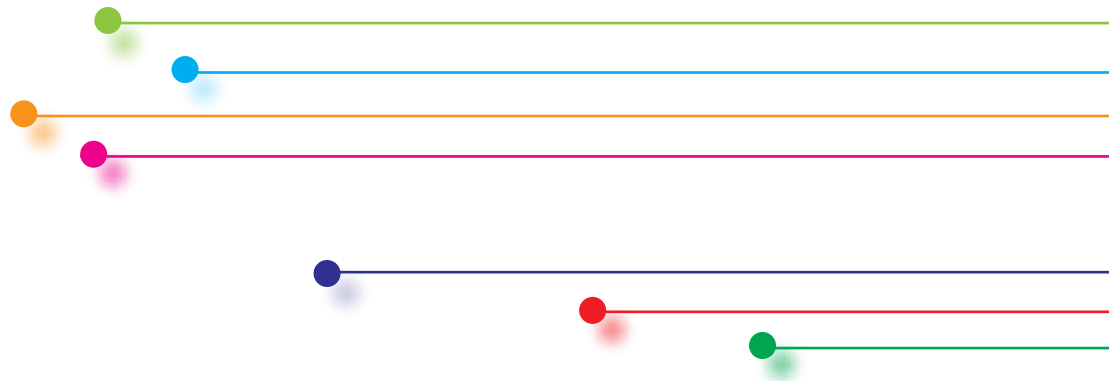


Integrated Social Protection Systems

Enhancing Equity for Children

Executive Summary



UNICEF
Social
Protection
Strategic
Framework

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.

Introduction

UNICEF is committed to social protection as part of its global mandate to advocate for the realization of children's rights. Within UNICEF's equity focused approach to development, social protection is a crucial policy tool for achieving equity and social justice. Social protection measures strengthen the capacity of families to care for their children and remove barriers to services that stand in the way of achieving goals and progress for children.

UNICEF's Social Protection Strategic Framework presents the approach and main principles guiding its work on social protection; argues the case for social protection and children; articulates UNICEF's position on key issues; and outlines a collaborative agenda for action for social protection and children. This Executive Summary highlights the key messages and policy positions of the Framework, while the full document also includes detailed evidence and references.

UNICEF's Social Protection Strategic Framework is intended to be a starting point for further policy dialogue and exchange of practice with partners. UNICEF recognizes the critical need to work together with decision makers and stakeholders to enhance social protection systems in order to achieve the common goal of improving the lives of all children and their families.

The full Framework can be accessed at: www.unicef.org/socialprotection/framework

The Case for Social Protection and Children: Ensuring children's well-being and contributing to national development

■ Increased Relevance of Social Protection

Recent trends such as increasing volatility at the macro and household level, the persistence of inequalities and exclusion, the threats posed to sustainable development by climate change, and changing population trends, have heightened the relevance and political momentum of social protection across regions. In the face of these challenges, social protection can play an important role in strengthening the resilience of children, families and communities and in maximizing the benefits of broader structural changes.

Social protection contributes to achieving equitable outcomes by addressing economic and social barriers that prevent access to services and an adequate standard of living, while reaching those who are vulnerable and reducing discrimination. It thus helps to even the playing field, supporting both children and adults to realize their full potential.

■ Investing in Children and Social Protection Now; Reaping Long-term Returns

Investing in social protection and children makes sense from both an economic and a human development perspective. The demonstrated impacts of social protection on children's development last long beyond childhood, increasing adult productivity, decreasing the burden of human development losses, and contributing to breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty. As these programmes benefit households more broadly, they also have more immediate economic impacts. Social protection programmes enable households to make productive investments and increase engagement in labour markets, stimulating demand in local markets and reducing poverty. By complementing investments in the supply of services, social protection also has the potential to improve outcomes and efficiency in other sectors such as water and sanitation, education, and health.

