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SAHEL SOCIAL PROTECTION JOINT PROJECT

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Supporting Social Protection Systems in the Sahel

A joint project between
UNICEF and WFP



KFW

Project Summary

Project overview

Social protection is a fundamental right. It is also a proven investment to reduce poverty, support food security and nutrition and education, manage the impact of shocks, build resilience, and promote gender equality. Expanding and strengthening national social protection systems in the Sahel stands to promote a decent life for all. Achieving this vision requires national systems to facilitate a progressively universal coverage of shock- and gender-responsive and nutrition-, child- and conflict-sensitive social protection.

A robust national social protection system is one that is anchored in national solidarity, adheres to minimum standards, and has strong government leadership. Social protection interventions that are inclusive, timely, regular, and predictable are key in working towards poverty reduction, improved food security and nutrition, enhanced resilience, and improved social cohesion. These outcomes rely on strengthening and institutionalizing national systems.

The Joint Project seeks to expand and strengthen national social protection systems, to build resilience, and support the development of human capital of the most vulnerable populations. Together with the delivery of cash transfers and complementary services to increase the coverage of social protection interventions, the Joint Project is driven by a transformational aim to strengthen core building blocks of national social protection systems and build capacities among country leadership and governments.

Delivering complementary services alongside cash transfers stands to strengthen cross-sectoral linkages to optimize and sustain the impact of cash transfers among vulnerable groups facing multidimensional needs. Nutrition, health, education, entrepreneurship, child protection, and gender-based violence prevention services aim to (i) prevent the deterioration in the nutritional status of vulnerable households, (ii) protect women and children through targeted approaches against violence, abuse, exploitation,

discrimination and neglect, and (iii) facilitate pathways for financial inclusion, decent work, and social cohesion.

The Joint Project has been implemented since 2020 in two phases – Phase 1 (2020-2026) and Phase 2 (2025-2028). It aims to reach close to 630,000 households (over 595,000 households under Phase 1, in addition to close to 35,000 households in Phase 2). The second phase builds on the success of the first phase, whereby UNICEF and WFP have been supporting the Governments of Mali, Mauritania and Niger since 2020, and those of Burkina Faso and Chad since 2024, in their social protection response to multidimensional needs in the face of complex, overlapping shocks, including on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The combination of fragile national social protection systems, low coverage of national programmes, and the scale of needs of vulnerable populations does not allow for the channelling of all support through the national system. Flexible delivery approaches are critical to facilitate the expansion of social protection coverage in fragile contexts. The Joint Project promotes the use of a twin-track approach¹ to considerably increase the reach of social protection systems to reduce coverage gaps in the short and medium term. As far as possible, the Joint Project works through government social protection programmes to deliver essential support (Track 1). Where national capacities are overstretched or interrupted, including because of a shock, or where access is constrained for government agencies, including because of security concerns, the Joint Project delivers cash transfers directly or via partners, remaining in alignment with national social protection response plans, programmes, and priorities (Track 2).

¹ Using the twin-track approach, social protection programme coverage can be expanded, by channeling resources directly through national systems or – when these are overstretched or constrained by access or security issues – through partners, in alignment with national programmes. Flexibility in the application of a twin-track approach ensures agility to support continuity of delivery.

Over the years, the Joint Project has progressively shifted support from supporting cash transfers to help vulnerable households overcome the impacts of multiple shocks, to supporting multi-year cash transfers that focus on building resilience and investments in human capital, especially for families with children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and persons with disabilities.² Through this approach, the Joint Project aims to contribute to the development and consolidation of national safety net programmes that address structural drivers of poverty and chronic vulnerability, supporting households become better positioned to face the continuous, layered, and at times unpredictable, shocks and stressors inherent to this region.

Given the rising needs across the wider Sahel region and the cross-border impacts of these shocks, Phase 2 of the Joint Project seeks to expand on existing gains and continue supporting the five countries in institutionalizing robust,

shock- and gender-responsive, nutrition-, child- and conflict-sensitive social protection systems. This new phase is particularly focused on supporting the set-up of, and bridging the gap towards, permanent national social safety programmes that can reach scale.³

The support to national social protection systems is informed and guided by the lessons learned and evidence generated as part of the cash transfer and complementary service delivery of the Joint Project, in turn accompanying national dialogues on social protection policy and governance frameworks, programme design, coordination structures, delivery mechanisms, and financing modalities. The evidence generation, knowledge dissemination, and continuous learning components of the Joint Project further support advocacy efforts to raise the profile of social protection and to help make the case for social protection across countries and regional spaces.



² As of January 2025, as part of the ongoing joint UNICEF-WFP project on social protection 'Responding to COVID-19 through social protection systems in the Sahel – Towards addressing the socioeconomic impacts of multiple shocks', which runs from 2020 through 2026 and which overlaps with this new joint project, a total of 486,234 households (over 3.3 million people) have already been reached through cash transfers and economic inclusion measures, out of a total of 595,371 households (3.8 million people) targeted through 2026.

³ With the notable exception of Mauritania, which already has a national social protection programme that is fully institutionalized and has reached full scale.

