Integrated Social Protection Systems
Enhancing Equity for Children

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Key Messages

- Social protection plays a vital role in strengthening the resilience of children, families and communities, achieving greater equity, and supporting national human and economic development. Its relevance is heightened in the face of persistent inequalities and recent trends.

- Expansion of social protection coverage is critical. UNICEF supports Progressive Realization of Universal Coverage, helping countries identify and progressively expand programmes and policies most conducive to achieving universality, while also recognizing countries’ different capacities and contexts.

- Social protection programmes can be affordable and sustainably financed. Long-term national financing strategies should be identified and implemented to protect and expand expenditure on effective social protection programmes. These are not only technical assessments, but also political choices.

- UNICEF promotes the development and strengthening of integrated social protection systems, which take a multi-sector approach and invest in sustainable national systems in order to more effectively and efficiently address the multiple vulnerabilities faced by children and their families.

- Social, as well as economic, vulnerabilities need to be addressed by social protection. This requires mainstreaming social inclusion into social protection programmes and using a broader range of social protection instruments.

- UNICEF puts forth this Framework as a starting point for a collaborative agenda with partners on joint learning and action, in order to maximize the potential of social protection for furthering children’s rights and well-being and for achieving equitable and sustainable social protection systems for all.
Tents provide temporary shelter for people displaced by flooding in Pakistan in 2011. Millions of houses were damaged or destroyed; millions of acres of land were affected; and millions of people left in need of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, shelter, food and medical care.

Large scale crises such as these are expected to become more frequent due to climate change. Social protection programmes and policies can contribute to transition from emergency response to long-term recovery and help build resilience among the most vulnerable.
VII. Key Emerging Areas for Social Protection

- **Humanitarian action**: UNICEF’s definition of humanitarian action goes beyond emergency response to include preparedness and early recovery, and action in chronic crises and fragile contexts. There is increased interest in the potential role social protection can play during each stage of humanitarian action in helping prevent and increase resilience to crises, mitigate their impacts, and support the transition from emergency response to long-term development. Nonetheless, substantial gaps in identifying good practice remain.

- **Adolescence and youth development**: There are currently 1.2 billion adolescents, between 10–19 years of age – the largest such generation in history. Increasingly, countries are exploring how social protection can contribute to enhancing individual capacities during adolescence, including reducing the skills deficit and securing access to secondary education – both key determinants of youth under and unemployment.

- **Social protection and the urban poor**: The particular characteristics of urban settings – informality, high population density, high mobility and socio-economic diversity – raise important challenges for social protection policy and programming. As this is an emerging area for social protection, there is still a need for enhancing evidence on the profiles of the urban poor, their vulnerabilities, and on the best ways to design social protection interventions that address these vulnerabilities.

- **Migration**: There is increased interest in exploring the potential linkages between social protection and migration, including: the extent to which social protection can reduce push factors for internal and international migration; and the ways in which social protection policies can address the vulnerabilities children and their families face in their countries of origin and destination. Questions remain as to what may be the most effective and politically feasible social protection strategies for addressing vulnerabilities in the context of migration.
Emerging global trends as well as new policy debates around key issues have led governments to explore the potential role of social protection in different settings and processes such as humanitarian action, adolescent and youth development, rapid urbanization and migration. As these are emerging issues, this chapter does not provide specific policy options but discusses some of the on-going debates, the potential role of social protection and some key areas for further research and discussion.

A. Humanitarian action and social protection

UNICEF is a recognized partner in humanitarian action. Since its creation, it has been committed to supporting countries in strengthening their capacity to prevent and respond to crises, with a special emphasis on protecting children’s rights.xxvii

Given the increased complexity of emergencies and lessons learned from past engagement, UNICEF’s broad definition of humanitarian action goes beyond emergency response to include preparedness and early recovery. UNICEF’s approach to humanitarian action has thus concentrated on providing relief not only in sudden-onset emergencies but also in chronic crises and fragile contexts.162 This translates into efforts to (i) enhance resilience; (ii) promote interventions that will create a solid base for sustainable recovery; and (iii) establish links between emergency response and medium- and long-term development. There is an increased interest in the potential role social protection can play in the different stages of humanitarian action to address key vulnerabilities, providing children and their families with the necessary tools to prevent as well as mitigate the impacts of emergencies.