■ Child-sensitive Social Protection: Helping all children realize their full potential

It is crucial for social protection systems to be responsive to children's rights and needs. As recognized by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), children have a right to social security, including social insurance, and to an adequate standard of living. Social protection also plays a critical role in supporting the realization of other rights, such as the right to survival and development and the right to education. Child-sensitive social protection addresses the age-specific and multidimensional vulnerabilities children face – which differ from those of adults or have more serious consequences – while at the same time addressing the broader vulnerabilities of their caretakers and communities.

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Table 1: Social Protection Components and Examples

Social Protection Component	Examples
<p>Social transfers</p> <p>Predictable direct transfers to individuals or households to protect them from the impacts of shocks and support the accumulation of human, productive and financial assets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash transfers (including pensions, child benefits, poverty-targeted, seasonal) • Food transfers • Nutritional supplementation • Provision of ARVs • Public works
<p>Programmes to ensure access to services</p> <p>Social protection interventions that reduce the financial and social barriers households face when accessing social services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth registration • User fee abolition • Health insurance • Exemptions, vouchers, subsidies • Anti-stigma programmes to promote access to services
<p>Social support and care services</p> <p>Human resource-intensive services that help identify and reduce vulnerability and exclusion, particularly at the child and household level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family support services • Home-based care
<p>Legislation and policy reform to ensure equity and non-discrimination</p> <p>Changes to policies/legislation in order to remove inequalities in access to services or livelihoods/economic opportunities, thereby helping to address issues of discrimination and exclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum and equal pay legislation • Employment guarantee schemes • Childcare policy • Maternity and paternity leave • Removal of discriminatory legislation or policies affecting service provision/access or employment • Inheritance rights

UNICEF’s Approach and Principles

■ Definition and Conceptual Framework

UNICEF defines social protection as:

Social protection is the set of public and private policies and programmes aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation. Social protection is essential to furthering UNICEF’s commitment to the realization of the rights of children, women and families to an adequate standard of living and essential services.

Within this broad set of policies, UNICEF’s work on social protection concentrates on the four key components outlined in Table 1.

Three concepts underpin UNICEF’s definition and approach, each with policy implications.

- Vulnerability captures the interaction between exposure to risk and the capacity to respond and cope. Social protection must therefore both reduce exposure to risks and increase resilience in an integrated manner.
- Both social and economic vulnerabilities are important and often intertwined. Social protection programmes and policies must address both. This requires a broader range of social protection instruments and more integrated social protection packages or systems in order to address the multiple and compounding vulnerabilities faced by children and their families.
- Vulnerabilities are shaped by underlying structural social, political and economic relationships. Social protection must therefore also tackle power, discrimination and inequality within programme objectives and design, in order to help transform these relationships which drive vulnerability.

Social protection programmes and policies must address both economic and social vulnerabilities, and their underlying causes.

■ Three Key Principles for UNICEF's Work on Social Protection

Progressive realization of universal coverage

As a human-rights organization, UNICEF regards universality as a key principle of its work on social protection. UNICEF supports universal coverage: all people should be covered by appropriate and effective social protection mechanisms. Expansion of social protection coverage, including for children, is critical given the current limited coverage globally. A universal approach also has the potential to reduce exclusion errors, create social solidarity and reduce the stigma associated with some targeting methods.

At the same time, UNICEF recognizes the challenges inherent in providing universal coverage, given resource and capacity constraints of individual countries. With this in mind, it advocates for progressive realization, supporting countries in identifying and building the most appropriate approach or mix of interventions and financing options that will meet social and economic policy objectives, and be most conducive to the ultimate goal of universal coverage.

National systems and leadership

UNICEF supports long-term, nationally owned and led systems. Work on social protection must fall within and support the national framework. Only in exceptional cases where government capacity to implement or coordinate is weak or when there is a humanitarian crisis, would UNICEF consider supporting implementa-

tion of ad-hoc, temporary safety nets or social protection programmes outside of government collaboration. This principle does not preclude UNICEF from supporting others – civil society, children, etc. – in their initiatives to influence, participate, and engage with social protection policy and programmes.