Table 1. Project overview

Countries	Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger
Project title	Supporting Social Protection Systems in the Sahel
Project objective	Build resilience and support development of human capital of the most vulnerable, through the expansion and strengthening of national social protection systems.
Beneficiaries and key expected results	<p>At least 34,546 vulnerable households (approximately 185,978 individuals), including households with children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people living with disabilities, receive cash transfers and/or economic inclusion support measures and complementary services to support human capital development and strengthen resilience against multiple shocks. This is in addition to 486,234 households (over 3.3 million people) already reached with cash transfers and economic inclusion measures under Phase 1 since 2020 (out of a total Phase 1 target of 595,371 households (over 3.8 million people) to be reached by 2026).</p> <p>Social protection systems, including policymakers and practitioners, see their capacities strengthened to respond to multiple shocks, to contribute to improved nutritional outcomes, to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including women, and to expand their coverage.</p> <p>Lessons learned are documented and regional partnerships established to facilitate learning and advocacy for scaled-up and inclusive shock- and gender-responsive and nutrition- and child-sensitive social protection in the Sahel.</p>
Key expected outputs	<p>Output 1.1 - Expansion of social safety net coverage</p> <p>Output 1.2 - Delivery of complementary services (e.g., nutrition, health, education, entrepreneurship, child protection, protection against gender-based violence)</p> <p>Output 2.1 - Strengthened policy and coordination frameworks</p> <p>Output 2.2 - Strengthened national safety net programmes</p> <p>Output 2.3 - Robust and inclusive delivery systems, including social registries</p> <p>Output 2.4 - Robust evidence and advocacy for financing expansion of social protection coverage</p> <p>Output 3.1 - Strengthened regional partnerships</p> <p>Output 3.2 - Advocacy initiatives for scaled-up social protection in the Sahel</p> <p>Output 3.3 - Learning, knowledge and evidence generation</p>
Implementing period	1 January 2025 – 31 December 2028
Total proposed budget	EUR 50 million ⁴ (initial amount for Phase 2 running from 2025 to 2028)

⁴ The budget for Phase 1 (2020–2026) is EUR 204 million.

Geographical coverage	<p>Burkina Faso <u>Track 1 & Track 2:</u> Est, Plateau Central, Centre-Est, Centre-Ouest, Centre-Nord and Nord regions</p> <p>Chad <u>Track 1:</u> Department of Kleta in the Province of Bahr El Gazal <u>Track 2:</u> Department of Kanem Centre in the Province of Kanem</p> <p>Mali <u>Track 1:</u> Sikasso, Bougouni, Koutiala, Koulikoro, Dioila, Segou and San regions <u>Track 2:</u> Gao, Menaka, Tombouctou, Taoudenit, Mopti, Bandiagara, Douentza, Koulikoro, San and Ségou regions</p> <p>Mauritania <u>Track 1:</u> Assaba, Guidimagha, Tagant, Gorgol, Hodh el Chargui and Nouakchott <u>Track 2:</u> Regions classified as most-vulnerable as per results of yearly <i>Cadre Harmonisé</i> analysis, to extent possible targeting to those overlapping with BMZ-funded Sahel Resilience Partnership (SRP) and its integrated resilience package interventions.</p> <p>Niger <u>Track 2:</u> Diffa, Tilabery, Tahoua, Dosso, Maradi, Niamey, Zinder and Agadez</p>
Strategic project partners	<p>Government Institutions: entities responsible for social protection system functions and/or implementation of cash transfer and/or economic inclusion programmes.</p> <p>Other Development Partners: World Bank, European Union, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Development Bank, German Cooperation and other bilateral partners, non-governmental organisations (NGOs).</p> <p>United Nations: FAO and ILO, among others.</p> <p>Regional Coordination Platforms: Sahel Alliance</p> <p>National Coordination Platforms: National Social Protection Working Groups</p>

Project objective

Through the expansion and strengthening of national social protection systems, the Joint Project aims to build resilience and support the development of human capital of the most vulnerable populations.

The Joint Project recognizes the potential that social protection holds in significantly addressing the broader development challenges in the Sahel. It therefore addresses weaknesses in national social protection systems and the enabling environments to facilitate the rapid and sustainable expansion of access to social protection.

By supporting social protection systems, the Joint Project aims to leverage the role of social protection to reduce poverty, fight hunger and malnutrition, build resilience, promote economic inclusion, enhance gender equality, and foster social cohesion.

Project Outcomes

OUTCOME 1 – The coverage of national social protection programmes is enhanced through provision of cash transfers and complementary services that build resilience in a context of chronic vulnerability and multiple shocks and crises.

Outcome 1 includes the expansion of social protection coverage through regular and shock-responsive and nutrition-sensitive cash transfers and/or economic inclusion measures targeting the poorest and most vulnerable households, with special attention to families with children under 2, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and persons with disabilities.