1. Vulnerabilities associated with emergencies: Sudden onset and chronic crises and social protection

Emergencies have the potential to create and/or further exacerbate existing vulnerabilities to poverty and exclusion. Sudden onset emergencies resulting from shocks, for example, may worsen economic hardship due to depletion of assets and resources and increase the threat of violence. Households and children in the poorest sectors and countries are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by natural hazards: More than 1.7 million people were killed in 23 mega disasters between 1975 and 2008, mainly in developing countries.163 Families suffer multiple and severe disruptions in an emergency that may affect their ability to protect their children. Communities that may have provided a safe environment for children are shattered, and the social fabric may became weakened by increased tension over scarce resources. Moreover, armed conflicts have significant impacts on children and their families including limited or no access to social services and lost livelihoods. The capacity of families to provide adequate care for their children is undermined, and children may become the victims of genocide or suffer the effects of displacement, family disintegration and sexual violence. Many are targets of violence or forced to commit violence as child solders, perpetuating cycles of violence and deprivation.

Humanitarian crises will increasingly arise from a combination of complex drivers that build over time. Slow onset or chronic emergencies164 – understood as situations where a particular shock or trend produces slow and gradual deterioration and where the humanitarian needs are constant while their main drivers are not resolved – pose serious challenges, especially for the most excluded. Drought, demographic change, displacement and/or impacts of climate change may contribute to furthering social exclusion, displacement and

long-term food insecurity while leading households to engage in risky coping mechanisms that weaken their ability to escape cycles of poverty and exclusion. Although in some contexts there may be some informal protection schemes such as micro savings or community insurance, these are severely weakened by the accumulated impacts of repeated shocks and emergencies.

The combined effects of conflict and natural disasters can create irreversible and daunting effects on livelihoods, adding to existing social and economic vulnerabilities and undermining children’s protective environment. The increasing complexity of conflicts heightens the need to identify innovative approaches to prevent and counteract their impacts, especially on the most vulnerable.

2. Linking social protection and humanitarian action: A phased approach to social protection

The link between social protection and humanitarian action is critical as, on the one hand, existing vulnerabilities can lead and/or shape emergencies, and on the other, social protection interventions can help address particular needs associated with humanitarian crises such as loss of assets, limited access to essential food supplies or services and increased risk of epidemic disease. In this sense, social protection can potentially play a key role in prevention and response as well as in post-crisis settings.

Pre-crisis: Preparedness and risk management

Interventions at the pre-crisis phase are considered critical in many cases. If crises are predictable or slow-onset, there might be key strategies to reduce impacts and/or enhance households’ capacity to cope with foreseen impacts and risks. UNICEF’s priorities in this stage include developing risk and vulnerability analysis to help identify the most appropriate strategies to prevent and mitigate risk as well as prepare for response. Social protection can contribute to strengthening livelihoods, increasing households’ resilience and preventing or mitigating the negative effects of crises. For instance, households benefiting from social protection interventions such as health insurance and/or cash transfers are better able to secure assets and thus cope with impacts. In addition, countries with well-established social protection systems can expand, scale-up or modify the programmes to address added vulnerabilities caused by crises – e.g., increase benefit size and/or expand programme to more districts and/or beneficiaries. Working towards strengthening social protection systems can be considered as a key risk management intervention in the context of emergency preparedness.

During a crisis: Emergency response and early recovery approach

As an approach that recognizes the gap between relief and development programming, early recovery aims to “shape the manner in which humanitarian response is conducted […] to ensure humanitarian response operations become assets for long-term recovery; support recovery initiatives by affected communities, and stabilize local and national capacities to encourage a quicker and sustainable transition to longer-term recovery.” In other words, it is key to ensure that response interventions are implemented in such a way that can begin building into local systems and existing capacities, while identifying potential pathways to recovery planning.

Social protection programmes can contribute to strengthening capacity – at household and national level – while at the same time enhancing local and national level tools such as vulnerability and capacity assessments to identify the most appropriate entry points and interventions conducive to recovery. Moreover, if successfully integrated into wider response systems, they can contribute to the transition from emergency response to long-term development and help build resilience in protracted crises (including long-term displacement and/or chronic conflict).
Priority actions post-crisis are targeted towards building on humanitarian investments to create and/or strengthen long-term recovery and sustainable development. Social protection can play an important role in transforming relief interventions into long-term recovery programmes. For instance, cash in emergencies can evolve into predictable medium- or long-term protection mechanisms and delivery mechanism created for relief can be strengthened and adapted as building blocks for more permanent systems.