UNICEF also supports national leadership in the identification of fiscal space and development of long-term national financing strategies necessary for the implementation of sustainable national systems. Assessment of affordability is a political choice at the core of the social contract between governments and citizens: how much a society is willing to redistribute, and how.

There is no 'one size fits all' blueprint for social protection policies. UNICEF's work in diverse contexts has highlighted the different challenges and priorities countries face. Different types and combinations of programmes, as well as different design and implementation modalities, are required in order to respond to context-specific vulnerabilities, national priorities, and national capacities and constraints.

Inclusive social protection

UNICEF recognizes social protection as an important tool for advancing inclusive and equitable outcomes. Social dimensions of vulnerability such as gender, ethnicity, HIV status, geographic location, and disability status fundamentally shape exposure to risk and resilience, and are therefore barriers to essential social services and secure livelihoods. In order to ensure that social protection programmes are responsive and sensitive to the needs

of all children, one of the key principles for UNICEF is inclusive social protection.

Inclusive social protection entails both using social protection instruments that explicitly promote social inclusion and equity, and ensuring that programme design and implementation are sensitive to the added vulnerabilities that stem from social exclusion. This implies moving away from targeting particular groups and looking at the underlying causes of exclusion and vulnerabilities these groups share: discrimination and stigma; traditional social norms preventing use of services; limited assets and visibility, etc.

In general terms, mainstreaming social inclusion means considering:

- *Age and gender specific risks and vulnerabilities* of children and adults throughout the life-cycle, including intra-household dynamics when assessing the most appropriate interventions;
- *Dimensions of exclusion and added vulnerabilities* require provisions to reach children and adults who are particularly vulnerable and excluded, including those who are marginalized due to their gender, disability, lack of parental care, ethnicity, caste, religion, HIV/AIDS status or other factors;
- *Mainstreaming inclusion in participation and accountability* mechanisms in order to include citizens and potential programme participants in the design, implementation and monitoring of social protection systems and programmes.

Table 2: Examples of Inclusive Design, Implementation and Evaluation

Programme Phase	Gender	Ethnicity	Disability
Inclusive design	Facilitating child care services and/or breastfeeding practices to support participation of women in public work programmes.	Selecting interventions that consider socio-cultural practices. Ex: in-kind transfers that include traditional and culturally appropriate food items.	Creating an appropriate mix of interventions. Ex: in-kind transfers that facilitate access to specialized supplies, and legislation reform to prevent discrimination in accessing services.
Inclusive implementation	Ensuring that women and men are actively encouraged and supported to participate in programmes at all stages.	Setting up consultation and information sessions with indigenous leaders and communities to increase the understanding of programmes and benefits.	Implementing complementary activities. Ex: outreach and referral services that raise community awareness and allow children and families to access benefits and/or specialized services.
Inclusive evaluation	Assessing outcomes such as intra-household impacts, participation, and empowerment.	Promoting the participation of indigenous groups in the monitoring and evaluation of social protection interventions.	Integrating disaggregated data into national surveys and programme evaluations to measure whether people with disabilities and their families are being included.

Integrated Social Protection Systems

Effective integrated systems adopt a:

1) 'Systems Approach' which strengthens the institutions and mechanisms necessary to address multiple vulnerabilities in an integrated manner

2) 'Multi-sector Approach' to maximize linkages between social protection and outcomes in child protection, HIV/AIDS, education and health – among other areas

UNICEF promotes the development and strengthening of integrated social protection systems as a highly effective approach for addressing the multiple and compounding vulnerabilities faced by children and their families. Two key components are required for functional and effective integrated systems: a systems and a multi-sector approach.