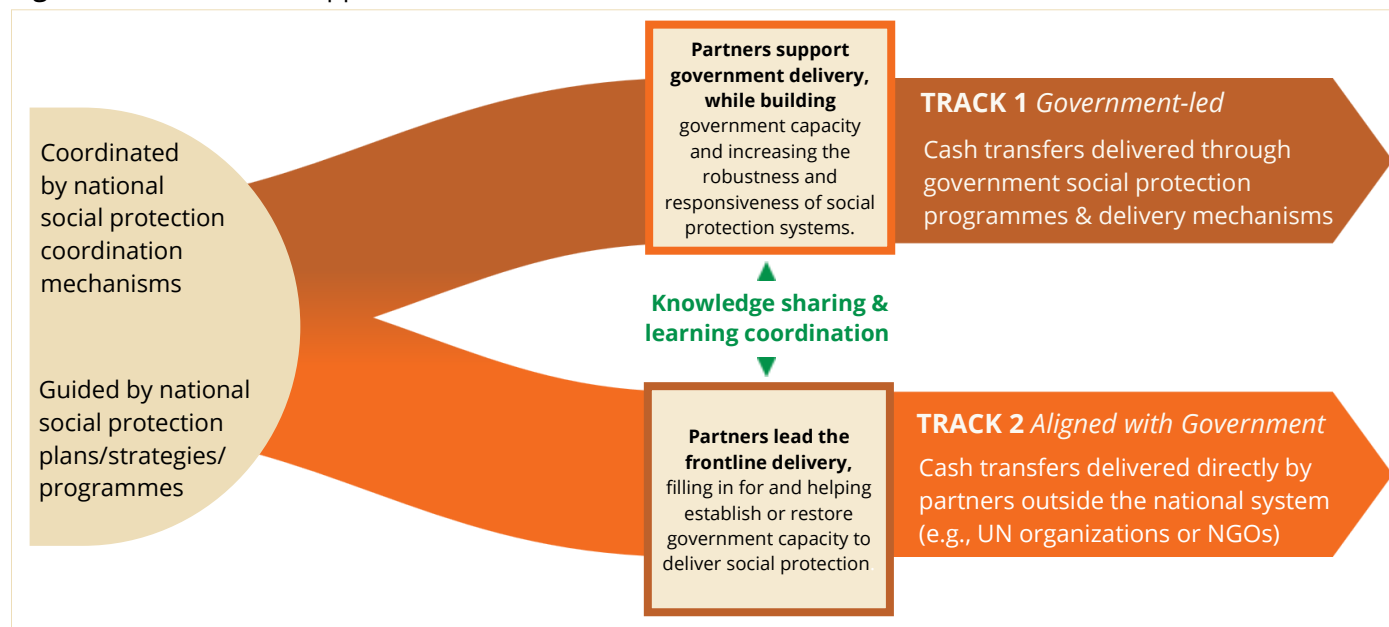
Complementary services help optimize the impact of cash transfers, and economic inclusion measures, paired with social cash transfers, together help households to build resilience against a backdrop of multiple shocks, enabling them to meet basic needs, increase productivity, and invest in their human capital through

enhanced access to services and to dignified work and financial inclusion pathways.

Amidst fragile national social protection systems, low coverage of national programmes, and the scale of needs of vulnerable populations, cash transfers are channeled through a twin-track approach (Figure 1), allowing flexibility and agility

to reach those most in need, channeling support as much as possible via existing national programmes and systems (**Track 1**), or by using UNICEF and WFP channels, or those of partners, working in alignment with national programmes (**Track 2**) whenever national systems are overstretched, disrupted, or constrained by access or security issues.

Figure 1. The twin-track approach

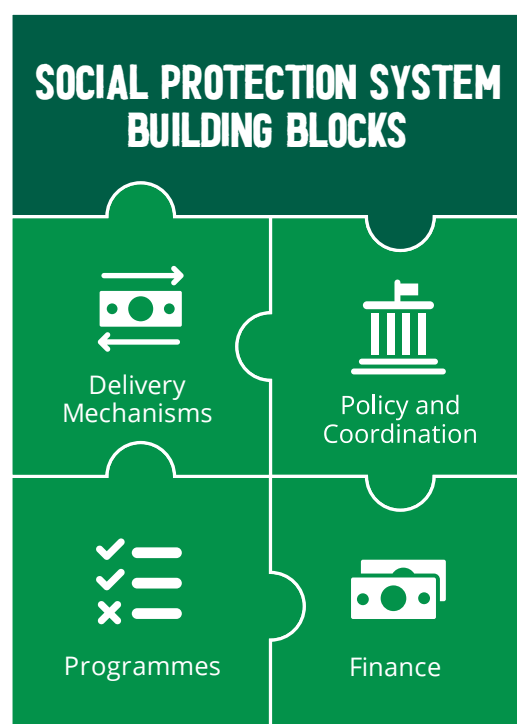


OUTCOME 2 – National social protection systems are inclusive, shock-responsive, and nutrition-sensitive, and fit for expanding coverage at scale.

Outcome 2 represents a whole-of-systems approach to strengthening national social protection systems, helping ensure social protection interventions are relevant, inclusive, timely, regular, and predictable, and that they lead to their expected impacts at scale.

The Joint Project accompanies governments in building robust national social protection systems that are shock- and gender-responsive and nutrition-, child- and conflict-sensitive, with medium to long-term capacity strengthening support anchored across key system building blocks: delivery mechanisms, policy and coordination, programmes, and finance (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Social protection system building blocks



Through the Joint Project, synergies between social protection, disaster risk management (including anticipatory action), resilience, and humanitarian response are leveraged, identifying policy, programmatic, and financial inroads towards elevating social protection as not only a human rights and social equity imperative, but also as a vital component in addressing chronic needs in a more sustainable and cost-effective fashion, moving beyond humanitarian assistance alone.

OUTCOME 3 – Regional partnerships facilitate evidence-based learning and advocacy for stronger and scaled-up shock-responsive social protection in the Sahel.

Outcome 3 encompasses the strengthening of regional partnerships and evidence-informed advocacy and learning. The Joint Project supports governments in their scale up of social protection systems, disseminating key operational and

programmatic lessons learned and promoting their uptake by governments in national social protection programming.

The Joint Project has established a strong partnership with the World Bank in the Sahel, with both UNICEF and WFP seeking to increasingly align the Joint Project with the World Bank's Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme (SASPP). The three entities are working to develop joint analyses and diagnostics on the state of adaptive social protection (ASP) in the Sahel, develop and disseminate standards for main pillars and instruments of ASP, and conduct research and advocacy to build the case of increased social protection investments in the region.