Specifically in post-conflict environments, social protection can contribute to peace-building by strengthening social cohesion, supporting state building and state legitimacy through the removal of access barriers and addressing some conflict drivers. As stated by the United Nations thematic report on peace dividends, effective and equitable access to social services is considered essential in a peace-building context.

Social protection interventions can address the structural and underlying causes of economic and social vulnerability, which in many cases are also drivers of discontent and conflict. Moreover, in terms of social cohesion, social protection is increasingly recognized as an inherently redistributive and equity-enhancing strategy and as a crucial tool for ensuring more even growth and long-term poverty reduction. In terms of state building strategies, social protection programmes and systems can strengthen national capacity for prevention and management, increasing state capacity to address citizens' needs – e.g., developing and/or expanding protection mechanisms to increase resilience – and thus improving legitimacy.

3. Disaster risk management, climate change and social protection

As discussed, climate change can increasingly exacerbate existing social and economic vulnerabilities among the poorest sectors. In addition, given their location, limited asset base and high dependency on agriculture and/or other climate-sensitive sectors, developing countries and sectors face added vulnerabilities in terms of:

- Potential impacts on food security, livelihoods and the economy, especially in weather-dependant sectors
- Increased strain on natural resources, particularly water
- Malnutrition and exposure to severe heat and cold, particularly relevant to the elderly and children
- Greater risk of increased child labour due to loss of agriculture-related income
- Threats to the supply of in-kind (food) transfers

A disaster risk reduction (DRR) approach, aiming to minimize "vulnerabilities and disas-
ter risk throughout a society in order to avoid (prevent) or limit (mitigate or prepare for) the adverse impacts of natural hazards and facilitate sustainable development is a key strategy for climate change adaptation. However, given common objectives in terms of enhancing households’ resilience towards shocks and structural vulnerabilities, a comprehensive approach that includes linkages between social protection and climate change adaptation may enhance the potential development processes of many vulnerable populations, especially those in rural areas or with weather-dependent livelihoods.

There is a need to have a wider understanding of (i) age- and gender-differentiated barriers to access as well as intra-household dynamics and how these relate to changes in climate; and (ii) preventive as well as coping strategies to potential impacts of climate change. This implies that the design of social protection interventions takes into account these potential impacts while at the same time including a holistic social inclusion and poverty approach to disaster risk management. The Institute for Development Studies (IDS), for example, has developed an ‘Adaptive Social Protection (ASP)’ framework that aims to combine social protection, DRR approach and climate change adaptation in order to promote climate-resilient rural livelihoods in developing countries. Interventions such as cash transfers or public work schemes targeted to those most vulnerable to climate shocks can smooth consumption and increase investments in assets and contingency financing to manage risks or can reduce the need to resort to damaging coping strategies in difficult times, as in the case of the PSNP in Ethiopia (see Box 20). It is important to note that social protection interventions would be most effective when integrated into comprehensive disaster management strategies and not as stand-alone operations.

4. Potential areas for future work

As an emerging area of intervention, there are still outstanding questions to address mainly associated with design and implementation issues. Given UNICEF’s presence before, during and after crises, it can play a critical role in addressing some of the research and learning gaps:

- **Systems and immediate response**: How to balance detailed design and building blocks for integrated, long-term systems with the urgency of immediate response? What are the most appropriate interventions in a given context or crisis? What are the financing challenges – aid and fiscal space – associated with long-term responses? How to find the balance between capacity-building objectives and principles of neutrality and impartiality?

- **Vulnerability and risk assessments**: How to strengthen vulnerability assessments in high-risk contexts? How to ensure vulnerable populations are included in the design and implementation of social protection systems? How to create opportunities for participatory design and learning in high-risk contexts?
groups such as ethnic minorities, women and children are not excluded? How to best include social protection responses and/or mechanisms in early warning system? How to address/cover displaced populations and/or migrants and how to address potential pull factors?