Integrated social protection systems:

- Address both social and economic vulnerabilities
- Provide a comprehensive set of interventions based on assessed needs and context
- Go beyond risk management interventions and safety nets to integrate responses to structural as well as shock-related vulnerabilities
- Facilitate a multi-sector approach and coordination
- Coordinate with appropriate supply-side investments to enhance availability and quality of services
- Frame social protection strategies within a broader set of social and economic policies that promote human development and growth

UNICEF's support to the development of integrated social protection systems is a contribution to the broader Social Protection Floor Initiative, adopted by the UN Chief Executives Board in 2009, particularly by supporting countries in developing their own context-specific social protection floors in line with national priorities. A Social Protection Floor (SPF) is the first level of a comprehensive national social protection system that helps realize human rights for all through guaranteeing: universal access to essential services and social transfers in cash or in kind.

■ Systems Approach: Key structures and mechanisms

A 'Systems Approach' develops and strengthens the structures and mechanisms that facilitate the integration of a network of interventions and policies to effectively address multiple vulnerabilities. These include: institutional arrangements and administrative systems, mechanisms for horizontal and vertical coordination, the use of vulnerability assessments, strong monitoring and evaluation systems, and processes for participation and accountability.

Selection of appropriate design:

The role of vulnerability assessments

A key starting point for design and implementation of social protection programmes and policies are vulnerability and child poverty assessments. Based on a multi-dimensional poverty approach, a solid understanding of the factors that render different children, women and households vulnerable and prioritization among these is critical to guiding the selection of the most relevant approach and potential interventions. It is important to note that understanding the key sources of vulnerability and characteristics of those who are vulnerable is not the same as identifying 'vulnerable groups' – children living on the street, orphans, widows, etc. Although these groups often are very vulnerable, they also share many sources of vulnerability with the broader population. This requires wider policy responses that tackle these shared sources of vulnerability, sometimes alongside more tailored programmes to address factors specific to these groups.

Institutional frameworks and mechanisms to facilitate systems integration

In establishing an effective institutional framework, one important element is a comprehensive strategy/policy that clearly defines and delineates the country's approach to social protection (e.g., national poverty reduction strategy, national social protection policy). A second is the identification of the most appropriate structures to provide strategic guidance and oversee implementation, such as an inter-ministerial committee or specialized social protection unit under a planning unit.

Integrated social protection systems require developing or strengthening specific administrative mechanisms. A critical tool is monitoring information systems (MIS) to ensure effective management of information, programme management, and accountability across programmes. As part of MIS, a single registry/beneficiary system can also create opportunities to harmonize and integrate social protection approaches across sector mandates and ministries and to ensure the provision of an integrated package of social protection services and benefits.

Strong horizontal and vertical linkages also facilitate integration. Horizontal linkages require developing mechanisms to identify and operationalize links between social protection programmes and sector outcomes, including inter-ministerial coordination bodies, common targeting systems, etc. From a vertical perspective, the implementation of social protec-

Implementation Debates

Conditionality

A growing body of evidence (see full Framework) suggests that both conditional transfers (given to beneficiaries conditional on particular actions such as sending children to school or attending regular health visits) and unconditional transfers (given to beneficiaries without any specific requirements beyond eligibility) have positive outcomes. The particular role of and attribution to conditionality remains an open debate. UNICEF has been mostly involved in supporting unconditional programmes and promotes a careful assessment of the context-specific added-value and feasibility of conditionality in light of its financial and administrative costs.

Graduation and Exit Strategies

A number of social protection programmes such as pensions and child benefits have in-built graduation mechanisms. When it comes to poverty-targeted transfers, however, there is debate on how to determine whether and when individuals no longer need external assistance from the programme. UNICEF's approach is that "graduation" can be achieved when children and their households become more resilient over time, and are no longer vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion. This requires that implementers go beyond current approaches which typically focus on income/asset thresholds to identifying indicators for resilience and sustainable graduation, which also take into consideration social vulnerabilities, the dynamic nature of movement in and out of poverty, and enabling external factors. This may also require promoting linkages between recipients and other social protection and poverty reduction programmes. Tools and practice in this area require further development.

tion programmes requires making sure different bodies and/or levels – national, regional, municipal, community – involved in implementation are coordinated.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are critical technical tools that provide insights on (i) the extent to which interventions are aligned with particular policy goals; (ii) how the programme is being implemented and delivered; and (iii) what adjustments can be made to improve effectiveness and impacts. In addition, results from monitoring and evaluation processes can also serve as effective policy tools, providing evidence to strengthen support behind a particular approach and intervention, sustain programmes even in contexts of political instability, and support proposed expansions and increases in budget allocations.

