



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



FAO'S WORK ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

Contributing to zero hunger,
poverty reduction and
resilience in rural areas

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MAURITANIA

A woman enrolled in FAO's productive transfers/CASH+ programme in Mbout, Mauritania. A few months after the distributions, more than half of the beneficiaries reported that at least one of the goats received had given birth.
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**SOCIAL
PROTECTION
IS A MAJOR
ELEMENT IN
FAO'S EFFORTS
TO REDUCE
RURAL POVERTY**

INTRODUCTION

**SOCIAL
PROTECTION
REPRESENTS A
WAY TO ADDRESS
VULNERABILITY
AND OFFERS
PEOPLE A
PATHWAY TO
RESILIENCE AND
GREATER
ECONOMIC
OPPORTUNITY**

Despite progress in recent decades, 736 million people worldwide still live in extreme poverty. Most are in rural areas, possessing few or no assets and are dependent at least in part on agriculture and the use of natural resources for their livelihoods.

PHILIPPINES

The Garredos are a farming family that has received support from FAO's rice seed and fertilizer distribution programme and will be able to harvest by mid-May. ©FAO/L.Liwanag.

For the rural poor, every day represents a struggle. Their access to social and financial services, infrastructure, markets, and new productive technologies or practices is limited, which in turn impedes their ability to build more efficient, sustainable and productive livelihoods for themselves and their families.

They are also highly vulnerable to social economic, climatic- and

conflict-related risks and shocks: almost 60 percent of the extreme poor live in fragile situations where climate variability and/or conflict erode their livelihoods. Shocks can have devastating impacts, sometimes forcing people into negative coping strategies such as the sale of productive assets, excessive deforestation, overfishing, or impacting the quality of children's diets.





This in turn exacerbates the cycle of food insecurity and poverty. Women and girls face additional challenges stemming from gender-related inequalities.

Social protection represents a way to address vulnerability and offers people a pathway to resilience and greater economic opportunity. It includes a diverse set of policies and programmes that seek to protect people – especially the

poor and marginalized – from poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion. These can range from cash transfers, to cash-for-work programmes, health coverage or school feeding schemes, old-age pensions, job-training or social insurance programmes – to mention a few.

If designed appropriately, social protection initiatives can address many of the barriers poor rural

households face while empowering them to engage in sustainable income-generating opportunities, thereby ensuring access to more and better food, building human capital, generating productive assets, and increasing access to decent work. This is why FAO has positioned social protection as a major element of its efforts to reduce rural poverty, respond to climate change, promote resilient livelihoods, and achieve Zero Hunger.

KEY MESSAGES

Social protection is critical to achieving Zero Hunger and the 2030 Agenda

Under the 2030 Agenda, countries have committed to implementing nationally-appropriate social protection systems and measures for all. Social protection spans the entire Agenda 2030 architecture from poverty eradication to reducing income inequality, to improving access to health, education, water and gender equality as well as increasing economic inclusion.

Its applications in achieving the first and second 2030 sustainable development goals – ending poverty and achieving Zero Hunger – are particularly relevant for FAO. The contribution of social protection to improving consumption is clear – for instance, through the removal of financial and social barriers that limit access to more and better food, education and health services. Moreover, social protection also has an important role to play in building resilient and sustainable rural livelihoods and in achieving FAO's objectives of reducing poverty and making natural resources management more sustainable.

Effective social protection can do this in a number of ways, by: providing access to food; improving diets and nutrition; increasing labour productivity and employability; safeguarding livelihoods and household assets during crises; creating jobs and income-generating activities; helping households better manage risk and cope with shocks; and fostering rural women's economic empowerment.

Social protection is an investment

Social protection has the potential to provide immediate assistance to the 736 million people living in extreme poverty more than 820 million living with hunger. In the form of social assistance to the poorest, it provides the minimum basis of income security to ensure food security and small-scale livelihood activity. In the form of social insurance for the vulnerable, it allows those living in rural areas to manage the inherent risks of agricultural activities.

A broad evidence base generated in recent years has helped allay some of the policy concerns associated with social assistance, including data that show how cash transfers – rather than being a “give-away” – can

generate important social and economic impacts. This has shifted perspectives of social protection, so that it is now widely viewed as a strategic investment that enhances human capital, raises the participants' productive capacity, and strengthens local economies.



