

CATALYSING UN ACTION TO RESCUE THE SDGS

FINAL REPORT ON THE SOCIAL PROTECTION AND
LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND JOINT PROGRAMMES

2022



JOINT SDG FUND



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Cover: Madagascar: Mija Anjarasoa, 17, looks out the window of her home while studying. Mija participates in a catch-up class at the Soanierana General Education College in Manantantely and aspires to become a midwife after she finishes her schooling. UNICEF works in southern Madagascar with local NGOs that focus on adolescents and youth through various protection, education and social integration programs. Education activities include life skills programmes and catch-up classes for students who are behind in their education. ©UNICEF/UN0438181/Ramasomanana

FOREWORD

The Covid-19 pandemic and the more recent food, energy and financing global crisis have reversed decades of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **Extreme poverty has increased for the first time in a generation** with an estimated 75 to 95 million more people living under USD \$2.15 a day in 2022¹. Children and women have been affected disproportionately with missed education opportunities, job losses, persistently unpaid domestic work and a growing prevalence of domestic violence. Before 2020, the world already needed ambitious and innovative actions to achieve the SDGs. More than ever, we need to join efforts to regain the lost ground and get back on track. **We do not only need to make progress, we need to accelerate it.** The time to rescue the SDGs is now.

The Joint SDG Fund was designed to supercharge the United Nations to accelerate progress of the SDGs for inclusive and resilient societies. The Fund is an inter-agency mechanism that incentivizes **transformative policy shifts and strategic investments** for the SDGs. The Fund provides United Nations Resident Coordinators with an instrument for government capacity development and financing through strengthened UN Country team **coherence** and enhanced **cross-sectoral** impact. The goal is to **break down silos across sectors and institutions with innovative solutions** that build synergies and strategically channel scarce resources into catalytic policy transformations.

Through its first portfolio of **35 joint programmes** on integrated social protection and Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), the Fund enabled at least **147 million people** to access new or extended social protection services and programmes from governments, including 62 million women and girls. This includes Norma Palacios from Mexico, a domestic worker for over 25 years, who is now entitled to pension, sickness and maternity benefits, and is a member of a labour union.

The Fund also catalysed at least **US\$ 211 million** in additional financing to sustain and expand social protection systems, while **accelerating the progress on 11 SDGs** across 39 countries with 17 UN entities. The broader impact was demonstrated in Somalia, where government engaged with International Financing Institutions to further **scale investments into safety nets**, a critical factor for creating a sense of solidarity in the context of state building.

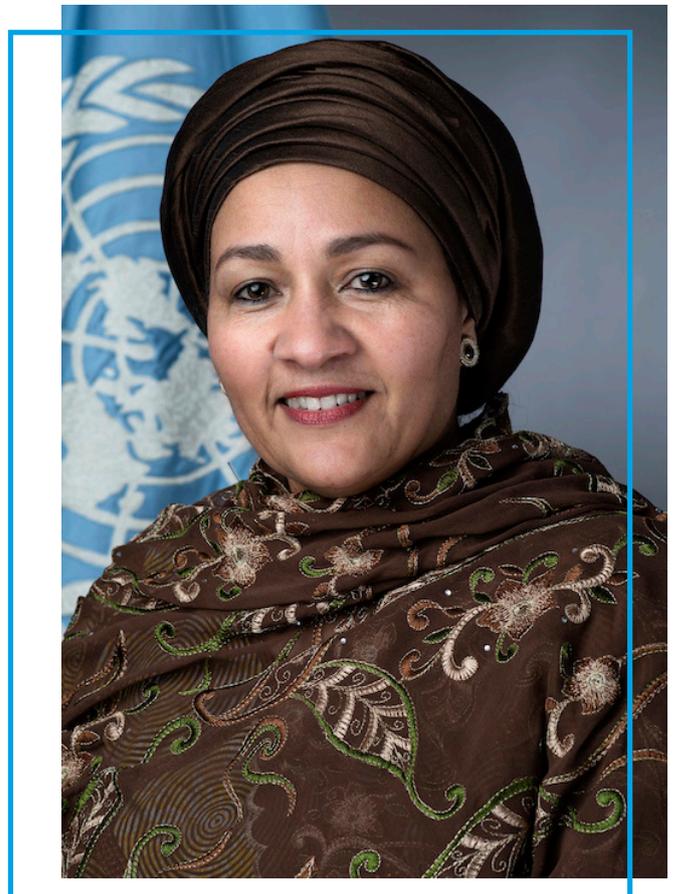
These joint programmes have been remarkable in catalysing UN collaboration and enhancing the coherence and effectiveness of the UN system at country level. As a global instrument, the Fund also actively facilitated learning and collaboration between diverse stakeholders across countries and regions. Over 600 local partners in the portfolio included **civil society organizations**, such as those in Albania that produced six watchdog reports on gender-integrated social care services, expenditures and accountability.