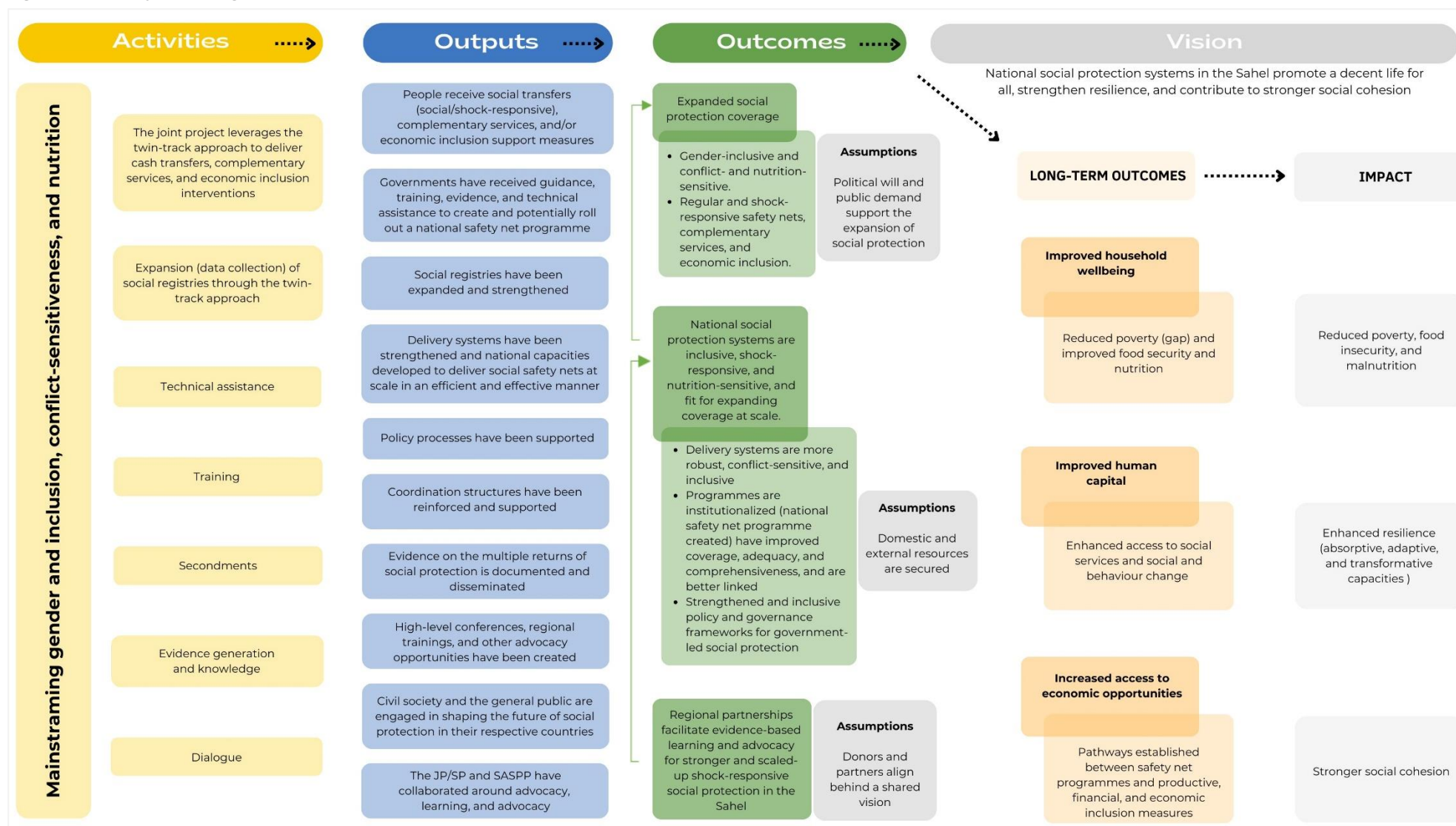
Regional learning platforms (e.g., TRANSFORM)⁵ and coordination fora (e.g., *Alliance Sahel*) further support efforts to presenting social protection as a flagship investment.



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⁵ **TRANSFORM** is an innovative capacity-building programme on the administration of national social protection floors. Since its inception in 2015, TRANSFORM has been implemented by regional experts across the African region in more than 20 countries.

Figure 3. Theory of change



Phase 2 Project Description

Beneficiaries

Across the five implementing countries, the Joint Project is supporting at least 35,846 households (193,678 individuals), with over half of the main beneficiaries being women. Intervention areas and specific target groups will follow, as far as possible,

those defined in the respective country national social protection strategies, national safety net programmes, and lean season response plans, among others.

Moreover, through its work on systems strengthening and advocacy, the Joint Project supports policymakers, social protection practitioners, and the social protection workforce at large.

Table 2. Targeted beneficiaries per country (Joint Project Phases 1 and 2)

	Households	Individuals
Burkina Faso ⁶	7,200	51,200
Chad	8,200	49,200
Mali	181,691	1,090,148
Mauritania	193,629	1,128,074
Niger ⁷	239,197	1,672,279
Total ⁸	629,917	3,990,901

Project implementation

While the outcomes and outputs are shared across the implementing countries, specific activities and approaches respond to and reflect each country's specific context, opportunities, and challenges.

In **Burkina Faso**, where the Government has designed and validated a new national flagship social assistance programme that creates a longer-term framework and moves beyond a project approach, the Joint Project supports the economic inclusion component of this national umbrella programme, as well as its operational mechanisms.

In **Chad**, considering the country's new National Social Protection Strategy, Joint Project efforts center on supporting the expansion of the existing Refugees and Host Communities Support Project (*Projet d'Appui aux Réfugiés et aux Communautés d'Accueil* – PARCA), to lay the foundation for a new permanent national safety net programme, progressively transforming current seasonal

assistance programmes towards permanent shock-responsive social protection programmes, to reduce vulnerability and build resilience, including against a backdrop of rising forced displacement.

In **Mali**, national capacities continue to be strengthened, accompanying national efforts to revise the National Social Protection Policy and elaborate an action plan for 2025-2030, which includes the development of a new permanent social safety net programme. In addition, efforts continue towards universal registration of households in the national social registry (*Registre Sociale Unifié* – RSU).