Despite acknowledging the importance of monitoring and evaluation systems, building effective systems remains a challenge for many countries. Key elements to consider include specific policy mandates and institutional structures that facilitate evaluations of programmes; institutional technical and financial capacity to oversee evaluation processes; and data availability and appropriate collection mechanisms.

Participation and Accountability

Participation of key stakeholders and citizens is essential for validating social protection policies and their redistribution mechanisms; to enhance their relevance, appropriateness and

ownership; and to ensure their effective implementation. In policy formulation and design, it is important to allow for consultation and participation when defining policies and strategies, identifying vulnerabilities and needs, and designing specific interventions. In the implementation phase, the participation of community case workers, civil society organizations and other support workers can play a role in the accompaniment of beneficiaries – increasing their knowledge of programme operations and processes, as well as strengthening their capacity to claim rights to social protection.

Also critical is building strong accountability mechanisms and facilitating their use at the local level. Civil society and other non-state actors can play an important role in monitoring the effective delivery and transparency of programmes. Examples of potential mechanisms to facilitate accountability may include: complaints mechanisms, community scorecards to rate service providers, community verification of participant lists, among others.

Participation of key stakeholders and citizens and strong accountability mechanisms are essential. Civil society and other non-state actors can play an important role in supporting participation, monitoring effective delivery, and ensuring transparency.

■ Multi-sectoral Approach: Social protection as a tool for enhancing sector outcomes

A 'Multi-sector Approach' identifies and maximizes linkages between social protection and sector outcomes (e.g. education, health, nutrition, early childhood development, water and sanitation, child protection and HIV/AIDS). For instance, well-functioning social protection systems can contribute to addressing some of the underlying causes of increased risk of violence, abuse and neglect of children. Similarly, interventions such as social health insurance, removal of user fees and cash transfers can reduce key financial barriers to accessing effective health services and/or covering related costs such as transportation and supplies. In relation to HIV/AIDS, a combination of cash transfers, social support services and anti-discrimination legislation can support HIV prevention, treatment and mitigation objectives. Family policies and legislation, such as parental leave and accessible child care, allow parents to spend more quality time with their children and thus contribute to an environment that is conducive to a healthy and balanced development for young children.

Reaching specific and equitable sector outcomes such as child survival or education for all, relies on a set of enabling factors: (i) equitable access to services and goods; (ii) social inclusion; as well as (iii) changes in behavior; and (iv) supply of adequate and efficient services. Social protection can have a direct impact on the removal of social and economic barriers preventing access to the basic services and goods required to improve human development outcomes, and it can indirectly encourage increased availability and quality of services.

By addressing economic and social barriers that stand in the way of accessing services and strengthening families' capacity to care for their children, social protection can help achieve more equitable outcomes across sectors. Evidence and UNICEF's own experience demonstrate the role of social protection in improving the lives of children, families and communities, often with stronger impacts for the poorest and most disadvantaged. Sustainable and long-term impacts of social protection interventions on sector outcomes are closely linked to complementary investments in the supply of services: quality, socio-cultural pertinence and financing.

■ Key Policy Issues and Challenges

Social Protection Financing

Despite the recognized benefits of social protection, adequate financing remains a key challenge and debate. Many argue that social protection for children is not affordable in developing countries because of a loss in potential investment/GDP and the assumption that it will create unmanageable fiscal deficits. However, the Framework shows how investment in social protection and children can result in positive immediate and long-term economic and social returns. And, UNICEF research shows that fiscal space for social protection exists even in very poor countries.