1. As reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals 2022: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>

Further investments are required to put the world on a path of sustainable development. Building on its unique track record in driving policy innovation, capacity development, and Member-state financing of integrated social protection systems, and the progress made in Bangladesh and Costa Rica on decent jobs for women in agriculture, the Fund will support the **Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions**. The portfolio on social protection and LNOB has also provided a foundation for future high-quality joint programmes on food systems and digital transformations, with the special focus on localisation to support governments across regions to deliver on their commitment to accelerate the SDGs

The Joint SDG Fund stands as an innovative and successful mechanism to accelerate the SDGs. **Continuous support to the Joint SDG Fund will multiply national efforts and galvanize acceleration of progress towards the SDGs.**

Ms. Amina Mohammed
Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations



PREFACE

In just over two years and amidst a global pandemic, the Joint SDG Fund proved that strategically directed financing and partnerships can make **significant contributions to accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Through the joint programmes on **integrated social protection and Leaving No One Behind**, the Joint SDG Fund incentivised systemic change and innovation, stimulating strategic investments that are accelerating progress towards the SDGs through enhanced collaboration and synergies between United Nations entities in support of policy integration at country level. Guided by national partners, the **35 joint programmes unlocked a range of policy, institutional and financial bottlenecks to strengthen social protection systems** in implementing countries and to contribute to Leave No One Behind.

Across the portfolio, 33 joint programmes **extended social protection coverage**, and 31 joint programmes **contributed to enhance the comprehensiveness of social protection systems and programs**. Interventions provided systemic support to persons in vulnerable situations including women, children, older people, persons with disabilities and pregnant women. All 35 joint programmes designed specific interventions to promote gender equality, and at least 62 million women benefited from expanded access to new or extended social protection benefits. The portfolio also made significant contributions in supporting shifts towards more inclusive social protection systems, with more than two thirds of the joint programmes providing specific attention to persons with disabilities.

The **flexibility and demand-based approach** of the Fund addressed the specific needs of the diverse countries benefiting from integrated support by United Nations country teams and proved to be critical in effectively responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. The joint programmes contributed to **mitigating the socio-economic impact of the pandemic** through the provision of immediate social protection support alongside policy and capacity development efforts to make social protection programs and systems more shock-responsive and build resilience .

Implementation of the joint programmes involved more than **600 partners** from governments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations. In the United Nations system, 15 United Nations entities and two Regional Economic Commissions also collaborated in its implementation. These partnerships incubated over 100 integrated policy solutions that facilitated cross-sectoral results at scale. Despite the complexity, all joint programmes reported increased **United Nations coherence** and efficacy, and cost-effectiveness.

Thanks to its catalytic impact, the Fund is now well positioned as a preferred venue to **incubate new thematic funding windows on integrated policy approaches for the 2030 Agenda**, such as one in support of the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions. The Fund has also demonstrated responsiveness to and anticipation of emerging global development challenges, by establishing a Development Emergency Modality which is enabling rapid interventions at country level to support collective responses to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the global crisis on food, energy and finance.

This report showcases key achievements and the bottom-up approaches **to improve social protection systems** and catalyse the achievement of the SDGs. These resulting lessons learned, and best practices can inform further investments, driving continuous innovation and increasing the catalytic impact of the Joint SDG Fund. I encourage all partners to support this momentum and engage with the Joint SDG Fund, the Resident Coordinators, and United Nations Country Teams in accelerating sustainable development in the way that **Leaves No One Behind**.



Mr. Haoliang Xu

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Director of Bureau for Policy and Programme Support Chair of the Operational Steering Committee of the Joint SDG Fund

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by Patrick Breard (International Consultant). Nenad Rava (Joint SDG Fund) led the production of the report. Maya Márquez Román (Joint SDG Fund) coordinated the development process and contributed to the report. The core team also included Tomoo Okubo (UNICEF) and Veronika Wodsak (ILO) who co-managed the process and supported strategic focus and technical coherence of the report. Lisa Kurbiel (Joint SDG Fund) and Heewoong Kim (Joint SDG Fund) provided overall guidance and quality assurance.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Joint SDG Fund (the Fund) was launched in 2018 to catalyse acceleration of the progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while facilitating the United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform. The core mandate of the Fund is to invest in solutions that produce transformative results that catalyse systemic change in an integrated, cross-sectoral manner.

In 2020 the Fund supported the launch of a first portfolio of 35 joint programmes on **Integrated Social Protection and Leave No One Behind (LNOB)**. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinators (RCs), the joint work of participating United Nations organisations has supported governments reach **147 million additional persons who benefited from the Fund's investment by expanding access to new or extended social protection benefits**.