GHANA

Thanks to cash transfers, some of the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Programme beneficiaries managed to open little shops in the local markets.
©FAO/Ivan Grifi



Social protection is affordable

A number of programmes have demonstrated not only that social protection can have significant impacts on poverty, but also that

even low-income countries can afford to provide social protection to their citizens, if they make a committed choice to doing so. There are many examples of success. A few include Colombia's Mas Familias en Accion y la Estrategia Unidos, South Africa's

social protection system, Kenya's National Social Protection System, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme in the Philippines, Fome Zero in Brazil, India's Public Distribution System and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. ►

KEY MESSAGES

Large numbers of rural people still do not have adequate access to social protection

As many as four billion people do not have access to any social benefits. In particular, smallholder agriculturalists, fishers, and forest-reliant families face significant obstacles when it comes to accessing social protection. Women face particular challenges in this regard: for instance, in most countries where data are available, women are consistently far less likely to receive an old-age pension than men are.

Despite significant progress, countries across all regions continue to encounter difficulties as they work to expand and enhance the impact of social protection programmes – especially in rural areas. A thriving agriculture sector requires innovative technological practices, vibrant markets and investment. But this is not enough. Family farmers, fishers and forest-dependent communities must also be able to access these resources and services.



COLOMBIA

Collective work on fields of yam by members of "Apacambi" association supported by FAO and UN. Over 250 000 people were killed and millions displaced during Colombia's five decades of armed conflict.
©Patrick Zachmann/Magnum Photos



Adequate access to social protection is one of the most effective ways to address market failures and enable households to invest in innovative, sustainable income-generating opportunities. Despite its importance and proven impact, many rural people engaged in the agriculture sector continue to face specific barriers when attempting to access social security guarantees. It is critical to understand these barriers and identify mechanisms to ensure effective, as well as adequate, coverage to respond to the specific needs and vulnerabilities of those in the rural sector.

Social protection builds resilience

Some 60 percent of the world's extreme poor live in fragile situations where climate variability and/or conflict erode their livelihoods. Driven by conflict, climate-related shocks, natural disasters and economic downturns, humanitarian needs have been on the increase for years. Strong, well-functioning risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection can make significant contributions to preventing and responding to crises, mitigating

these costs. This is why in recent years the humanitarian and development community have recognized that social protection should also be a core strategy for increasing resilience and preventing crises.

Social protection must be embedded into broader development policies

Social protection is a key strategy to promote the economic inclusion of the poorest within the on-going processes of structural, rural and agriculture transformation. This requires policymakers and programme implementers to continue to explore effective ways of complementing social protection with other measures. Doing so requires improved coordination and coherence across a broad range of sectors and policy areas, especially in agriculture, natural resources management, education and public health. Above all, promoting economic inclusion and accelerating progress on SDGs 1 and 2 in rural areas requires tackling head-on the key challenges faced by rural families, using integrated approaches that address their needs.

AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

Demand for FAO's technical advisory services, knowledge products and impact evaluations related to social protection programmes in the realms of food security, nutrition, agriculture, climate adaptation, gender and migration has expanded significantly in the last ten years.

Currently, FAO is engaged with 42 governments spanning all regions to advance the social protection agenda, with a focus on three main tracks: i) expanding coverage; ii) helping programmes shift from providing basic protection to acting as engines for increased economic inclusion; and iii) harnessing the power of social protection to increase resilience.

MAKING THE CASE

Access to social protection is a fundamental right, according to the 1948 Universal Declaration of

ARMENIA

First graders having lunch in the canteen of a FAO beneficiary school of a food security and nutrition project.
©FAO/Karen Minasyan



Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), and other major UN human rights instruments.

However, there is also a strong social and economic rationale for supporting the expansion of social protection, as indicated by the solid base of rigorous evidence on the impact of social protection across sectors developed by FAO's From Protection to Production Project (PtoP). Benefits include the development of human capital



supporting food and nutrition security, gains in terms of productive capacity, employability, and risk-management capacity, as well as its multiplier effects on local economic development.

FAO uses a mixed method approach to its research, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis. This creates a more complete understanding of the benefits yielded through social protection, expanding the evidence base regarding its economic and productive

impacts and the multiplier effects it creates in the local economy. This knowledge has informed policy dialogues at country level and makes the case for increased investment in social protection.

Research priorities

- Building the investment and business case for the scale-up and expansion of social protection, showing its food security, nutrition and economic impacts.
- Developing evidence on the added value of integrated

approaches, including linking social protection and agriculture programmes, CASH+, Home-grown School Feeding programmes and other approaches.