B. Adolescence and youth development

There are currently 1.2 billion individuals who fall under the UN definition of adolescence (those between 10–19 years of age and/or in their second decade of life);¹⁷⁵ the largest such generation in history. The vast majority of adolescents – 88 percent – live in developing countries, facing acute challenges. UNICEF recognizes the critical importance of investing in adolescents to sustain and consolidate the investments and gains of early and middle childhood, as well as ensure the effective transition into youth and adulthood. It works to fulfil the rights of adolescents, as mandated by key international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

More than 70 million adolescents do not attend secondary school and, even when they do attend, many fail to complete their studies and/or lack sufficient skills to respond to labour market demands. Particularly for girls, child marriage, discrimination and exclusion further diminish their opportunities to access quality education and live productive lives. Around one third of adolescent girls in the developing world are married before age 18,¹⁷⁶ and maternal deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth are the primary cause of mortality for girls aged 15–19 worldwide, accounting for 70,000 deaths each year.¹⁷⁷ Moreover, HIV and AIDS represent daunting and life-threatening risks for adolescents in high-prevalence countries, where one third of all new cases involve young people aged 15–24. In many regions crises have exacerbated risks, poverty and marginalization among adolescents, reflected in areas such as increased youth under- and unemployment.²⁸

As discussed in The State of the World’s Children 2011,¹⁷⁹ adolescents are at a critical point in their lives where adequate access to health, education and other basic services would enhance their transition into youth and adulthood, while helping break intergenerational cycles of poverty and enabling them to shape their own lives, as well as the future of their communities and countries. Effective interventions therefore need to assess age- and gender-specific vulnerabilities faced by adolescents as well as ways to increase employment opportunities and skills development. Increasingly, countries are exploring how social protection can contribute to enhancing individual capacities during adolescence, including reducing the skills deficit and securing access to secondary education, key determinants of youth under- and unemployment trends.

In their transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents face many challenges as well as opportunities. Table 15 outlines some sector-specific vulnerabilities as well as examples of social protection interventions that may be considered to address these while enhancing adolescents’ access to education, health and livelihood opportunities.

However, as this is a growing emerging issue, there are still research and evidence gaps on best practice, most effective interventions and impacts. UNICEF can play a key role in exploring potential mechanisms and complementary activities, with a strong emphasis on the most excluded groups such as adolescent girls, girls with disabilities and/or girls with no access to basic services (see Box 22).

### Table 15: Sector-related vulnerabilities during adolescence and social protection interventions: Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector-related vulnerabilities</th>
<th>Social protection interventions: Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Despite improved health status in comparison with previous generations, adolescents continue to face significant health-related risks, such as: • Injuries as a result of traffic accidents and gang-related violence – leading causes of death among youth, particular in urban areas • Risky behaviour: drug, tobacco and alcohol use; early marriage, early childbearing/ pregnancy; sexual abuse and violence increase likelihood of maternal mortality as well as child mortality • Higher risk of HIV/AIDS infection and sexual transmitted diseases due to risky practices, mainly among boys, and to sexual violence and rape (inside and outside marriages), mainly among girls; High incidence of mental health disorders, such as depression.</td>
<td>• Family and individual support programmes can be critical in providing counselling and information on health-related risks associated with early marriage and childbearing; providing support and reducing stigma associated with youth with mental illnesses (i.e., depression) or those affected by HIV and AIDS. • Social protection interventions such as cash transfers can address some of the underlying causes of violence and crime, such as poverty, exclusion and marginalization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barriers to education: • Cost: secondary schooling is usually more expensive than basic primary education. • Distance and transportation: secondary and vocational training facilities are usually more scarce than primary education or located in urban centres far from rural and/or geographically remote communities. • Early marriages and adolescent pregnancy increase likelihood for high drop-out rates. • In terms of protection, high vulnerability to crime and violence (at home, community, schools). • High risk of rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, especially for girls (further exacerbated in emergency and violence settings). • Child labour: adolescents working excessive hours and/or in illegal conditions are less able to complete education</td>
<td>• Social transfers can reduce financial barriers to accessing secondary school and vocational training, as well as reduce incentives for early marriage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Under- and unemployment among adolescents and youth is a major concern in many countries. ILO estimates that of the 211 million unemployed people in 2009, nearly 40 percent – or about 81 million – are between 15 and 24 years of age. Another 152 million are estimated to be unemployed. Main causes are (i) skills deficit: lack of appropriate skills and low levels of education; (ii) youth population is growing at a faster pace than available employment opportunities.</td>
<td>Focusing on adolescents can help address employment-related vulnerabilities experienced in transition to youth and adulthood. • Social transfers can contribute to reducing financial barriers to accessing secondary school and vocational training, as well as reduce incentives for early marriage. • The design of public works and/or cash for work programmes can be adjusted to integrate labour and skill training schemes for adolescents and youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gender discrimination is a cross-cutting issue that further exacerbates lack of access to basic services and fulfilment of adolescent rights – e.g., if a family is unable to afford education services for all their children, the boy child is often the one in whom the family invests; when schools are located far from home, boys are most likely to be sent because they tend to have more mobility in and outside the community.</td>
<td>• Legislation and policy reform can contribute to removing barriers to access based on exclusion and gender discrimination.</td>
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</table>
Box 22: The role of social protection in reducing vulnerability among adolescent girls