In **Mauritania**, UNICEF and WFP, together with the World Bank, build on the long track record of collaboration around ASP, capitalizing on existing gains around expanded safety net coverage and a more efficient lean season response.

As for **Niger**, where existing social protection mechanisms are constrained by coverage,

⁶ All 4,000 households receiving school bursaries under Phase 2 also receive economic inclusion support, therefore these 4,000 households are only counted once.

⁷ Of the 6,500 households targeted under Phase 2, a total of 1,300 will receive both regular cash transfers and economic inclusion support measures and are therefore only counted once.

⁸ Total number of beneficiary households and estimated individuals reached is expected to be higher when accounting for additional support foreseen under Phase 2 for groups of people with disabilities, children under 2 and pregnant and breastfeeding women not yet counted.

fragmentation, and efficiency concerns, the Joint Project is supporting the development of a national permanent safety net programme, capitalizing on the **lessons learned** from the twin-track approach in times of political crises and disruptions to national systems, as seen following the 2023 coup d'état.

Burkina Faso

In 2024, the Government of Burkina Faso validated a new national flagship social assistance programme, the National Programme to Support the Empowerment of Poor and Vulnerable Households (*Programme national d'appui à l'autonomisation des ménages pauvres et vulnérables* – PAMPV).

The Joint Project aims to support the Government in operationalizing and rolling out the PAMPV as an umbrella national programme, with the Joint Project adopting the twin-track approach, which is already part of the PAMPV's programme methodology. Originally, the PAMPV included a two-year cash transfer component for extremely poor households and a shock-responsive

component during the lean season. A decision to suspend cash-based support measures (since October 2023) has led to modifications in the PAMPV, looking in turn to establishing an economic inclusion component supporting household productive capacities, and extending the period of support to three years.

In response to this, Joint Project support is focusing on the PAMPV's economic inclusion component, around which beneficiaries will be organized into village savings and credit associations and other types of community groups to promote productive and income-generating activities. On the one hand, beneficiaries receive a school grant support for adolescent girls. In parallel, the same group of beneficiary households receive an economic inclusion package composed of seed capital, technical and business training, mentorship and coaching, life and business skills, and market access support.

Beneficiaries likewise receive complementary measures to support consumption needs and access to basic services and to help promote positive social behaviours, including around improved household nutrition outcomes.

Table 3. Economic inclusion measures in Burkina Faso (Phase 2)

	School grants for adolescent girls ⁹	School grants for adolescent girls	Economic inclusion package ¹⁰	Economic inclusion package
Transfer modality	Track 1	Track 2	Track 1	Track 2
Lead agency	UNICEF	WFP	UNICEF	WFP
Number of beneficiaries (HH) ¹¹	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Total transfer value per household (per year/round)	US\$ 126 (XOF 75,000)	US\$ 126 (XOF 75,000)	US \$332 (XOF 200,000)	US \$332 (XOF 200,000)
Total transfer value per household (2024-2026)	US\$ 252 (XOF 150,000)	US\$ 252 (XOF 150,000)	US \$332 (XOF 200,000)	US \$332 (XOF 200,000)

⁹ Four biannual payments for a period of 24 months for both Track 1 (UNICEF) and Track 2 (WFP) payments .

¹⁰ One-time lump sum payment for both Track 1 and Track 2 transfers.

¹¹ The 2,000 households receiving school grants via Track 1 and Track 2 are the same households receiving the economic inclusion package, therefore the total number of households supported via each track is 2,000, for a total number of households supported of 4,000.

The Joint Project continues supporting central and local authorities in their scaling up and managing of social protection at national and decentralized levels, as part of a long-term resilience building and economic inclusion country vision. The strengthening and expansion of the Single Social Registry (*Registre sociale unique* – RSU) and the deployment and institutionalization of the PAMPV remain key pillars of Joint Project support.

Together with support to the finalization, validation, and operationalization of the National Social Protection Strategy (2024-2028), the Joint Project works alongside the Government in ensuring policy frameworks and targeting and delivery systems respond to specific nutrition needs, especially those of women, children, and people with disabilities. It also supports national and sub-national social protection coordination bodies, in collaboration with the World Bank.

These efforts seek to optimize synergies between social protection and humanitarian assistance to rethink the response to cyclical and chronic needs, beyond humanitarian assistance alone. Enhanced community engagement and social accountability mechanisms are also being strengthened, and evidence generation, advocacy, and partnership-building shall help inform efforts for the mobilization of domestic finance opportunities at the crossroads of social protection, climate action, and humanitarian response.

Chad

While the Government does not yet have a permanent national social assistance programme, the new National Social Protection Strategy foresees a progressive transition from seasonal assistance programmes, predominantly led by non-State partners, towards adaptive social protection programmes. Adopting a twin-track approach, the Joint Project support the delivery of regular cash transfers following the design of the PARCA project and its social cash transfer component. The alignment with PARCA enables the Joint Project to accompany the Government in ongoing efforts to establish a regular, nationally owned social safety net programme.

By prioritizing areas with high levels of chronic vulnerability, food insecurity, and malnutrition, cash transfers aim to help beneficiaries meet their routine consumption needs, diversify food intake, facilitate their access to services, and improve household nutrition status, especially among women and children.

Complementary measures accompanying cash transfers include child, nutrition, and gender-sensitive social services, alongside community engagement support and capacity building of social workers to help increase demand and supply of social services.

