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# WFP's support to social protection in Asia and the Pacific: Regional Implementation Plan

## Executive summary

WFP's Social Protection Implementation Plan for the Asia and the Pacific region outlines a vision for WFP's support to national systems from 2024 to 2028. It contextualises [WFP's global social protection strategy](#) and provides a roadmap for how WFP will support countries in Asia and the Pacific to achieve their social protection goals. The plan focuses on strengthening social protection to ensure food security, nutrition and basic needs while managing risks and shocks, and builds on decades of experience to consolidate WFP's approach for the coming years.

# Regional social protection landscape

Over the past decade, social protection systems in Asia and the Pacific have expanded significantly, contributing to social and economic development. In 2023, over half its population (53.6 per cent) were covered by at least one social protection benefit.<sup>1</sup> Public expenditure remains low at 11.8 of GDP, below the global average of 19.3 per cent.<sup>2</sup>

Governments are making progress in enhancing social protection systems to better support food security and manage large-scale shocks. Across the region, they have progressively enhanced their social protection systems to better support people in achieving food security through the implementation of cash transfer programmes targeting the first 1000 days of child development, the integration of large-scale food fortification in social protection programmes, and the expansion of school-based programmes. Moreover, governments have built significant experience in leveraging social protection mechanisms to address large-scale shocks, such as typhoons, cyclones, floods, earthquakes, and more recently, the COVID-19. Adaptive and shock-responsive strategies are now present in many countries and regional intergovernmental organisations.

Despite these efforts, key challenges persist. Most social protection programmes remain primarily focused on poverty alleviation, often overlooking food security and nutrition as key objectives. Social

assistance measures, such as cash transfers, still fall short in ensuring beneficiaries' access to nutritious diets, enhancing their dietary habits, and guaranteeing an adequate supply of nutritious food.

In addition, various barriers limit the use of social protection to effectively respond to large-scale shocks, including the inability of many social assistance programmes to respond or continue functioning during large-scale shocks, a lack of integrated risk financing options linked to existing social protection programs to enable timely scalability, and fragmented governance and coordination between disaster management and social protection institutions.



## WFP's priorities in Asia-Pacific

WFP is supporting governments in strengthening national social protection systems, contributing to enhance their coverage, comprehensiveness, adequacy, quality, and responsiveness. WFP's work in the Asia and the Pacific is guided by two priorities:

**Regional priority 1: Social protection that helps people meet their food security, nutrition and**

**associated essential needs:** WFP supports the integration of food security and nutrition outcomes in social protection policies and programmes to enable people to fulfil their right to access adequate, nutritious and safe food.

**Regional priority 2: Social protection that helps people manage risks and shocks:** WFP works with

<sup>1</sup> ILO (2024). [World social protection report 2024-26: Regional companion report for Asia and the Pacific](#).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

governments on enhancing social protection systems to help people prepare for, respond to and recover from shocks, as well as build their adaptive capacities.