Several UN agencies have come together under the Interagency Task Force on Adolescent Girls to end the marginalization of adolescent girls. Guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Fit For Children (WFFC) agenda, these agencies promote collaboration at the country level in order to create opportunities for adolescent girls’ full development and promote their meaningful participation in society. Girls face particular vulnerabilities during adolescence such as limited access to secondary education, sexual abuse, child marriage and discrimination within and outside the home. By increasing adolescent girls’ access to social services, education, health care, employment and human development, social protection can play a key role in the full realization of their rights.179

Bangladesh: Education grants for girls180

The Female Secondary School Stipend Programme (FSSSP) was launched by the Government of Bangladesh in 1993 as a response to large gender disparities in secondary school enrolment. To tackle this issue, FSSSP provided girls with tuition stipends. According to the World Bank, following FSSSP implementation, girls’ enrolment in secondary schools jumped from 1.1 million in 1991 to 3.9 million in 2005, including an increasing number of girls from disadvantaged or remote areas.

Mexico: Adjusting benefit size181

The conditional cash transfer programme Oportunidades is an example of how the design of social protection programmes can be adjusted to address gender discrimination in access to education. Whereas receipt of the cash is conditional on school attendance for all children, beginning at the secondary level grants are slightly higher for girls than for boys. As a result, between 2002 and 2003 enrolment in rural secondary schools of beneficiary children increased by 24 percent relative to that of non-beneficiaries with similar socio-economic characteristics. Enrolment among boys increased by 17.1 percent relative to the comparison group while among girls it increased by 32.2 percent, reflecting the adaptation in design.

Malawi: Reducing risky sexual practices and boosting secondary school enrolment182

In order to tackle both adolescent girls’ low school attendance and their risk of engaging in unsafe practices – including transactional sex – in response to income insecurity, a cash transfer programme was implemented in the Zomba district from January 2008 to December 2009. The intervention involved 3,805 girls and young women aged 13 to 22 in 176 urban and rural areas in Zomba, a district with high drop-out rates and low educational attainment (due to high poverty levels, according to a 2005 government survey). Stipends ranged from $1-5 a month for adolescent girls while parallel payments to parents ranged from $4-10. Results show that receiving the cash transfer led to a decline in self-reported sexual activity and a 40 and 30 percent drop in marriage and pregnancy, respectively. Furthermore, the transfer reduced school drop-out rates by approximately 40 percent relative to the comparison group.

C. Social protection and the urban poor

The urban global population is estimated to reach almost 5 billion by 2030. Most of this growth is concentrated in developing countries; for instance, the urban population expected to double from 2000–2030 in Africa and Asia. Although in aggregate terms those living in urban areas have lower poverty rates than those in rural areas, poverty has been increasing more rapidly in urban areas. Moreover, looking at disaggregated data reveals stark disparities among groups, as well as concentrated pockets of poverty; for instance, over 90 percent of those living in slums are in developing countries.183

Despite important opportunities in terms of economic growth, availability of services and income-generation activities, many children and families living in urban settings face specific risks and vulnerabilities that may prevent their successful development and ability to break away from poverty and exclusion cycles. Issues such as under- and unemployment, heavy reliance on cash assets and poor and dangerous living conditions are some of the most important vulnerabilities faced by the urban poor.

While social protection interventions have been considered as potential mechanisms to address some of these vulnerabilities, the particular characteristics of urban settings – informality, high population density, high mobility and socio-economic diversity – raise important challenges for their design. For instance, in response to rapid urbanization in several regions, a number of cash transfer programmes are being expanded to urban settings. The specific vulnerabilities of the urban poor imply changes and adjustments to the design of programmes in areas such as (i) targeting; (ii) size of transfer; (iii) conditionality type and (iv) logistics.184 Moreover, specific vulnerabilities associated with particular groups such as migrants and out-of-school youth may also require certain adjustments to programmes when implemented in urban settings. Table 16 looks at some of the urban-specific vulnerabili-
ties and examples of potential social protection interventions that can be explored to address them. However, as this is an emerging area for social protection, there is still a need to enhance the evidence on the vulnerabilities of the urban poor and how best to address these.

