

REGIONAL BUREAU FOR WESTERN AFRICA (RBD)

2022 Social Protection Newsletter



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES



The World Food Programme in Western Africa has been supporting governments in their efforts to build nationally led social protection systems across the region, focusing on their ability to help people manage risks and shocks, all the while contributing to food security and improved nutrition.

The present newsletter provides a few highlights into this work, without providing a comprehensive view. Each newsletter will focus on a few topics and activities.

“Social protection for Zero Hunger.”

December, 2022

OVERVIEW OF KEY PUBLICATIONS



WFP's support to the strengthening of social protection systems in Western Africa

This note provides a snapshot of WFP's work in the region in the sector. It can be shared with partners to showcase the breadth of our engagement and expertise, as relevant for the social protection sector, in [French](#) and [English](#).

Responding to the 2022 food crisis in the Sahel: Leveraging and strengthening social protection to mitigate the impact of current and future crises

This illustrates WFP's role in supporting governments to enhance their national social protection systems to be more resilient and reactive in order to reach the dramatically increased needs of the population in the Sahel. It is available externally in [French](#) and [English](#).



Linking Nutrition and Social Protection in Western Africa

The brief builds a case for stronger linkages between the two sectors to tackle the malnutrition issue in the sector, including a rapid overview of the contribution of social protection to tackling malnutrition, including through a nutrition-sensitive approach. The note also identifies key areas of work and opportunities to build these linkages. This note is available for wider circulation in [French](#) and [English](#).

JOINT RETREAT FOR WFP AND UNICEF TECHNICAL FOCAL POINTS FOR THE PROJECT ON “RESPONDING TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC THROUGH SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN THE SAHEL”¹

In Mali, Mauritania and Niger, WFP and UNICEF jointly implement the *Responding to COVID-19 through Social Protection Systems in the Sahel* project. The joint project which began in August 2020, funded by BMZ/KfW, is designed to support governments in their social protection responses to the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 and other shocks through cash transfers and complementary services while strengthening the building blocks of the national social protection systems to be more shock responsive, nutrition- and child-sensitive.

In order to capitalise on learnings thus far and foment closer collaboration between the two agencies at all levels, a joint retreat was organised on September 12-16, 2022 in Dakar, Senegal. The retreat aimed at building capacity and facilitating meaningful exchange of experiences between the project’s participating countries as well as with partners. The retreat deepened technical discussions on shock-responsive and nutrition-sensitive social protection; enhanced partnerships and joint strategic planning, including the exchange of knowledge and experiences amongst participants.

The agenda covered a range of different topics and modalities, ranging from an in-depth technical session on social protection

information systems which was led by leading global expert Valentina Barca; experience exchange around the joint project’s twin-track approach; exploration of the role of social protection in the future of the annual lean season response; and how the project can work more efficiently with governments when it comes to system-strengthening. The retreat also hosted a joint day with the regional World Bank team, when cross-learning took place between our experiences in the joint project and the World Bank Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Project.

Three overarching recommendations from the retreat include (1) the importance to focus on strengthening routine social protection programmes to enhance shock-responsive systems, (2) taking action to institutionalise reforms based on project learning. This includes documenting experiences with the twin-track approach and distilling lessons learned that should be institutionalised and (3) ensuring predictability for recipients of social protection as a guiding principle for governments’ and this project’s interventions. Another concrete output was country-specific joint prioritisation plans of WFP and UNICEF teams that will help guide joint strategic activities going forward, to strengthen shock-responsive and nutrition-sensitive social protection.



Participants at the joint retreat for WFP and UNICEF technical focal points for the Social Protection Sahel project. WFP/Richard Mbouet

¹ To know more about the joint social protection project, join the Mauritania country teams on a [virtual field trip](#) to have an insight into the project’s daily operations, government and population perceptions.

CONDUCTING SCOPING STUDIES FOR MORE TAILORED SUPPORT

Social protection scoping studies are being conducted in the region with the aim to provide WFP country offices with strategic and operational recommendations in the identification of entry points and opportunities for further engagement in the social protection sectors of their respective countries. The studies are an analysis of the gaps within the national social protection systems vis-à-vis WFP's dual social protection objectives – food and nutrition security and shock response.