- Assessing the impact of different pathways towards economic inclusion at territorial level.
- Examining how social protection can support climate adaptation.
- Evaluating cash-based interventions in fragile contexts and enhancing operational

AN AGENDA FOR CHANGE

knowledge on the design of shock-responsive social protection systems.

- Improving gender-sensitive social protection, including the impact of rural women's economic empowerment.
- Better understanding the role of social protection to address migration-related issues (at origin, transit and destination).
- Exploring how social protection can contribute to more inclusive food systems.

Partnering with countries

FAO supports governments to assess the barriers to accessing social protection, helps identify gaps in meeting the social protection needs of the rural poor, supports the development of farmers' registries, and provides costed scenarios and economic impact analyses to assist policymakers.

Around the globe, FAO-generated evidence is informing the design and implementation of social protection policies and programmes aimed at improving rural poor families' living conditions, food security and their potential to contribute to the economic growth of countries. This evidence allowed FAO to play a critical role in national policy dialogues, acting as a neutral

SOUTH SUDAN

FAO and WFP Representatives meet at the office of NGO ACTED in the Protection of Civilians site in Juba, South Sudan for a two-day joint mission to assess the humanitarian situation in the country.
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partner while supporting the scale up of programmes.

Assembling evidence

Generating solid evidence: Undertaking impact evaluations

The From Protection to Production Project (PtoP), is FAO's core contribution to the Transfer Project, is a collaborative

effort between FAO, UNICEF and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill that is documenting the impact of large-scale national cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa in order to strengthen the case for social protection as an investment, not just a cost, while addressing misperceptions



FROM PROTECTION TO PRODUCTION PROJECT ALLOWED FAO TO POSITION ITSELF AS A CRITICAL ACTOR IN SOCIAL PROTECTION

around dependency and labour disincentives amongst others. FAO supports countries across all regions in strengthening the evidence base on the economic impacts of social protection, as well as the added impacts of combining social protection with nutrition, economic and climate adaptation interventions.

Working for adequate social protection programmes

FAO works to enhance the visibility of those living in rural areas and the need for adequate and effective coverage that better addresses the reality of multiple concurrent vulnerabilities. Rural workers face a myriad of risks in both development and fragile contexts.

FROM PROTECTION TO INCLUSION

FAO is working to draw attention to how the wider economic impacts of social protection on productivity, poverty reduction and resilience can be amplified and harnessed as an engine for economic and productive inclusion.

By increasing small-scale farmers', fishers' and foresters' capacity to invest in productive activities and strengthen their ability to manage risk, social protection helps them better withstand shocks and stresses placing them in a better position to gradually move from subsistence livelihoods to higher levels of sustainable productivity.

Accordingly, FAO works with countries to build social protection systems that are not only robust but are holistic in scope and seek to establish synergies between social protection, food security and nutrition, disaster risk management and agricultural policies. The aim is to maximize the impact of social protection on rural transformation.

FAO supports the development of roadmaps and context-specific pathways for economic inclusion, building evidence on the best strategies, while supporting the development of comprehensive strategies for the progressive integration of social protection

participation into broader rural development and economic policies and programmes that can be sustained and scaled up over time.

Ultimately, social protection is a key complement to FAO's broader programme of work in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, climate change and food security and nutrition, increasing its relevance and impact on SDGs 1 and 2.

PUTTING NUTRITION FRONT-AND-CENTRE

A core component of FAO's inclusion strategy is ensuring enhanced food and nutrition security. Nutrition-sensitive social protection combines social protection with nutrition-sensitive agriculture and nutrition education to improve households' access to food, intra-household distribution, and eating habits.

In recent years, home-grown school feeding programmes have been increasingly seen as an opportunity to improve the livelihoods of

GUATEMALA

More than an investment in increased food and nutrition security for elementary-level school children and capacities of small-scale fisheries, the school-feeding law (approved in September 2017) represents a long-term social protection commitment by the Guatemalan government to vulnerable segments of the population.
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NOOR for FAO





FAO WORKS WITH COUNTRIES TO BUILD SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS THAT ARE NOT ONLY ROBUST BUT ARE HOLISTIC IN SCOPE

smallholder farmers and local communities while promoting links and shared benefits between nutrition, agriculture and social protection programmes.

For instance, connecting vulnerable farmers with opportunities to sell their produce to school feeding programmes, in combination with predictable and timely cash transfers, can give them a chance to unlock economic opportunities and establish new business partnerships. Similarly, combining social assistance with community

and school-based nutrition education helps households improve their access to healthier and more diverse diets.

