



World Food Programme

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REGIONAL BUREAU FOR **EASTERN AFRICA**

Social Protection

2021 Regional Achievements & Outlook

MAY 2022

Regional Overview

In 2021, RBN continued to witness the recurrence of large-scale covariate shocks, such as droughts, floods, pandemics, and conflicts. These shocks and stressors exerted a significant impact on the lives of the most food and nutritionally insecure households. In response, there has been an increased role of social protection in mitigating the impact of these shocks, protecting vulnerable households from engaging in negative coping strategies and laying a strong platform for building the resilience of households to future shocks and stresses.

WFP's engagement in social protection is mainly on strengthening the capacity of the Governments to provide social protection services through several entry points that span across 12 building blocks as expounded in the global social protection strategic framework.

Regional Achievements

All countries across the region were engaged in some form of social protection activities from delivering on behalf of the government to facilitating the review of key social protection strategies and supporting strengthening management information systems.

Policy and programme development

WFP is actively involved in the development of shock responsive social protection strategies and capacitating Government officials on shock responsive social protection systems. For example, **Rwanda** supported the capacity building of Government officials and other partners on shock responsive social protection and is facilitating discussions on the use of social protection system to respond to natural shocks and the development of an operational framework for the shock responsive social protection system. Moreover, WFP supported the updating of a Disaster Risk and Management (DRM) Policy aimed at mainstreaming the DRM into social protection among other sectors.

Social Protection Digitization

WFP continued to support the development and strengthening of management information systems.

Sudan has worked with the Government to design social protection management information systems that support the emerging social protection system. **Somalia** is partnering with UNICEF and the World Bank to develop a Unified Social Registry that will support the targeting and management of the *Baxnaano* programme.

Partnerships

WFP continued to strengthen partnerships with development institutions to provide technical support and capacity building on social protection. WFP partnered with the **University of Wolverhampton and Institute of Development Studies through the RBN supported Learning Facility** to build practical know-how and address bottlenecks on social protection implementation through open conversations with experts.

Evidence Generation

A part of the social protection evidence generating activities, the region conducted a Social Protection Management Information System (MIS) mapping exercise to assess the state of MIS architecture in the region, identify gaps and provide evidence-based recommendations regarding opportunities and entry points. RBN also recognises that MIS are important policy and operational tools in the development of strong, nationally owned SP systems.

The report highlighted that social protection policies and strategies have largely shaped the type of integrated information system in RBN countries. Whereas **Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda** have built integrated beneficiary registries; **Burundi, Somalia, Djibouti and Sudan** are moving to establish social registries. On the other hand, **Kenya** also recently integrated a social registry component as part of its Enhanced Single Registry (ESR).

Several recommendations were made, key among them is the need to support Governments to build strategies on data use for evidence-based decision making. This entails supporting strategies that ensure that data is analysed, shared with relevant stakeholders at the national and sub-national level, is used for policy cycles such as social protection policy review, the national development plans.

Challenges

The COVID-19 posed a major challenge with in the region in 2021 negatively impacting livelihoods of millions of people. In the urban areas, the effect was exacerbated by large numbers of workers that are in the informal sector, while in rural areas, disruptions in the availability and access to agricultural inputs were among other negative impacts. In most countries within the region, Governments responded with short-term fiscal expansionism, with increased public spending allocated to supporting the health sector and providing social safety nets to those worst affected. However, the overstretched budgets were largely temporary.

Secondly, the impact has been disproportionately felt by the working poor and their families, especially those in the informal sector who could not work from home when lockdowns were imposed and had no access to unemployment insurance. This posed a new challenge with regards to implementation of social protection programmes within the urban setup. Most countries had limited coverage of social protection interventions within urban areas. Currently the urban working poor are excluded from virtually any social assistance and social insurance. This gap in social protection systems needs to be urgently addressed, and with additional resources.

Thirdly, in recent years, the region has faced multiple climate shocks, notably droughts, floods and desert locust outbreaks. This calls for more shock-responsive social protection systems with robust information systems and social registries to allow various programme expansions: an increase in population coverage (horizontal) and additional benefits to existing people (vertical) and pre-positioned resources. These systems are still at different levels of development within the region.

Lessons Learned

Strengthening shock responsive social protection systems in the region

There is a need to support Governments within the region to strengthen shock responsive social protection systems. This includes strengthening Management Information Systems that are linked to beneficiary management systems.

Strengthening linkages between social protection and rural development

The COVID-19 pandemic heightened the need for supporting expansion of Government social protection programmes and linking them to livelihoods programmes. For example, in **Ethiopia** where WFP is working with the Government to expand elements of the Productive Safety Net Project in urban areas, the combination of climate-related shocks impacting on food production and COVID-19 have pushed up food prices. WFP is providing complementary programming alongside the Governments on social protection. Assistance to cover seasonal food gaps is complemented with additional support to productivity and engagement in resilient and profitable food systems.

Building linkages between disaster risk management systems and social protection systems

WFP could also leverage its comparative advantage on systems and data management to support the design and operationalisation of early warning systems that support shock responsive social protection system in the region. The early warning system can be used to trigger responses to shocks via the social protection sector. Such an approach would ensure that the resilience and shock-responsive agenda is supported through social protection information systems such as social registries and also through functional early warning and early action system.

CONTACT INFORMATION

MICHAEL DUNFORD

Regional Director for Eastern Africa

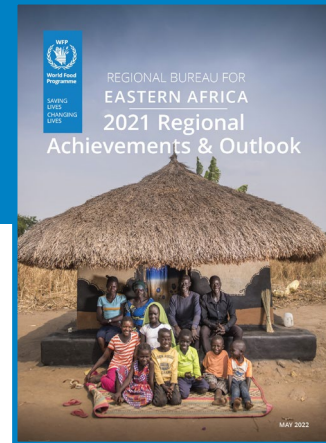
RYAN ANDERSON

Senior Regional Programme Advisor

RBN.reports@wfp.org

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