Table 4. Cash transfer delivery in Chad (Phase 2)

	Regular cash transfer support to vulnerable households ¹²	Regular cash transfer support to vulnerable households
Transfer modality	Track 1	Track 2
Lead agency	UNICEF	WFP
Number of beneficiaries (HH)	2,000	2,500
Total transfer value per household (per year/round)	US\$ 300 (XAF 180,000)	US\$ 300 (XAF 180,000)
Total transfer value per household (2024-2026)	US\$ 900 (XAF 540,000)	US\$ 900 (XAF 540,000)

¹² Quarterly payments equivalent to US\$25 (XAF 15,000) per month, over a 36-month period for both Track 1 and Track 2 transfers. During the lean season, the transfer value may be adjusted upwards to cover additional and heightened needs, as necessary, in line with the PARCA programme.

The Joint Project accompanies the Government in the validation and operationalization of Chad's new National Social Protection Strategy, together with strengthening national and subnational coordination platforms. This includes efforts towards enhanced collaboration between the National Institute of Statistics and Economic and Demographic Studies (*Institut national de la statistique, des études économiques et démographiques* – INSEED), the Food Security and Early Warning Information System (*Système d'information sur la sécurité alimentaire et d'alerte précoce*), the National Meteorological Agency (*Agence nationale de la météorologie*), the Directorate General of Civil Protection (*Direction Générale de la protection civile*), the RSU, and the Ministries of Social Action, Solidarity, and Humanitarian Affairs, of Finance, Budget, Economy, and Planning, and of Women and Early Childhood, to reinforce social protection as a crosscutting priority, including as part of disaster risk management efforts.

Joint Project activities also support the design of a national safety net programme with shock-response elements and the expansion of the RSU. Delivery, payment, and monitoring mechanisms across the wider social protection system are also supported, including through capacity strengthening initiatives with line ministries as part of their design, implementation, monitoring, and coordination activities of social assistance programmes.

A financing mechanism to identify and mobilize complementary funding for social protection is another key priority of the Joint Project. The Joint Project works with the Government on fiscal space analyses to build an investment case for social protection in Chad, including as part of climate risk response mechanisms.

Moreover, alongside other coordination and capacity development activities, the Joint Project supports national and local actors to plan, design, and implement policies and strategies that respond to Chad's need for early actions in the face of recurrent climate shocks. The evidence generated around early warnings and emergency preparedness stands to enable a rapid scale up of shock-responsive social protection in the country.

Mali

Using a twin-track approach, the Joint Project supports nutrition-sensitive cash transfers – both regular and shock-responsive transfers – to the poorest and most vulnerable households to help strengthen their resilience to multiple shocks and to promote investments in their human capital. Households with children under 2 and pregnant and breastfeeding women also receive a supplemental top-up support to help bridge existing gaps in securing nutritious diets.

The Government has also announced the political commitment to adopt a national social safety net programme, though there is currently no permanent programme in place. The Joint Project aims to facilitate a bridge with the future national programme, promoting nutrition-sensitive cash transfers for the poorest and most vulnerable households.

Building on the positive experience with the Community Nutrition Support Groups (GSAN) and the *Mama Yeleen* community outreach leaders to improve access to healthcare, nutritious foods, optimal feeding practices, clean water, and sanitation facilities to tackle malnutrition and reduce child mortality, the Joint Project leverages the cash transfer component to optimize the intersectionality of social protection and enhanced access to social services. Other complementary measures include social and behaviour change (SBC) activities focused on nutrition, aimed particularly at increasing the impact of nutrition-sensitive cash.



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Table 5. Cash transfer delivery in Mali (Phase 2)

	Cash transfers for households with children under 2 and/or pregnant & breastfeeding women	Regular cash transfers for poor and vulnerable households	Nutrition top-ups for households with children under 2 and/or pregnant & breastfeeding women ¹³
Transfer modality	Track 1	Track 2	Track 2
Lead agency	UNICEF	WFP	WFP
Number of beneficiaries (HH)	4,000	2,246	4,663 children under 2 2,332 pregnant & breastfeeding women
Total transfer value per household (per year/round)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000)	<u>Children under 2</u> US\$ 90 (XOF 54,000) <u>Pregnant & breastfeeding women</u> US\$ 115 (XOF 69,000)
Total transfer value per household (2024-26)	US\$ 900 (XOF 540,000) ¹⁴	US\$ 900 (XOF 540,000)	<u>Children under 2</u> US\$ 360 (XOF 216,000) <u>Pregnant & breastfeeding women</u> US\$ 460 (XOF 276,000)

Joint Project cash transfer support aims to provide a model and lay a foundation for a future permanent and nationally owned safety net programme in Mali, and to ensure the institutionalization of social protection through broader support to policy, programming, coordination, and advocacy efforts, together with the World Bank.

The cash transfer component leverages capacities and delivery systems developed by the former national safety net programme – Jigisemejiri – which will form the basis of operational protocols for a new national safety net programme. The Joint Project aims to support the Government to strengthen and transfer these existing capacities within the National Department of Social Protection and the Solidarity Economy (*Direction nationale de la protection sociale et de l'économie solidaire* – DNPSES) for a successful transition to a new flagship social protection programme.

The Joint Project also provides policy guidance to ensure that the new social safety net programme figures prominently in the revised National Social Protection Policy, and endeavors to ensure it is gender-, child-, and nutrition-sensitive, responsive to shocks, and inclusive of the needs of marginalized populations.

In line with the new Policy, the Joint Project supports the operationalization of coordination platforms and the continued expansion of the RSU (through on-demand and at-scale census registration), including through the establishment of partnerships with civil society organizations and community-level actors.

The strengthening of social protection delivery mechanisms is also foreseen, including through monitoring and evaluation support to help leverage digital solutions for the delivery of cash transfers.