By request, the regional bureau has supported country offices in Benin, Cameroun, The Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria to conduct scoping studies of their national social protection systems. The country offices leverage on these studies to develop their Country Strategic Plan (CSP) and their internal social protection strategy for medium- and long-term engagement and partnership in the sector as well as to improve other ongoing initiatives with the Governments.

THE TWIN-TRACK APPROACH TO SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN RESPONSE TO SHOCKS

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP has taken a more active role in assisting governments in the region to maintain the provision and expansion of shock-responsive social protection assistance following rising needs, particularly in the Sahel. In Niger, Mali, and Mauritania, WFP and UNICEF are supporting governments in the delivery of critical social assistance to vulnerable households through a 'twin-track' approach.

This approach involves a combination of two cash delivery modalities used to ensure horizontal and vertical expansion of social protection responses. First, channelling resources through existing government programmes, thereby allowing them to scale up their own programmes (Track 1). Second, implementing directly through the agencies' own channels in alignment (targeting, transfer value, etc.) government programmes, in areas where national programmes are not yet operational or limited (Track 2). The twin-track approach was particularly used during the COVID-19 response and is increasingly adopted

for the response to the lean season or other seasonal shocks.

**MORE THAN
900,000
PEOPLE**

**Reached through
Track 1 and 2 by WFP
since 2020**

The twin-track approach has proven effective for social protection shock response with an overall positive feedback from both government and the supported population. Track 1 guarantees less fragmentation and more coordination in social protection delivery as well as supports government's role as a first provider of social protection for its people. Moreover, using our own systems, as per Track 2, gives us agility and control to better ensure timely assistance.

Nonetheless, channelling resources to the government (Track 1) requires the readiness of systems to reach the entirety of the population in need and in a timely manner. At the same time, Track 2 interventions have to be accompanied by specific efforts to reinforce government programmes, if not such an intervention will have no impact on the ability of the national system to respond to emergencies in the long run.

As a guiding principle, regardless of the track selected, a dual emphasis is placed on assistance delivery and national system strengthening because the objective of WFP's work in social protection is to support the government's capacity and capabilities to provide support and assistance to its own population.

RESPONDING TO THE 2022 GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS THROUGH SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

The West Africa region faces a significant decline in the food and nutrition security situation due to shortages of rainfall in 2021, intensifying conflict, and the socio-economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the impacts of the Ukraine crisis have compounded the already deteriorating food security and nutrition situation through increased inflation, hampered supply chains and high food prices. In the Sahel, for instance, prices have increased by 33 to 70 percent compared to the previous year, implying that all households' purchasing power has further decreased. According to the March 2022 *Cadre Harmonisé*, 42.9 million people were projected to be food insecure during the lean seasonal period of June to August in the region. This is a 38 percent increase as compared to the same period in 2021.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine crisis have highlighted the weaknesses and gaps in the current social protection systems to respond effectively and comprehensively to these shocks. Effective social protection delivery as well as system building should therefore go hand-in-hand in the response to global food crisis, in order to reach the dramatically increased needs of the population in the region and simultaneously enhance the structural underlying causes of food security and vulnerability.

In response to the food crisis and other shocks, WFP provides technical support and advisory services, delivery on behalf of governments, and complementarities within our own programming as efforts to strengthen social protection. WFP is committed to accelerating our efforts to support government systems, including in preparedness

to enhance the shock responsiveness of such systems at policy, programme and delivery levels.

In countries such as **Mauritania**, WFP supports the expansion of the national shock-responsive safety net programme, *El Maouna*, to assist population severely affected by the lean season as well collaborating with the World Bank to help the Government develop a risk-financing strategy and institutionalising the National Food and Nutrition Crisis Response Fund established in 2022.

In **Niger**, since 2021 WFP aligns part of our emergency cash response with the national safety net programme, *Wadata-Talaka* in the response to COVID-19 and the subsequent crises, shaping a shock responsive social protection response. In 2022, WFP has been supporting the expansion of the national safety net "drought response pilot" to double the programme's reach.

In **Sierra Leone**, WFP is advocating an increased transfer value under the national safety net programme in order to reach targeted vulnerable population with increased benefits to better help them manage the current shock and improve their access to nutritious foods.