The relevant question is where and how resources should be spent to maximum benefit and what long-term financing strategies are feasible for progressive expansion of coverage. This assessment is not only a technical question but also a political choice. As such, implementers should consider cost estimates of different social protection options and cost-benefit analyses of social protection programmes vis-à-vis other policy options. These analyses should take into account the short-term effects of social protection as well as its indirect and long-term impacts. Domestic and international financing options available to countries include raising domestic tax revenues, reallocating public expenditure, and using international assistance. The political, administrative and fiscal feasibility and relevance of different financing options will vary and needs to be assessed in each country's context.

Sequencing and Prioritization

The design and implementation of social protection programmes and policies entail prioritizing investments and developing the most appropriate sequence to reach desired objectives and long-term goals. The different pathways and choices of strategies and building blocks will depend on national social protection objectives and current political and institutional context. However, the following should be considered:

- UNICEF supports countries considering putting in place a national Social Protection Floor – guaranteeing access to essential services and social transfers – as an initial step.
- Selection of the most appropriate programmes should be based on assessments of poverty and vulnerability, institutional capacity and existing programme evaluations.

Social protection can help achieve more equitable outcomes across sectors. Evidence and UNICEF's own experience demonstrate the role of social protection in improving the lives of children, families and communities, often with stronger impacts for the poorest and most disadvantaged.

Key Emerging Areas for Social Protection

Humanitarian action

UNICEF uses a broad definition of humanitarian action – one which 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 and 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. As this is an emerging area for social protection, there is still a need for enhancing evidence on the characteristics 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 international and internal 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.

- Progressive expansion of coverage should be pursued commensurate with evolving fiscal and administrative capacity.
- Social protection can be affordable, even in budget-constrained settings.

The Politics of Social Protection

It is critical to understand and assess the political factors that influence social protection and its impact on the relationship between states and citizens. These factors include: formal and informal institutions, such as legal frameworks and social norms; the role of key decision-making actors ranging from policy makers to community leaders, to donors; and governance structures, which affect the efficiency and transparency of programmes. Practitioners should keep in mind that these elements influence not only the ultimate design, implementation and evaluation of programmes, but also which interventions are conceived as feasible and affordable.

Institutional Capacity

A key challenge in the effective implementation of integrated social protection systems is institutional and administrative capacity at all levels: national, regional and local/community. The success of social protection programmes in fostering demand for services may itself put a strain on institutional capacity. Organizations such as UNICEF can help by providing support to sequencing decisions, avoiding complex programme design, enhancing ministries' monitoring and information systems, promoting collaboration with other countries, and engaging non-state actors.

Social protection systems can be sustainably financed. Affordability and financing are not only technical questions but also political choices.

The Road Ahead

The current context is deepening challenges to social protection programming and there remain areas that need to be strengthened to achieve equitable and sustainable social protection systems. In response, UNICEF proposes a collaborative agenda for action (see back cover), as a starting point for further policy dialogue, joint learning, and action with partners.

■ UNICEF's Role

UNICEF is committed to contributing to the emerging social protection agenda, working in partnership with key actors and stakeholders. The following areas outline UNICEF's contribution to the overall agenda for action (see back cover). These areas are essential in order to realize the full potential of sustainable social protection systems in enhancing equity for children, and reflect UNICEF's value-added, given its mandate, extensive field presence and partnerships.

Support consolidation and innovation in practice to strengthen integrated social protection systems

- Support governments in strengthening context-specific, integrated and inclusive social protection systems, through technical support, analysis and policy dialogue.
- Facilitate exchange and document practice on building, strengthening and expanding integrated social protection systems, including different successful pathways in progressive realization of universal coverage.
- Develop analysis and policy tools on the essential elements and successful policy and implementation options for strengthening social protection systems.
- Develop and/or enhance innovative tools to support countries in costing and financing social protection, including in fiscally constrained settings.