ECONOMIC INCLUSION: FAO'S TOOL KIT

Supporting policy coherence
Agriculture and social protection are fundamentally linked in the context of rural livelihoods in Africa. When embedded within a broader rural development framework, stronger coherence between agriculture and social protection interventions can

FROM PROTECTION TO INCLUSION

assist in improving the welfare of poor small family farms by facilitating productive inclusion, improving risk-management capacities, and increasing agricultural productivity. By drawing from concrete country experiences FAO has developed a framework for action, presenting the benefits of bringing together agriculture and social protection and identifying options for doing this at policy and programming levels.

Developing diagnostic methods

In the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture and forestry sectors, social protection together with sector-specific policies and programmes can improve production, natural resources management, strengthen livelihoods, develop value chains, and strengthen risk management and resilience. In recognition of this, FAO has developed a framework for action and a diagnostic tool to promote coordination between social protection and agriculture programmes, as well as adapting said tool to fisheries and forestry policies and programmes.

FAO leads the development of the Food Security and Nutrition Inter-Agency Social Protection

Assessment Tool on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN-ISPA), which aims at strengthening social assistance instruments and programmes to ensure greater positive impact on FSN at country level while addressing cross-cutting issues on gender, nutrition and governance. The tool was successfully implemented in Cambodia, Palestine and Paraguay, by FAO and partners. In Palestine, the results of the ISPA-FSN tool are now being used to develop a National Investment Plan for Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture.

Generating knowledge

FAO is working to support governments in the design of specific roadmaps from social protection to economic inclusion. This includes taking into account the economic impacts of social protection programmes, the role of complementary activities, as well as the specific strategies to effectively and progressively insert the poorest into broader rural development and economic processes. These strategies are based on the characteristics of territories, FAO's experience across technical areas, and different pathways to move out of poverty and enhance resilience.

**SOCIAL
PROTECTION
SUPPORTS THE
TRANSITION
TO AND
MAINTENANCE
OF SUSTAINABLE
LIVELIHOODS**

ENHANCING RESILIENCE

Recent years have seen an increasing burden of conflict, natural disasters and economic crises undermine global progress in fighting poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition.

Up to 80 percent of the people most affected by such threats are rural families who depend on agriculture as their primary source of food and income.

While the humanitarian community has had successes in preventing and mitigating the impact of food crises on rural livelihoods, too frequently the socio-economic and root causes remain unaddressed. But now a new approach has emerged, one that emphasizes reducing risks ahead of time and supporting development that enhances resilience to shocks and enables swifter, more sustainable recovery.

Here, too, social protection has a key role to play. A twin-track

social protection approach can both protect people's basic welfare during shocks and boost their capacities to prepare for and weather future crises. Properly designed, social protection programmes can not only help address structural causes of chronic poverty and vulnerability but can take on some of the humanitarian caseload during times of crisis.

PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES

When it comes to the sustainable management and use of natural resources, poverty can exacerbate vulnerability in a number of ways.

Forest-dependent and fisheries communities are particularly vulnerable to ecological degradation and climate change and are exposed to environmental risks and shocks. Furthermore, their income is always unstable, and they experience high levels of informality – and thus exclusion – from key labour and protection legislation.

Social protection schemes can provide an alternative to this vicious cycle, giving small-scale farmers, fishers and forest-dependent communities more, and more sustainable, livelihood options. Moreover, they

can support addressing the barriers that prevent compliance with natural resource management measures, such as closed seasons in the case of fisheries, as well as allow them to protect their assets in case of damage and loss.

THE POWER OF CASH

FAO's Cash+ approach in humanitarian contexts combines financial payments with the provision of productive inputs like seeds, giving people in need a way to meet immediate needs and resume or upscale household food production. Assistance is tailored to the specifics of beneficiaries' livelihoods and may include improved crop and vegetable seeds, planting materials, fertilizers, gardening equipment, fishing gear, and animal vaccines or feed. Technical training in best practices is often provided to complement these packages.

The Cash+ approach can consist of standalone programmes providing different types of support, or integrated approaches, where social protection programmes are linked with interventions in agricultural development or climate change adaptation. Cash+ programmes can be designed to achieve specific objectives, such

ENHANCING RESILIENCE

as making agriculture more nutrition-sensitive, or promoting the uptake of disaster risk management practices, including climate-smart agriculture.