**Challenges:**

- Targeting for social protection interventions in urban settings is particularly challenging due to diversified socio-economic profiles even within the same geographic area/zone and the high mobility of the urban poor. For example, income verification is a challenge for programmes relying on means testing because a significant percentage of the urban poor are engaged in informal employment or live in informal settlements. At the same time, geographic targeting may be difficult due to the high socio-economic diversity in urban centres. For example, political divisions of cities and/or towns may not coincide with ‘poverty pockets’ and/or the most marginalized communities may live close to the wealthiest sectors in society.

- In many transfer programmes the size of the transfer remains the same throughout the country. However, there might be a need to adjust (increase) transfer sizes because of the different cost of living, opportunity costs associated with schooling and types of work in rural and urban settings.

- Given the number of youth out of school and potentially at risk of engaging in violent or non-productive activities, there might be a need to consider changing the focus of education-related programmes to encourage attendance in secondary school or out-of-school training programmes. However, as there are other underlying causes for school drop out (drug use, violence, lack of interest, etc.), transfers may need to be linked with other complementary programmes that specifically address these issues.

**D. Migration**

Approximately 13 percent of the total migrant population is under the age of 20, and over 60 percent of those children and adolescents who migrate live in developing countries. There is an increased interest in exploring the potential linkages between social protection and migration, including (i) migration as a risk-mitigation strategy; (ii) the extent to which social protection can potentially reduce push factors for internal and international migration; and (iii) how social protection programmes and policies can mainstream and address the vulnerabilities children and their families face in countries of origin and/or destination.

**Migration as a risk management strategy**
The decision to migrate can be motivated by a series of factors, including expanding opportu-

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**Table 16: Social protection and urban-specific vulnerabilities: Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulnerabilities</th>
<th>Social protection interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Urban poor are integrated into the cash and market economy and may be more vulnerable to economic shocks</td>
<td>• Cash transfers can increase affordability of basic services; however, size of transfer may need to be adjusted to reflect urban costs of living and opportunity costs to education and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Despite increased availability of services in contrast with rural areas, these may be unaffordable and/or poor quality</td>
<td>• Non-contributory social insurance and assistance programmes can protect those in the informal sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diversity and high population density may weaken family ties and decrease access to informal social networks</td>
<td>• Childcare services as well as other similar support programmes can increase the ability of parents to engage in income-generating opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Absence of extended families; many single parent families</td>
<td>• Public work programmes can be a significant source of income in urban settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A significant percentage of the urban poor are concentrated in the informal sector and thus have less access to social assistance programmes and contributory pensions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children and youth face increased risks due to violence, victimization, drug-use</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Urban poor are more vulnerable to environmental health problems: e.g., respiratory problems due to pollution, overcrowding; water-related illnesses</td>
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</tbody>
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nities and experience, exploring new income-generating opportunities, reducing financial vulnerability and/or escaping from discrimination or fear due to conflict and emergencies. In that sense, migration can be considered as a risk mitigating strategy, as families leave their town, cities and/or countries searching for improved standards of living.

**Strengthening social protection systems to address push factors**

Effective social protection systems can address some of the factors that lead to migration flows as a result of necessity as opposed to choice. By ensuring access to services while contributing to securing livelihoods, social protection can help countries address some of the root causes of migration, especially those linked with poverty and exclusion, and develop and/or strengthen responses for those who decide to stay in their countries.**xxix** In addition, countries may also consider strengthening or expanding existing social protection systems as an investment in human capital and a mechanism to prevent brain drain.

**Social protection addressing migrants’ vulnerabilities**

Children and youth are particularly vulnerable to some of the impacts of migration. Migration can have an impact on (i) children who migrate with their families and then face significant barriers in accessing to services, limited protection in the workplace and in some case higher risks to ill health and the impact of emergencies, (ii) children who migrate independently and live without family care and are exposed to greater risks of exploitation and trafficking; (iii) children who are left behind with elder members of extended families when one or both parents migrate.