In **Burkina Faso**, WFP has been providing technical assistance to the Government in the reinforcement of their systems for shock response which has led to defining institutional arrangements, an increased number of recipients in the national safety nets project (following the transfer of caseload from WFP to the project – see below) and an update of the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) used by the national safety nets project to increase its transfer value during the lean season.

In **Mali**, WFP is targeting *Jigisemejiri's* recipients (flagship national safety net) and providing pregnant and lactating women and children under 2 years of age with nutritional support, supporting the affordability of nutritious foods for these vulnerable groups. WFP also aligns with *Jigisemejiri* to extend its benefits to affected populations in 21 communes where the national programme is not present.

TRANSITION OF RECIPIENTS OF WFP EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT SAFETY NETS PROGRAMMES: BURKINA FASO CASE STUDY

Governments have the first responsibility to provide social protection benefits to their own people, to which WFP supports through capacity strengthening for optimal delivery of these benefits. One of the steps in this process involves the transition of the population support by WFP to national social safety nets programmes to reinforce the social contract between the government and its people whilst enhancing a more systemic approach to social protection delivery.

In early 2022, WFP worked with the Government of Burkina Faso to test the transition of the population receiving WFP support into the national safety net project (*Projet Filets sociaux* - PFS) to support the expansion of its coverage to internal displaced persons and host communities in the Sahel region of the country. To this end, more than 4,000 households were transitioned to the Government's project to receive regular cash and complementary assistance, including a cash top-up during the 2022 lean season.² Transitioned population were selected based on the eligibility criteria of the safety nets project, including nutrition security.

The protection of people's data and privacy were at the centre of the transition process. This involved the signing of a data-sharing agreement between WFP and PFS as well as the conduct of an internal risk assessment and a privacy impact assessment aimed at assessing and mitigating the risks associated with the transfer of personal data. In addition, affected households were informed on the transition through several communication channels based on a joint communication plan developed by both agencies.

SOCIAL REGISTRIES

The social registry as part of a social protection system continues to have big political traction among governments in West Africa. The lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic showed that having an information system in place was useful to roll out faster and more efficient support, instead of starting from scratch. However, these systems can be better integrated for vulnerability targeting as they are poverty-focused, risks identification, preparedness, emergency data collection to complement data that exists, and learning and planning.

Across the region, WFP is supporting governments in their development and improvement of their social registry. To ensure inclusive targeting, WFP is supporting the Ministry of social Affairs (MINAS) in **Cameroon** to develop the social registry targeting methodology to ensure the tool captures multiple dimensions of vulnerability, making it useful to determine the eligibility for different social protection programmes. In **Mali**, the Government plans to include 78 percent of the population into the registry, and WFP works closely with UNICEF to help the government realize this vision. For example, through the installation of mobile kiosks at commune level to pioneer on-demand registration for the registry.

In **Burkina Faso**, WFP together with the World Bank, has supported the institutionalisation process of the social registry, through the establishment of the social registry technical unit (*Secretariat Technique du Registre Social Unique*, ST-RSU), and plays a key role in coordination around the social registry. WFP also completed a joint study with the World Bank to assess existing databases to inform the design of the new social registry and promote data protection.

Moreover, building knowledge and learning on social registries remains a key approach

² It is worth noting that in Burkina Faso, the Government through the National Emergency and Rehabilitation Council (Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation - CONASUR) is solely responsible for the registration of internal displaced persons and refugees in the country. All actors providing humanitarian aid in the country are provided access to the CONASUR database in order to identify vulnerable households for emergency interventions as a way of enhancing coordination among actors.

to WFP's support in Western Africa. During the year, WFP collaborated with the **Chadian government** in their development of a national social registry through the implementation of a South-South Triangular Cooperation project. The project facilitated online as well as face-to-face knowledge exchanges both in Kenya and in Chad - between the Government of Chad and the Government of Kenya -. The government counterparts from Chad gained knowledge on the potential of a social registry and the enabling and limiting factors in the institutional environment, through the demonstration of Kenya's Enhanced Social Registry system and in-depth discussions with the Kenyan government.

In **Mauritania**, WFP supported a joint study on the social registry that has helped redefine the Government's social protection targeting approach, as well as ensured the inclusion of refugees from Mali (who started receiving cash transfer from the national *Tekavoul* cash-transfer programme during the 2022 lean season), hence allowing more efficient and coordinated targeting and access to social protection benefits.