ADDRESSING CLIMATE RISKS

Climate change has both direct and indirect effects on agricultural productivity and disproportionately affects small-scale food producers. FAO and its partners have contributed to the development of new technologies and innovative practices to reduce risk and enhance the efficiency and sustainability of farming, fishing and forestry. However, barriers associated with gender discrimination, costs, time requirements, access to credit, knowledge and information continue to hinder their wider use, exacerbating the cycle of exclusion and poverty.

In fragile contexts, access to predictable and sizeable transfers have proved effective in mitigating the negative food security impact of climate-related shocks such as El Niño/La Niña events. Over the longer term, social protection programmes can enhance financial and human capacity for investing in new agricultural technologies that contribute to prevent and mitigate the risks associated with climate variability,

MALAWI

Social protection enhances the ability of families to adapt to climate change.
©FAO/Luca Sola

and thus enhance disaster risk and sustainable natural resource management.

FAO works to strengthen the ties between social protection and climate risk management. This includes generating new knowledge on its role in climate risk management, addressing vulnerability, avoiding the use of negative coping strategies, and promoting the uptake of climate-resilient livelihood strategies.

SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR RESILIENCE: FAO'S TOOLKIT

Early Warning, Early Action

Tapping into the power of existing early-warning forecasting systems, FAO's Early Warning, Early Action initiative allows the Organization to mount proactive interventions before hazards like droughts or heavy rains turn into disasters. Doing so protects livelihoods from shocks, and acts as a safeguard for longer-term development progress. One way to deliver early action is through existing social protection





SOCIAL PROTECTION SHOULD BE A CORE STRATEGY FOR INCREASING RESILIENCE AND PREVENTING CRISES

systems and working to promote stronger linkages between social protection and early warning information systems.

Cash+ interventions and livelihood support

When crises hit, FAO Cash+ responses and livelihood support activities give affected households the capacity to stay on their feet and on their land, avoid fire sales of assets, feed themselves, and recommence household food production.

New internal guidelines help make sure that risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection is fully incorporated into FAO emergency and resilience programming.

Defining strategies

Today, the humanitarian system is under unprecedented strain. FAO's Position Paper on Social Protection and Resilience (see Publications section) examines how existing social protection programmes can be utilized in protracted crises and in fragile and humanitarian contexts, and how FAO can add value in this regard.

Generating new knowledge

FAO has developed a series of framing papers and guidance material on the links between poverty and climate change, and more specifically on how social protection programmes can be leveraged to: i) reduce vulnerability to climate risk and the adoption of negative coping strategies; ii) build resilient livelihoods; iii) promote the uptake of climate-smart agriculture; and iv) support inclusive and effective disaster response. FAO is also working in a number of countries to support the design of social protection interventions, enhance cross-sectoral coordination, and generate country-specific evidence.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Social protection is especially relevant in efforts to reach the world's most highly vulnerable populations.

Women, for example, make up about 45 percent of the global agricultural labour force but – compared to men – generally have far less access to credit, productive resources, agricultural extension systems and social protection services. Gender inequalities mean that rural women are disproportionately affected by poverty, malnutrition and social exclusion.

Understanding the impacts of cash transfers and public works programmes on rural women's economic empowerment – and the transformative role these can play in the household, marketplace, and community – is key to shaping and delivering programmes that can truly make a difference in the lives of women. Research, knowledge generation and capacity development are important aspects of the work FAO carries out in gender-sensitive social protection.

FAO has for years been actively raising awareness about the positive impacts of gender-sensitive social protection on food security, nutrition, and economic productivity. FAO builds the capacity of social protection practitioners in designing and implementing gender-sensitive programmes, and by the wide dissemination of FAO-led research and programme and project evaluations. Information and data collected also inform FAO-developed webinars, global policy dialogues, technical papers, and good practice guidelines.

GENDER-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION: FAO'S TOOLKIT

FAO has assembled a comprehensive toolkit to support social protection practitioners in designing, delivering, monitoring and evaluating gender-sensitive social protection programmes in rural areas.

The *FAO Technical Guidance Toolkit* includes a number of tools for systematically applying a gender lens to social protection programmes targeting rural populations, specifically cash transfer and public works programmes. It includes concrete guidance and recommendations on how to achieve this throughout all stages of the programme cycle.

One key recommendation is that programmes should – beyond increasing direct access to cash – include measures that empower women economically and socially. Another recommendation relates to public works programmes and if they offer women flexible work arrangements, work sites that are appropriately located, and access to childcare. The Toolkit also offers guidance on how gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation can help implementers draw lessons learned out of programme implementation and use that insight to improve effectiveness and avoid unintended negative outcomes for programme participants.

EFFECTIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION FOSTERS RURAL WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

MAKING MIGRATION A CHOICE

Migrants, refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) represent particularly vulnerable population groups who often find themselves marginalized.

Migration from, to and between rural areas – whether within a country or across borders – constitutes a large portion of global migration flows. Rural migration is closely linked with agriculture and rural development, including the vulnerabilities and poverty traps that social protection can help address.

Of course, many migrants – whether IDPs or refugees – move because they have no choice. Whether at the origin, in transit or at their final destination, social protection services can be critical for meeting the needs of these most vulnerable of populations, harnessing opportunities for migrants to contribute to economic development, helping them integrate socially and economically, while supporting host communities. A large number of refugees – at least 30 percent at the global level and more than 80 percent in sub-Saharan Africa – are found in rural areas of their host countries. This represents an additional reason for the need to build up social protection

systems, beyond addressing pre-existing shortcomings.

WORK PRIORITIES

- Ensuring better access to social protection for IDPs and international migrants in rural areas, as well as to rural communities in source areas.
- Strengthening coherence between social protection and rural development initiatives to promote stronger, more sustainable rural livelihoods, both in places that are a source of migration and host countries and communities.
- Advocating for greater socio-economic inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and irregular migrants in rural areas of destination and transit and leveraging social protection systems to create livelihood opportunities and foster social cohesion.
- Encouraging the establishment of shock-responsive social protection systems, that can help address the drivers and impacts of forced displacement of vulnerable rural populations.

ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR MIGRANTS CAN ENHANCE THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL COHESION

In addition to FAO's efforts to advance this agenda in a number of international fora and policy dialogues, social protection features prominently in a number of field projects responding to issues of migration and forced displacement such as in Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Palestine, Somalia, Turkey and Uganda.

BUILDING CAPACITY

SOUTH–SOUTH COOPERATION IS A POTENT MECHANISM THAT FAO TAPS INTO TO SHARE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE IN EXPANDING ADEQUATE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN RURAL AREAS

At the regional, country, and local level, FAO engages closely with rural organizations and other institutions to develop their capacities in enhancing access to social protection and economic opportunities.

Globally, FAO is working on multiple tracks to enhance the capacity of governments, development and humanitarian organizations, and others, to design and implement social protection initiatives linked to broader agricultural, resilience, food and nutrition security, and rural development strategies. Much of this work is undertaken in partnership.

Examples include: an annual course on “Linking Social Protection with Agriculture and Food Security” offered in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO); training and other knowledge sessions on evidence collection and evaluation, undertaken with the United Nations University's Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology; an online FAO course on evaluation features as part of the Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences/Master of Science

in Analysis and Design of Social Protection Systems programme; and an FAO–Red Cross Climate Centre interactive training on social protection policies and disaster risk reduction/climate change adaptation.

South–South Cooperation is another potent mechanism that FAO taps into to share experiences and knowledge on best practices in expanding adequate social protection in rural areas. When it comes to social protection, many developing countries possess similar sociocultural contexts and face similar challenges in implementation. Governments with experience in addressing such challenges – even in contexts of resource scarcity – have a lot to offer other governments eyeing an expansion of social protection services in rural areas. FAO has facilitated key exchanges on social protection, particularly in Africa, contributing to enhance the programmatic capacity at country level.

SCALING UP

Social protection is an investment, not a cost. Most countries, even the poorest, can afford it.

Social protection offers benefits that span multiple dimensions and is much more than a last-resort safety net. Rather, it can help to spark rural revitalization, give people a stepping-stone out of poverty, and support sustainable economic growth.

The transformative impacts of social protection, when integrated into broader rural development strategies, is evidenced in country-level evaluations. The World Bank, for instance, estimates that scaling up social-protection schemes can shrink the number of people living below the poverty line by 45 percent.

In terms of preparing proactively for the risks and impacts associated with stressors like cyclones, drought or agricultural pests, risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection programmes can help reduce vulnerability, mitigate after-effects, and reduce

the financial burden during humanitarian responses.

It is true that social protection on its own cannot move people out of poverty or chronic food insecurity. Yet, it is just as true that – when embedded in multisectoral strategies focused on agricultural development, food and nutrition security, natural resource management and poverty reduction – social protection is a potent force multiplier that can make a major contribution to achieving Zero Hunger and realizing the 2030 Agenda. FAO will continue to work with partners to harness its technical expertise to further social protection goals, while accelerating progress around inclusive rural development.

