systems.







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## Modernizing delivery systems in Jordan to reach new beneficiaries through digital services

Throughout 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak in Jordan was generally kept under control and food security among vulnerable Jordanian households remained largely stable. The Government of Jordan was able to mitigate potential impacts on food security by distributing supplies of food and other essential goods to households and preventing food price inflation through robust controls and monitoring mechanisms.

Amongst the government response measures, the National Aid Fund (NAF), Jordan's largest and primary social assistance and poverty alleviation body, expanded coverage of its Takaful safety net programme. The expansion provided emergency cash assistance (via mobile money wallet) to 250,000 additional day labourers and informal workers who were heavily affected by COVID-19 outbreak and its economic consequences.

WFP's intervention provided technical assistance and operational funding that enabled the NAF to rapidly expand to reach this new caseload. In particular, WFP's technical support focused on access to digital services that enabled the

expansion in a context where movement across Jordan was highly restricted and physically reaching beneficiaries was impossible.

Specific support included:

- 
- a. Promoting financial inclusion for new beneficiaries by running virtual sessions on how to remotely enrol and open mobile money wallets; and
  - b. On-the-job support to the NAF to design and implement new grievance and redress processes with an online appeal mechanism, as well as training for the NAF's hotline staff.
- 

During the COVID-19 response, WFP's long-term technical assistance also achieved a milestone by integrating the NAF's database with the e-wallet databases of the Central Bank of Jordan and the Jordan Payments and Clearing Company. With this new feature, the NAF is able to verify the e-wallet status and have a faster enrolment for new beneficiaries that eliminates manual intervention-related errors. Integration with multiple payment service providers is the next step forward.





The COVID-19 response was also made possible through a closely coordinated agreement with the World Bank that aimed to jointly support the NAF. The World Bank offered a financial contribution that was necessary for the NAF to fund the emergency assistance, while WFP offered the technical and operational capacity support which enabled the NAF to design and implement their planned response.

These achievements were founded on a strong partnership between WFP and the NAF which predated the COVID-19 outbreak. WFP was already providing technical assistance to the NAF on work streams including: a large-scale validation exercise of existing NAF beneficiaries, digital payments enrolment and systems enhancements, strengthening grievance and redress mechanisms, and on-going staff salary support.

WFP Jordan's experience in managing large-scale digital cash-based assistance programmes gave the organization a unique capacity to partner with the NAF during the COVID-19 response. The Country Office systems and know-how that evolved through the Syrian refugee response over the past decade put WFP in a position to demonstrate what the capability of a modern digital safety net programme could be to the national government, and use this to experience to bring long-term value to the NAF.

WFP has already committed to continue supporting a variety of NAF programmes beyond the COVID-19 emergency response. In 2021, virtual data collection exercises (for 130,000 families) and virtual information sessions for newly enrolled beneficiaries (for 230,000 families) will continue, alongside support to monitoring and evaluation processes.

## Deploying WFP's digital tools to support government social assistance in the Philippines

To help alleviate the economic shocks wrought by COVID-19, the Government of the Philippines provided financial assistance for daily wage earners and those working in informal economies through the Social Amelioration Programme (SAP). As part of its commitment to support the government to ensure food security amidst the pandemic, WFP adapted its technical assistance so that the government could continue to meet the needs of these vulnerable groups while abiding by quarantine measures in place.

To that end, WFP provided digital advisory and solutions services to the government to ensure continuity of namely three aspects of national social protection programming:

1. household vulnerability and food security assessments;
2. monitoring of the SAP; and
3. registration and distribution of payments in locations where financial service providers were unable to operate owing to lockdown restrictions.

To support the government to gather information on the impacts of COVID-19 on food and nutrition security of Filipinos under quarantine, WFP deployed mVAM – its mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping project that uses mobile technology to remotely monitor household food security and nutrition with a view to inform decision making. Through mobile surveys, mVAM enabled the government to gauge food security and nutrition levels in Metro Manila, the region with the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), one of the regions with the highest poverty rates in the country. MoDa, WFP's new corporate tool for Mobile Operational Data Acquisition, provided an accessible platform for collecting the data.

Meanwhile, to monitor outcomes and processes of the SAP, WFP supported the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) develop outcome level indicators and further offered its remote monitoring and evaluation toolkit (rM&E) in order to track the programme's performance.





With most service providers unable to operate as usual because of quarantine restrictions, the Ministry of Social Services and Development in BARMM (MSSD-BARMM), requested support from WFP for the distribution of financial assistance to households impacted by COVID-19, under the SAP. To meet the request, WFP offered a customized version of its beneficiary information and transfer management platform SCOPE, where MSSD-BARMM could collect, control and manage its own data. As a technical solution, SCOPE was readily available, did not require procurement of any equipment to be operational as MSSD-BARMM enumerators were able to use their own smartphones, and, the government had already witnessed previous deployments of SCOPE for emergency response, for example the Marawi Siege (2017), Typhoon Ompong (2018), and the eruption of Taal Volcano (2020). By May 2020, MSSD-BARMM had completed its financial assistance distribution to 353,000 households.

Beyond the COVID-19 response, the support provided by WFP serve two longer-term objectives:

1. that the generated evidence and knowledge of the vulnerabilities faced by the Filipino population and the performance of the SAP can be used to inform future social protection programming; and
2. that the support in the creation and use of digital solutions can further the development of a strong digital ecosystem to facilitate the extension of social protection in the country.

# Looking ahead to 2030

As a signatory to the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (USP2030), WFP is committed to working with governments and partners to extend social protection globally, for the achievement of universal social protection by 2030. This is critical not only for meeting the needs of people in a vulnerable situation here and now, but also for strengthening societal resilience so that countries are able to stay

on their 2030 development trajectories in the face of a confluence of risks.

In 2021, WFP will launch a new ambitious social protection strategy, outlining how WFP will work to ensure that, by 2030, people will have substantially increased access to national social protection systems that safeguard and foster their ability to meet their food security, nutrition and associated essential needs, and to manage the risks and shocks they face.



WFP will support governments and other national actors, partners and affected populations to implement social protection measures that enable people to achieve and maintain a decent standard of living, including their right to access adequate, nutritious and safe food throughout their lives, and leaving no one behind. WFP will do so by leveraging its expertise to assist countries to enhance the coverage, comprehensiveness, adequacy and quality of their social protection systems and programmes.



## Acronyms

<b>ASPIRE</b>	Adaptive Social Protection for Increased Resilience
<b>BARMM</b>	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
<b>DSWD</b>	Department of Social Welfare and Development
<b>ECLAC</b>	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>FID</b>	The Intervention Fund for Development
<b>FNG</b>	Fill the Nutrient Gap
<b>FSC</b>	Food Security Commission
<b>GCPS</b>	Centre for Emergency Operations and Social Programmes
<b>IADB</b>	The Inter-American Development Bank
<b>ILO</b>	The International Labour Organization
<b>MoCWA</b>	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
<b>MoDa</b>	Mobile Operational Data Acquisition
<b>MSSD</b>	Ministry of Social Services and Development
<b>MSSD-BARMM</b>	Ministry of Social Services and Development in BARMM
<b>mVAM</b>	Mobile Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping
<b>NAF</b>	National Aid Fund
<b>NSPPP</b>	National Social Protection and Promotion Policy
<b>PAHO</b>	Pan American Health Organization
<b>PROSOLI</b>	Progressando con Solidaridad
<b>rM&amp;E</b>	Remote Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>SAP</b>	Social Amelioration Programme
<b>SIMAST</b>	Information System of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>USP2030</b>	Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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