Convene multiple partners and facilitate coordination

- Build on the existing multi-sector structure within UNICEF to bring together relevant sectors to identify common goals and integrated strategies.
- Support strengthened vertical and horizontal coordination, building on presence in the field and relationships with national and local governments and civil society.

- At all levels, advocate and support increased coordination among international partners, including through existing multi-partner initiatives such as the Social Protection Floor.

Lead efforts to promote child- and gender-sensitive social protection

- Support learning, knowledge development and dissemination on “what works for children.”
- Support governments and civil society in ensuring that social protection programmes are child- and gender-sensitive.
- Link child-sensitive social protection with the well-being of caretakers and to other stages of the life cycle.

Advocate for and support social protection measures that address social and economic vulnerabilities together

- Develop guidance on effective mainstreaming of social inclusion in social protection programmes and policies.
- Document the impacts of social protection programmes on social inclusion and good practice in implementing inclusive social protection programmes and policies.
- Strengthen evidence on the economic and social returns of social protection investment.

Humanitarian action and social protection

As a recognized partner in humanitarian action and social protection and given its extensive field presence, UNICEF will facilitate practice, learning and evidence in linking social protection and humanitarian action, including in fragile contexts.

Facilitate knowledge generation and exchange

UNICEF will support knowledge creation, innovation and dissemination to improve practice and address gaps. Specifically, it will mobilize its technical staff, partnerships and wider networks of experts to:

- Bring together practitioners, policy makers, programme participants and researchers to share experiences, problem-solve and disseminate learning through mechanisms such as communities of practice and South-South exchange.
- Provide technical support to the implementation of rigorous quantitative and qualitative impact evaluations, which help capture why and how programmes are effective.

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Proposal for a Collaborative Agenda for Action

UNICEF puts forward this agenda for action as a starting point for further dialogue and collaboration with partners, which it believes is critical to maximizing the potential of social protection for furthering children's rights and well-being and for achieving equitable and sustainable social protection systems for all.

Expand and strengthen integrated social protection systems to respond to the multiple and compounding vulnerabilities faced by children and their families

- Identify the most appropriate and effective building blocks towards integration in different contexts, as well as the most appropriate sequencing of interventions to support expansion.
- Strengthen practice and evidence on the combination of policies, programmes and mechanisms that are most effective (in terms of costs and impacts), given specific contexts and stages of development of particular systems.

Identify effective and sustainable financing for expansion and strengthening of social protection

- Develop and enhance tools to help governments evaluate the potential costs of alternative options in the reform or expansion of systems.
- Assess financing options available in terms of impact and sustainability, and how to plan the right mix of financing options over time.
- Advocate for and protect investment in social protection, including in contexts of fiscal austerity and contraction.

Address social dimensions of vulnerability in social protection programmes

- Increase attention to social determinants of vulnerability in social protection objectives and selection of social protection instruments.
- Enhance good practice, guidance, and tools to effectively mainstream social inclusion in the design of social protection programmes.

Improve coordination

- Harmonize, among key national and international players, to present coherent support to governments and programme participants.
- Recognizing the value-added of each stakeholder, identify effective linkages between interventions to maximize synergies and common agendas.

Improve practice in linking humanitarian action and social protection

- Identify potential contributions of social protection systems across the different stages of humanitarian action (preparedness and risk management, emergency response and early recovery, and recovery).
- Provide practical guidance on how to balance the urgency of immediate response and support to building blocks for integrated, long-term systems.
- Strengthen vulnerability assessments in high-risk contexts, including integrating social protection responses in early warning systems.

Knowledge exchange and learning

- Identify and support effective approaches for knowledge exchange and innovative structures for building knowledge among different actors.
- Identify lessons learned, replicable interventions, innovative solutions, and gaps on common policy and operational challenges in different contexts.