

Social Protection

Situation Overview

Despite the ongoing peace process, South Sudan remains volatile and its population highly vulnerable. In total 63 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line, 70 per cent are under 30 years of age, and around 85 per cent engage in subsistence agriculture. Since 2015, rapid currency devaluation and basic commodity shortages have caused hyperinflation, compounding the economic hardships faced by most. In much of South Sudan, conflict and drought have halted agricultural production and other economic activities, contributing to an estimated 54 per cent of the population experiencing severe food insecurity.

The basic needs of the population remain largely unmet. Government expenditure on social sectors is minimal. Allocations have been undermined by the failing economy and de-prioritization at the expense of security spending. The inability of the Government to pay salaries has caused an exodus from the civil service.

Against this backdrop, the Government has strengthened its policies in relation

to social protection. Social protection is defined as the set of private and public mechanisms that protect and prevent individuals and households from suffering the adverse effects of shocks and stresses. At macro level, the South Sudan Development Plan 2013-2017 and the National Development Strategy 2018-2021 identify social protection as a national priority to combat poverty and social exclusion.

In 2015, the Government approved the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF), which envisages a national social protection system with strong coordination and a range of social protection programs for the most vulnerable. The Government has also committed to allocating 1 per cent of its annual budget to finance the NSPPF through the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW).

The operational context in South Sudan limits the scope of social policy initiatives. Therefore, UNICEF does currently focus on strengthening planning, monitoring and evaluation of the institutional capacity until the environment allows UNICEF to scale up social policy programming.

To support this process, UNICEF has a dedicated staff, which ensures efficient and adequate adaptability to the operational context.

2019 results



33 National Social Protection Working Group members trained on social protection.



1 National social protection mapping initiative completed.



1 2019-2021 Cash Strategy launched.



1 Cash pilot started; 2 at concept stage.

National Social Protection Policy Framework

Prior to the conflict, in 2012, Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW) in partnership with UNICEF and the World Bank developed a National Social Protection Framework. However, implementation of the framework including collaboration with the Government-led National Social Protection Working Group (NSPWG) stalled due to the crisis and became dormant in 2016. UNICEF joined as Co-Chair and facilitated four NSPWG meetings, helping to expand membership to the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Bank, international NGOs and the Inter-Agency Cash Working Group (IACWG).

Since 2018, UNICEF is continuing to partner with the MGCSW and the World Bank to operationalize the NSPPF. UNICEF supported the MGCSW to undertake a national social protection mapping initiative as well as training for NSPWG members on social protection in 2019. It also ensured linkages between the Interagency Cash Working Group (IACWG) and the NSPWG.

TRANSFORM

Thirty-three members of the NSPWG gained technical knowledge and understanding of social protection through UNICEF-supported training in April 2019. TRANSFORM is an innovative learning package on the administration of national social protection floors in Africa, jointly supported by UNICEF, ILO and UNDP. The prime objective is to build critical thinking and capacities of policy makers and practitioners at national and decentralized levels to improve the design, effectiveness and efficiency of social protection systems.

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More information on the situation in South Sudan and UNICEF response, including the latest situation reports, can be found at <https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/>

National Social protection mapping

In January 2019, the MGCSW proposed to the NSPWG that South Sudan's social protection system should be analysed and mapped, in order to provide a strong foundation to the MGCSW's efforts to coordinate, design, implement, monitor and evaluate social protection activities.

The process was led by an international consultant working with UNICEF and used the Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) Core Diagnostic Tool (CODI) methodology. The recommendations, which were endorsed by the NSPWG includes the need to redouble existing coordination efforts; harmonize the transfer levels in public works and asset creation programmes; improve the compatibility of management information systems; and create an overarching social protection monitoring and evaluation framework.

Cash-based programming

In 2019, UNICEF launched a South Sudan Cash Strategy 2019-2021, increased its internal capacity on cash-based programming and raised its preparedness around humanitarian cash transfers. This included exploring the joint programming approach with partners such as WFP and FAO and actively engaging with partners on cash and voucher assistance programmes as well as explore entry points for cash plus linkages.

UNICEF strengthened its representation in the IACWG through a dedicated staff member. UNICEF as member of the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) led by REACH, a data analysis organization, and the Inter-Agency Cash Working Group, supported data collection in Yambio and Malakal in an effort to share timely [market](#)

[information](#) and improve coordination among cash actors in the country. Moreover, UNICEF supports linkages between the IACWG work and the wider national social protection agenda. UNICEF is also supporting the MGCSW to develop core tools, including joint vulnerability assessments and targeting mechanisms, and a single registry of social transfer beneficiaries.

In August 2019, UNICEF began a Water Voucher project in Wau in collaboration with WFP, UNICEF's partner Oxfam and the Urban Water Corporation. The programme targets emergency water vouchers to 24,000 of the most vulnerable families. Thus far 8,728 people (2182 households) have been provided with water through voucher systems in five kiosks. Complementary water infrastructure work including elevated reservoirs tank is underway, to expand the number of operational kiosks. Over 1,928 people have reached with key hygiene messages.

Furthermore, UNICEF is exploring two cash and voucher pilot concepts to be rolled out within the Integrated Rapid Response Missions (IRRM) in 2020.

2020 Priorities

UNICEF will continue supporting the MoGCSW in the strengthening of the NSPWG, and implementing the CODI recommendations; in particular supporting the development of a national social protection M&E Framework, and road-map for ensuring inter-linkages among various Management Information Systems (MIS) used by humanitarian and development cash actors. UNICEF will also explore opportunities for cash plus linkages with existing social protection programmes and scale up cash programmes targeting vulnerable children and families.