LINKING DISASTER RISK FINANCING AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The West African region is prone to several natural disasters such as floods and droughts, and their intensity is likely to increase due to climate change. These disasters have affected large parts of the population, causing hundreds of thousands to be food insecure and prompted humanitarian assistance from governments and the international donor community. The scale-up of social protection programmes to respond to these shocks is crucial and can be sustained through arranged financing that can enable rapid, cost-effective, and reliable responses. To meet the financial needs associated with

disasters, governments can either prepare financial instruments in advance or arrange finance after a disaster has taken place. Such instruments can be in form of reserved funds, risk insurance, bonds, and loans, among others. Disaster risk financing tools supported by WFP across the region include micro-insurance for small-holder farmers to cover loss of crops; macro-insurance such as the Africa Risk Capacity (ARC) Replica scheme for natural disasters; anticipatory actions such as social transfers to reach households or communities ahead of a forecast weather shock; and climate information such as weather forecast services tailored to communities/farmers.

The linkages between social protection and disaster risk financing are significant approaches being explored in the region to maximise impact in a predictable response to disasters. As a crucial pillar of shock responsive social protection, WFP works with governments and partners to ensure that financing strategies are in place to sustain the expansion of social protection programmes in anticipation or response to shocks. In Mauritania, for instance, WFP and the World Bank are assisting the Government develop a risk-financing strategy and have supported the emergence of the National Food and Nutrition Crisis Response Fund (FNRCAN), a financial and budgetary mechanism that ensures funding of the annual response to slow onset crises from the Government and other funding sources. Social protection integration with micro- and macro-insurance mechanisms are equally explored. At the 2022 annual African Risk Capacity (ARC) Replica meeting, WFP facilitated strategic reflections on the role of microinsurance to promote shock-responsive social protection, and how to better integrate the ARC and ARC Replica payouts and social protection systems for enhanced efficiency and sustainability.

PROMOTING DIGITAL FINANCIAL INCLUSION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR WOMEN IN GHANA:

through capacity strengthening to the Government of Ghana and leveraging on the national cash transfer programme (LIVELIHOOD EMPOWERMENT AGAINST POVERTY - LEAP).

The Government of Ghana through its National Financial Inclusion and Development Strategy aims to increase access to formal financial services from 58 percent of the adult population to 85 percent by 2023. One of the actions undertaken to meet this objective, is the integration of financial inclusion interventions with the cash grant of the Government's flagship social safety net programme, Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP). To this end, WFP is aligning with the Government's priority on promoting digital financial inclusion (DFI) and women economic empowerment (WEE) via the LEAP programme.

Through a Bill and Melinda Gates funded project and under the technical support of WFP Capacity Strengthening and Social Protection units, WFP Ghana in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection uses an evidence-based approach to advance the Government's current understanding of barriers to financial access and end user experience as well as to increase LEAP recipient households' knowledge of the range of available financial services linked to E-zwich digital payment platform used by the LEAP programme.

So far, WFP facilitated an assessment

conducted by the Institute for Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER) on challenges to women's access to digital financial inclusion through the LEAP; this assessment was also complemented by a desk audit on LEAP implementation in Ghana, Based on the findings and recommendations of the assessment WFP supported LEAP in launching a nationwide campaign called 'Hey Sister, Show Me the Mobile Money' which uses local languages to increase the use of mobile money accounts among LEAP households so that they can quickly and conveniently access their transfers through their accounts even in remote locations. WFP also supported upgrading LEAP's Reporting and Management and Information Systems (MIS) for more sex-disaggregated data collection pertaining to access and utilisation of digital financial services made available both via the E-zwich and other forms of digital bank accounts.

Going forward, WFP will be supporting the LEAP programme to conduct more targeted financial and digital capacity building workshops for female LEAP recipients and to expand the programme's "Productive inclusion Intervention" to about 600 women; this supports enhancing the economic empowerment component and exit from cash into sustainable livelihoods.

Moreover, WFP is supporting the recertification of LEAP recipients, which is currently being piloted in the five regions of the Northern Ghana. Recipients deemed to have leaped out of poverty will be phased out into productive livelihoods as would have been exemplified by the Productive Inclusion activities under the GATES collaboration.

For further enquiries, please contact RBD.socialprotection@wfp.org