Mauritania

The Joint Project supports the expansion of coverage, adequacy, and comprehensiveness of social assistance programmes in Mauritania. Leveraging the twin-track approach, it supports the implementation of El Maouna (the safety net programme for the lean season) and Tekavoul (the regular social cash transfer programme), by providing cash transfers and malnutrition prevention top-up payments to both national programmes. This seeks to facilitate the access to nutritious diets for recipient households with children between 6 and 23 months of age and pregnant and breastfeeding women. The Joint

¹³ Top-up payments for children under 2 and for pregnant and breastfeeding women take place for five months every project implementation year. The yearly top-up benefit amounts to US\$90 (XOF 54,000) for children under 2 and US\$115 (XOF 69,000) for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Depending on the level and recurrence of need, some beneficiary children and women may be the same ones across project implementation years.

¹⁴ Quarterly payments equivalent to US\$25 (XOF 15,000) per month, over a 36-month period, for both Track 1 and Track 2 transfers.

Project also aims to enhance safety net coverage of households with members with a disability, including supporting their progressive integration into Tekavoul.

To complement and reinforce the above measures, the Joint Project provides a range of complementary measures to maximize the impact of cash transfers on improved food security and nutrition outcomes, enhanced child protection,

and support for women's empowerment. SBC activities before, during, and following the delivery of cash transfers aim to have a positive impact on nutrition and other family practices as well as access to basic services, such as for education, health, water, sanitation, and hygiene, and child protection. This is done in collaboration with the Tekavoul safety net programme and its social promotion platforms.

Table 6. Cash transfer delivery in Mauritania (Phase 2)

	Cash transfers to HHs living in extreme poverty & with children with disabilities ¹⁵	Cash transfer top-up to HHs in extreme poverty & with members with disabilities ¹⁶	Cash transfer top-up to HHs with children under 2 ¹⁷	Lean season response cash transfers ¹⁸	Nutrition-sensitive cash transfers ¹⁹
Transfer modality	Track 1	Track 1	Track 1	Track 1 & 2	Track 1 & 2
Lead agency	UNICEF	UNICEF	UNICEF	WFP	WFP
Number of beneficiaries (HH)	3,000	4,000	2,000	4,300	1,032 children and pregnant & breastfeeding women
Total transfer value per household (per year/round)	US\$ 540 (MRU 21,600)	US\$ 292.50 (MRU 11,700)	US\$ 292.50 (MRU 11,700)	US\$ 300 (MRU 12,000)	US\$ 65 (MRU 2,600)
Total transfer value per household	US\$ 540 (MRU 21,600)	US\$ 292.50 (MRU 11,700)	US\$ 292.50 (MRU 11,700)	US\$ 900 (MRU 36,000)	US\$ 195 (MRU 7,800)

Efforts focus on working with the Government to expand the coverage of existing safety net programmes (El Maouina and Tekavoul) and enhance their ability to target beneficiaries in a more inclusive and timely fashion, especially ahead of, and during, shocks and crises. Programme design support, in turn, will facilitate the integration of different programmes and services to ensure more nutrition-sensitive approaches.

Moreover, the Joint Project builds on ongoing support to the national social protection system,

including support for expansion and update of the Social Registry, the coordination of food security and nutrition crisis response, and the identification and operationalization of the lean season financing mechanism, the National Fund for Food and Nutrition Crisis Response (*Fond national de réponse aux crises alimentaires et nutritionnelles* – FNRCAN).

Advocacy and policy guidance efforts accompany policymakers in discussions towards a national social protection law and the institutionalization of key programmes. To this end, the Joint Project

¹⁵ Quarterly payments equivalent to US\$ 30 (MRU 1,200) per month, for a period of 18 months.

¹⁶ Quarterly payments equivalent to US\$ 16.50 (MRU 650) per month, for a period of 18 months.

¹⁷ Quarterly payments equivalent to US\$ 16.50 (MRU 650) per month, for a period of 18 months.

¹⁸ Monthly payments of US\$ 12.50 (MRU 500) for 4 months (lean season) per year, over a period of 36 months. Amounts are calculated per person, with an average household having six members (US \$75 (MRU 3,000) per month or US\$ 300 (MRU 12,000) per lean season).

¹⁹ Monthly top-up payment of US\$16.25 (MRU 650) for 4 months (lean season) per year, over a period of 36 months. Top-up payments are paid on a per person basis, so the amount per household may be higher.

supports the implementation of the new National Social Protection Strategy and of the Strategy for the Inclusion and the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the work of the National Food and Nutritional Crisis Prevention and Response Mechanism (DCAN), and the mandate of the Social Protection Working Group.

The Joint Project further works with the General Delegation for National Solidarity and the Fight against Exclusion (Taazour), the Commission for Food Security (*Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire* – CSA), the Social Registry, and the Ministries of Social Affairs, Childhood, and Family and of Environment and Sustainable Development to improve payment and monitoring systems, community feedback and grievance redress mechanisms, and enhance the Social Registry as the principal tool through which to select beneficiaries through a lens of multidimensional vulnerability. This includes support towards ensuring the Social Registry's interoperability with other information systems, especially to ensure the inclusion of and access for persons with disabilities.

Linked to these inter-institutional support efforts is the support to the integration of refugees into the Social Registry to ensure their access to social protection services and enhance social cohesion amidst rising needs among forcibly displaced populations and their host communities. Costing analyses and the identification of additional funding sources for social protection, including as part of the FNRCAN, are also envisioned.

Niger

The Joint Project works with the Government in laying the foundations for a permanent national social safety net programme with shock-response components and pathways for economic inclusion.