Much has been done to advance the social protection agenda in recent years. Since 2013, social protection has helped lift 150 million people out of extreme poverty. However, with more than 55 percent of the global population still without any such coverage, more work – and greater impact – is needed to make a bigger difference. FAO is firmly committed to supporting countries in extending and scaling up social protection, to build a future that leaves no one behind.

**SINCE 2013,
SOCIAL PROTECTION
HAS HELPED LIFT
150 MILLION
PEOPLE OUT
OF EXTREME
POVERTY**

PROGRESS IS POSSIBLE

Examples from
FAO's work around
the globe reveal the
potential of social
protection as a
force for progress,
across sectors.

ETHIOPIA

Adapting social protection systems to pastoralist communities

FAO is currently supporting the implementation of the livelihoods component of the Productive Safety Net (PNSP), particularly in the pastoralist communities of the low lands. Moreover, it is also contributing to strengthening the risk-informed and shock-responsive capacity of the Programme.

ZAMBIA

Expanding coverage through research

FAO has been engaging in a variety of ways with the Government of Zambia to develop a strong social protection research agenda to support the expansion of the country's social protection systems. FAO-generated evidence on the impacts of cash

transfers on rural economies and opportunities for linking up agricultural interventions with social programmes have been incorporated into Zambia's flagship Social Cash Transfer Programme.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Linking social protection and economic inclusion

A number of Central American countries have implemented large-scale national social protection programmes in rural areas in recent years, but so far, these have not established well-developed synergies with the agricultural sector. Engaging with governments through the Central American Integration system, FAO helped drive the development of a regional agenda for social protection and productive inclusion that is now guiding strategies in eight countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize and the Dominican Republic.

COLOMBIA

Helping sustain peace

An FAO-led diagnostic of national social protection programmes requested by the Government identified a number of opportunities for

improvement – in particular for linking up initiatives intended to increase agricultural production with those aiming to stimulate employment and improve nutrition. This collaboration continues, as Colombia has placed sustainable rural development at the heart of its efforts to consolidate its recently achieved peace.

ASIA

Strengthening disaster preparedness

FAO and partners are engaging with members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to develop regional and national strategies for disaster-responsive social protection. The ultimate goal is to help vulnerable households living in one of the world's most hazard-prone regions build up their resilience. In four ASEAN Member States – Cambodia, Myanmar, Viet Nam and the Philippines – plans for the implementation of disaster-responsive social protection systems are already underway.

PARAGUAY

Promoting climate resilience

Social protection is at the heart of the Green Climate Fund-supported, FAO-designed



LEBANON

A farmer milking a cow received through an FAO livestock project. Training was also provided to farmers to promote animal health through disease detection and prevention, breeding techniques and good milk handling practices.

©FAO/Kai Wiedenhofer

PROEZA (Poverty, Reforestation, Energy and Climate Change) programme in Paraguay. The initiative seeks to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change in the country while reducing rural poverty, deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions. Through this work, vulnerabilities are being reduced and negative-coping strategies replaced with sustainable livelihoods – including via the use of cash incentives that promote environmentally-friendly agroforestry approaches.

LEBANON

Social protection for farmers and fisherfolk

FAO and the Government of Lebanon are working together to explore options to expand social protection coverage to rural families including fisheries. As a first step, FAO is helping the country establish its first ever farmer registry as a basic tool for agricultural development and the delivery of agricultural services – as well as a means of targeting and delivering social assistance. A pilot phase was successfully concluded and now the initiative is being implemented at scale.

KYRGYZSTAN

Enhancing food and nutrition security

In Kyrgyzstan, FAO is actively engaged in promoting social protection by collaborating with the ILO and other UN agencies, and is piloting a Cash+ model to progressively improve the food security and nutrition outcomes of households through a flexible combination of cash transfers and productive inputs, training, extension services, individual follow-up and nutrition education.

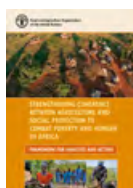
PUBLICATIONS

Examples of FAO's publications on social protection include:



FAO SOCIAL PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

This publication presents the Organization's vision and approach to social protection. FAO recognizes the critical role social protection plays in furthering and accelerating progress around food security and nutrition, agriculture development, rural poverty and resilience building.