Social protection interventions – both formal and informal – can play an important role in addressing the needs of children and families affected by the consequences of their migratory status and/or migration of family members. Although migration flows vary from country to country, migrants share similar risks and vulnerabilities depending on the stage of migration, the socio-economic context and the institutional environment. Four types of vulnerabilities can be identified: temporal – associated with the different stages in the migration process; spatial – dislocation and remoteness, particularly relevant for transit migration; socio-cultural – perspectives, norms and values with respect to migrants, closely linked with culturally held notion of race, gender and illegality; and socio-political – institutional constraints in the host country that create a strain in migrants’ access to services, political participation, etc. These vulnerabilities can be further exacerbated by characteristics shared by migrants, such as their likelihood of living in urban informal settlements or working in informal sectors. As this is an emerging area, there are still questions around the most effective as well as most politically feasible strategies to address vulnerabilities faced by children and their families in the context of migration. Further work and discussion is needed in areas such as:

- How to adjust some elements of the design of social protection policies and programmes so that they reach and benefit internal or irregular migrants. For instance, access to benefits may require permanent residence in a particular area with no flexibility to families that migrate from rural to urban areas, including seasonal workers.

- How to ensure the rights of children from families who have migrated to other countries in irregular or illegal circumstances, who in most cases are the most vulnerable and excluded. For instance, access to certain benefits is linked with registration and citizenship, which is particularly relevant for undocumented migrants. Beneficiary registration is considered a very important tool to ensure effective targeting as well as to prevent abuses in the distribution and delivery of social transfers. However, it may prevent access to services by migrant children and women.

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• How to prevent migrants from losing access to social benefits and social protection mechanisms when they decide to migrate or when children’s status changes due to migrant parents. Migrants may not be able to access services and benefits at their country of origin while at the same time they are not eligible for benefits in the receiving country.

Table 17: Migration-specific vulnerabilities: Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Vulnerabilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transit:</td>
<td>• Environmental hazards; health risks</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Exploitation due to lack of legal representation or protection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Social exclusion based on ethnicity or illegal status; exclusion from participation in social life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vulnerable to trafficking, abuse and exploitation, particularly for children, women and irregular migrants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Limited access to social services such as education and health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Destination:</td>
<td>• Relocation constraints: lack of familiarity with new environment; limited information on health and education facilities; remoteness and geographic location may also prevent migrants from accessing key services</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Access to services and registration: particularly relevant for undocumented migrants as registration may be required to access certain basic social services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Legislative barriers: particular requirements in housing sectors; education access</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Health risks: increased exposure to health risks as many migrants start to settle in urban informal settlements</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Work-related risk: work environment; low paid; dangerous conditions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lack of political representation; risk of exploitation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social exclusion and discrimination based on illegal status, ethnicity – particularly relevant for women, children and the elderly</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased risk of abuse, exploitation and trafficking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• South-South migrants: most are undocumented and thus face barriers to access to formal social services; host countries may have weak social protection systems and may not provide sufficient benefits even for native/local citizens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family at source:</td>
<td>• Child labour: children may have to drop out of school to help family with household responsibilities and income</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Occasional neglect of caregivers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Separation of families; family instability and social stigma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Return migrants:</td>
<td>• Inability to access basic education, health and other social services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inability to access accrued social benefits, allowances, pensions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reintegration challenges</td>
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Key Messages

Social protection plays a vital role in strengthening the resilience of children, families and communities, achieving greater equity, and supporting national human and economic development. Its relevance is heightened in the face of persistent inequalities and recent trends.

Expansion of social protection coverage is critical. UNICEF supports Progressive Realization of Universal Coverage, helping countries identify and progressively expand programmes and policies most conducive to achieving universality, while also recognizing countries’ different capacities and contexts.

Social protection programmes can be affordable and sustainably financed. Long-term national financing strategies should be identified and implemented to protect and expand expenditure on effective social protection programmes. These are not only technical assessments, but also political choices.

UNICEF promotes the development and strengthening of integrated social protection systems, which take a multi-sector approach and invest in sustainable national systems in order to more effectively and efficiently address the multiple vulnerabilities faced by children and their families.

Social, as well as economic, vulnerabilities need to be addressed by social protection. This requires mainstreaming social inclusion into social protection programmes and using a broader range of social protection instruments.

UNICEF puts forth this Framework as a starting point for a collaborative agenda with partners on joint learning and action, in order to maximize the potential of social protection for furthering children’s rights and well-being and for achieving equitable and sustainable social protection systems for all.