Considering the current context and institutional capacities, all Joint Project-supported cash transfers are being channelled through Track 2 – with a gradual shift towards Track 1 anticipated, when capacity and risk management conditions ameliorate.

The Joint Project supports four components of what is envisaged would become a future permanent safety net programme: (i) regular cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households over a 48-month cycle, (ii) shock-responsive cash transfers to support people facing the impact of weather extremes, such as droughts and floods, in the form of top-up benefits of regular cash transfer support (vertical expansion), (iii) shock-responsive cash transfers as a horizontal expansion of coverage to reach newly impacted households, and (iv) economic inclusion measures through which seed capital support is provided to support income-generating activities.

As part of this fourth component, a series of complementary measures include training programmes, the organization of beneficiaries in saving groups, and guidance to facilitate income-generating activities.



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Table 7. Cash transfer delivery in Niger (Phase 2)

	Regular cash transfers to vulnerable households ²⁰	Regular cash transfers to vulnerable households	Economic inclusion package ²¹	Economic inclusion package	Shock-responsive cash transfers ²²	Shock-responsive cash transfers
Transfer modality ²³	Track 2	Track 2	Track 2	Track 2	Track 2	Track 2
Lead agency	UNICEF	WFP	UNICEF	WFP	UNICEF	WFP
Number of beneficiaries (HH)	3,000	2,000	800	500	1,000	500
Total transfer value per household (per year/round)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000) US\$ 167 (XOF 100,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000) US\$ 167 (XOF 100,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000)
Total transfer value per household	US\$ 900 (XOF 540,000)	US\$ 1,200 (XOF 720,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000) US\$ 167 (XOF 100,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000) US\$ 167 (XOF 100,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000)	US\$ 300 (XOF 180,000)

In terms of systems strengthening, the Joint Project aims to build consensus between national leadership and other actors around the need for a coherent national social protection system that addresses current low levels of coverage and works towards enhanced levels of inclusion and addressing fragmentation and heterogeneity across programmes. The Joint Project also accompanies the Government in the review process of the National Social Protection Policy, engaging in strategic advocacy to broaden the political and social dialogue on social protection.

Continued support to the expansion of the RSU and improved planning, coordination, programme design, delivery, and data and information systems seeks to help Niger's social protection system be better equipped to reach more people in need and improve its agility in responding to different shocks.

Overall, the Joint Project supports the Government in strengthening coherence, convergence and complementarities of the social protection sector through a clear institutional anchorage of social protection. To this end, the Joint Project accompanies the process towards enhanced articulation of steering committees and technical working groups, in addition to tailored capacity strengthening support to the Ministry of Population, Social Action, and National Solidarity and the Ministry of Public Function, Work, and Employment, as well as to the National Mechanism for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises (DNPGCA).

Through an enhanced articulation between existing programmes, multi-partner technical working groups, inter-ministerial steering committees, and cash transfers working groups, the Joint Project seeks to support the Government in strengthening inclusiveness, coherence,

²⁰ Quarterly payments equivalent to US\$ 25 (XOF 15,000) per month, over a period of 36 months, for all Track 2 transfers.

²¹ Quarterly payments equivalent to US\$25 (XOF 15,000) per month, over a period of 12 months, in addition to a one-time lump sum of US\$ 167 (XOF 100,000), for all Track 2 transfers. The 1,300 households receiving the economic inclusion package are selected from among the 5,000 households receiving regular cash transfers.

²² Total transfer value per 12-month period, after which a new 12-month coverage period begins but with new targeting. Those meeting the targeting criteria may continue to receive this benefit across multiple 12-month coverage periods. This modality applies to both UNICEF and WFP-supported Track 2 shock-responsive cash transfers. Depending on needs each year, it may be different households and individuals receiving this benefit across project implementation years.

²³ All transfers channeled through Track 2, with a gradual shift towards Track 1.

convergence, and complementarity of different interventions. This includes a suite of capacity strengthening support efforts with the DNP-GCA. In addition, the identification and operationalization for a financing mechanism for social protection, given the country's constrained fiscal space, is supported.

Regional

The Joint Project's regional outcome seeks to strengthen regional partnerships for evidence-informed advocacy and capacity building initiatives to support the scale up of shock-and gender-responsive and nutrition- and child-sensitive social protection in the Sahel.

The ongoing partnership between UNICEF, WFP, and the World Bank on social protection in the Sahel, including aligning Joint Project interventions and evidence generation more closely with that of that of the Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme (SASPP), will enable more coherent support to governments by the three organizations. Together, they identify opportunities to provide evidence-based support to social protection systems in fragile contexts, the results of which can be relevant to the Sahel region and beyond.

Moreover, UNICEF, WFP and the World Bank engage in joint analyses and diagnostics on the state of adaptive social protection in the region, development and disseminate standards for the main pillars and instruments of ASP, and conduct research and advocacy to build the case for increased social protection investments in the region.

The research, analysis, and documentation agenda across the five countries includes (i) research on social protection and social cohesion, (ii) documentation of best practices in using the twin-track approach in different contexts, (iii) a cross-country gender assessment to gauge the gender-responsiveness of social protection systems, and (iv) a cross-country conflict analysis to inform social protection programming in contexts of fragility, conflict, and violence.



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The partnership also engages in advocacy for advancing the social protection agenda through key regional platforms, such as the Alliance Sahel, to help coordinate partners and build investment cases of social protection as a flagship investment. What's more, community engagement and social mobilization efforts help create grassroots demand for social protection as a human right and social equity imperative.

Capacity development activities include the development of materials on gender-responsive social protection in collaboration with the SPIAC-B Gender Working Group, and leveraging the regional TRANSFORM social protection training platform to deliver an inter-agency approved curriculum for capacity and leadership development for practitioners across national social protection systems.