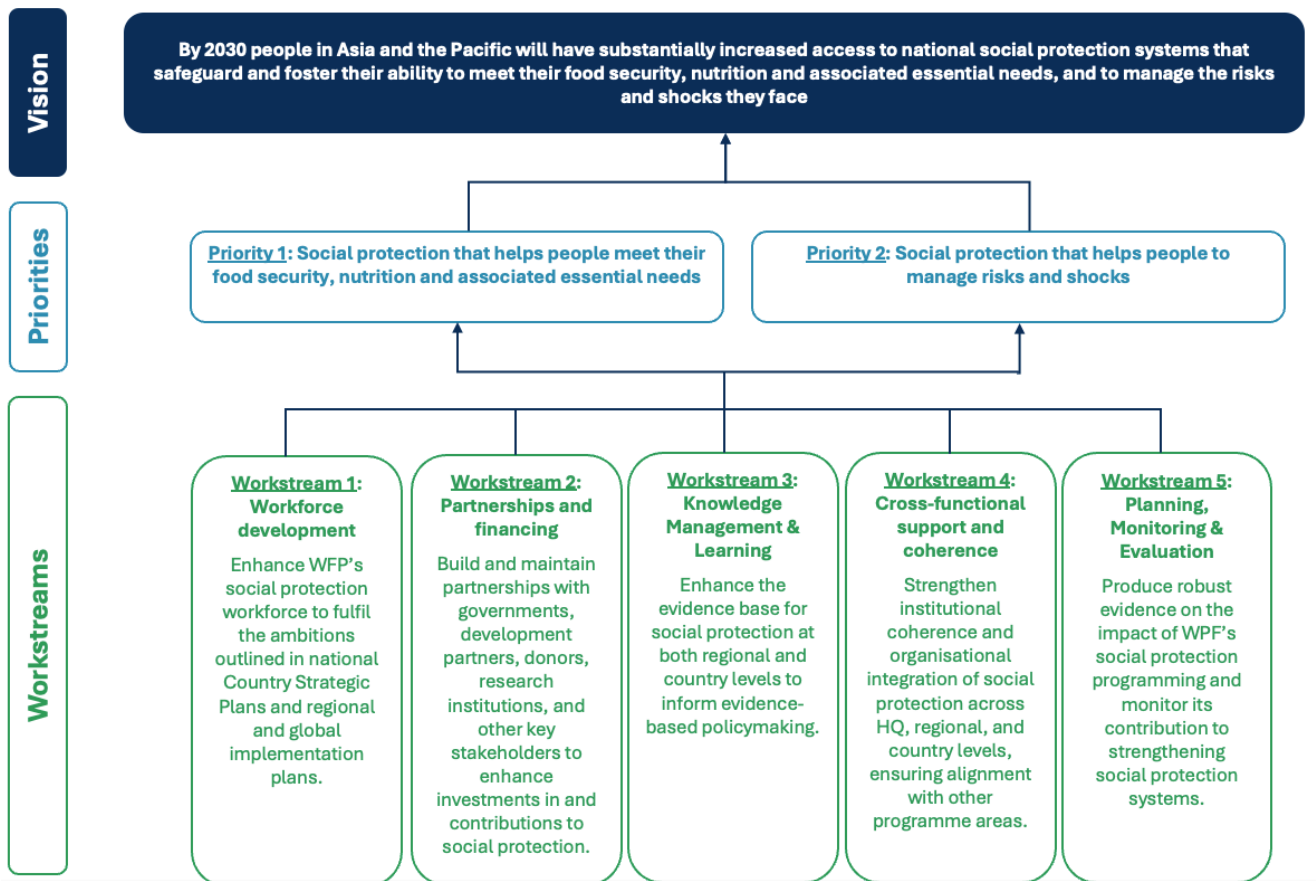
WFP supports different elements of social protection systems in 16 countries in Asia and the Pacific,

including an enabling environment that steers the sector (system architecture), the programmes that deliver benefits and services (programme features), and cross-cutting processes of evidence generation, knowledge, learning and monitoring, as well as inclusion and gender.

# WFP's implementation strategy

To achieve the two regional priorities outlines above, WFP will focus its internal approach and investments in five prioritised workstreams: strengthening its social protection workforce (Workstream 1); forging strategic partnerships (Workstream 2); advancing knowledge and learning (Workstream 3); enhancing internal coherence and cross-functional support

(Workstream 4); and improving monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (Workstream 5). Detailed strategic actions under each workstream for the period 2024 – 2028 are outlined in the full [Social Protection Implementation Plan for the Asia Pacific Region](#).



## REGIONAL BUREAU BANGKOK

### World Food Programme

Wave Place Building 7th Floor 55, Wireless Road  
Lumpini Pathumwan 10330 Bangkok, Thailand  
T +66 2 6554115 | WFP.Bangkok@wfp.org

Photo cover page: WFP/Sayed Asif Mahmud  
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