STRENGTHENING COHERENCE BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION: Framework for Analysis and Action

To support efforts aimed at combating poverty and hunger, FAO and its partners have developed guidance material for strengthening coherence between agriculture and social protection. Drawing from concrete country experiences, the Framework presents the benefits of bringing together agriculture and social protection and identifies options for doing this at policy and programming levels.



STRENGTHENING COHERENCE BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION: Diagnostic Tool

The Diagnostic Tool assists users in identifying existing linkages between agriculture and social protection interventions in a given country and how to strengthen them. The Tool can also help understand people's experiences and perceptions of the linkages between the two sectors and how these linkages (or lack of them) affect their livelihoods.



FAO POSITION PAPER ON SOCIAL PROTECTION: Supporting livelihoods in protracted crises, fragile and humanitarian contexts

This paper discusses the role of social protection in saving livelihoods while also enhancing the capacity of households to respond, cope and withstand threats and crises. It focuses on social protection's role in protracted crises and fragile and humanitarian contexts, as well as discussing the importance of shock-response systems, even in stable contexts.



SOCIAL PROTECTION, EMERGENCY RESPONSE, RESILIENCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

A new interactive learning tool

This interactive learning tool aims to facilitate learning for national stakeholders and policymakers about the potential benefits and trade-offs in linking social protection, resilience and climate change policies at local, national and global level. The tool captures the essence of real-life complexity simulating struggles and threats faced by smallholder farmers.



TECHNICAL GUIDANCE TOOLKIT ON GENDER-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Toolkit comprises three technical guides and is designed to support social protection and gender policymakers and practitioners to systematically apply a gender lens to reduce gendered social inequalities, rural poverty and hunger.



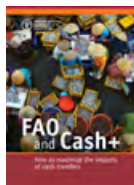
THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN PROTRACTED CRISES – Enhancing the resilience of the most vulnerable

This guidance note focuses on the topic of social protection in protracted crises and presents possible approaches and case studies from FAO interventions in such contexts.



SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR BUILDING THE RESILIENCE OF FOREST-DEPENDENT PEOPLE – Evidence, linkages, practices and potential applications

This publication reviews evidence on the role of forestry policies in reducing vulnerabilities and fostering livelihoods among forest-dependent people, and on the impact of social protection instruments on the resilience of forest-dependent people and the promotion of sustainable forest management.



FAO AND CASH+: How to maximize the impacts of cash transfers

Cash+ is a tool for quick-impact humanitarian response and recovery as well as serving

as a component of long-term social protection and resilience programmes. FAO's work on Cash+ is based on field experience and research, showing the potential of this tool to sustainably enhance the economic and social impacts of cash transfers when combined with productive support and/or technical training.



THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR THE EXPANSION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

This brief brings together the critical mass of evidence emerging from recent rigorous impact evaluations of government-run cash transfer programmes in seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa. These assessments have been developed under the Protection to Production (PtoP) initiative, led by FAO and UNICEF in partnership with national governments and research organizations.



FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION: The Story of Cash Transfers and Impact Evaluation in Sub-Saharan Africa

Published by FAO and UNICEF in collaboration with the Transfer

Project, this book includes a review of eight sub-Saharan country case studies and descriptions of innovative research methodologies, political economy issues and good practices to design cash transfer programmes.



SOCIAL PROTECTION TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND REDUCE POVERTY IN FISHERIES-DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES

This publication summarizes the presentations, discussions, conclusions and recommendations of a major workshop on social protection and fisheries.



NUTRITION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The paper is part of FAO's broader efforts to mainstream

nutrition in all key aspects of the Organization's programme of work. It is written for policymakers and project managers working on areas related to nutrition and social protection.

FAO'S WORK ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

Contributing to zero
hunger, poverty reduction
and resilience in rural areas



This brochure highlights the important role that social protection has to play in addressing many of the barriers poor rural households face in building resilient and sustainable livelihoods. Despite progress in recent decades, 736 million people worldwide still live in extreme poverty. Most are in rural areas, possess few or no assets and depend on agriculture and the use of natural resources for their livelihoods. A number of programmes have demonstrated not only that social protection can have significant impacts on poverty, but also that even low-income countries can afford to provide it for their citizens, if they commit to doing so.

FAO has positioned social protection as a major element in its efforts to reduce rural poverty, respond to climate change, promote resilient livelihoods and achieve Zero Hunger.

Social protection spans the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development architecture, from eradicating poverty and reducing income inequality, to increasing social inclusion, promoting gender equality and improving access to health, education and water. FAO is firmly committed to supporting countries in extending and scaling up social protection in order to build a future that leaves no one behind.