This report presents the Fund's impact and lessons learned. Particular emphasis was put on illustrating **the "how"** - joint programmes' contribution to the reform of the UNDS through joint action led by the RCs - and **the "what"** - catalytic impact that "breaks down the silos" to accelerate the SDGs.

The report conveys results and best practices, and reviews country case on extending social protection systems by supporting policy and legislative reforms, strengthening implementation mechanisms (such as social registries and data management systems), and improving public financial management. The report also explores the **scaling and spill-over effects** of binding UN expertise, networks, and partnerships for increased UN coherence and catalytic impact.

LNOB lenses in social protection are highlighted through the support provided to human rights in national action, empowering women and promoting gender equality, and addressing the needs of people with disabilities. The portfolio was launched at the onset of the global pandemic. A chapter looks at how the joint programmes adapted to the new context and responded to **the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic**, primarily through Shock Responsive Social Protection.

All joint programmes engaged into innovative solutions, knowledge creation, and learning, with most illustrative examples presented in the final chapter.

The report concludes by underlying the contribution of integrated social protection and LNOB joint programmes for setting the **foundation for the upcoming thematic windows**. As the Fund moves into the next phase outlined in its 2023-2026 Strategy "Financing Catalytic Action for the SDGs," this first investment portfolio is expected to be upscaled through key SDG transformation priorities, including on food systems, digital transformation, energy and climate, decent jobs and social protection, transforming education, SDG localization, and development solutions for internal displacement.

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INTRODUCTION

“The Joint SDG Fund is a critical lever for collective action on the ground and a vehicle for United Nations Resident Coordinators to leverage significance amounts of SDG financing into Joint Programmes, making it successful to the United Nations Development System reform.”

-Robert Piper, former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Development Coordination, 2021

The **Joint SDG Fund** was established in 2018 to incentivize transformative policy shifts and stimulate the strategic investments required to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the country level. The Fund operates on a two-fold strategic mandate to supercharge the United Nations Development System (UNDS) to be fit for purpose and to catalyse systemic transitions at the country level in areas of integrated policy and financing to accelerate the SDGs. The Fund provides United Nations Resident Coordinators with an instrument that strengthens the coherence of the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) and triggers cross-sectoral impact by investing in solutions that induce and accelerate change across systems, sectors and industries, and produce transformative results at scale.

In March 2019, the Fund launched its first global Call for Concept Notes to support integrated policy for SDG acceleration focusing on **Social Protection and Leave No One Behind (LNOB)**, particularly on the most vulnerable and marginalized – including children, adolescents, people with disabilities, minorities and older persons. A total of 114 UNCTs applied, and the top 35 proposals were selected, leading to the development of joint programmes in 39 countries with a total funding of \$101 million over two years (Box 1). Joint programmes were launched in 2020 and completed in 2022.

FACTS AND FIGURES OF THE FUND'S PORTFOLIO ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

● ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FUND	2018
● CALL FOR CONCEPT NOTES	MARCH 2019
● UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM APPLICANTS	114
● SELECTED JOINT PROGRAMMES	35
● IMPLEMENTING COUNTRIES	39
● IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD	2020-2022
● FUNDING	US\$ 69 MILLION
● CO-FUNDING	US\$ 31.5 MILLION
● UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES	16
● PARTNERS	600+
● SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS COVERED	11
● SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL TARGETS	53
● INTEGRATED POLICY SOLUTIONS	100+
● BENEFICIARIES	147 MILLION PEOPLE

Box 1.

“The Joint SDG Fund was essential in enabling UN agencies to come together and articulate the work to promote sustainable and inclusive development, placing the elderly at the center of development agenda in Chile. This is the result of a wide alliance with State, academia and civil society.”

-Maria Jose Torres Macho, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Chile, 2022

The geographic coverage of the portfolio spanned across all regions (Figure 1) with a prevalence of joint programmes in Africa (34 per cent), followed by Asia and the Pacific (26 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (20 per cent), Europe and Central Asia (14 per cent) and the Arab States (6 per cent). Countries that implemented joint programmes included 10 least developed countries, seven Small Island Developing States (SIDS), four countries in fragile situations and three conflict-affected countries.

Figure 1. Countries of the United Nations Joint SDG Fund’s joint programmes on Social Protection and Leave No One Behind



The implementation of the joint programmes was carried out by United Nations Country Teams, led by the Resident Coordinator. Sixteen United Nations entities and two Regional Economic Commissions collaborated within the United Nations system (Figure 2). The implementation involved over 600 partners from governments, civil society, national human rights institutions, the private sector, trade unions and employers’ associations, and international financial organizations.

Figure 2. United Nations entities involved in the implementation of joint programmes



The interventions supported by the Fund offer many good examples of scaling developmental impact. The Fund has built a culture of learning and sharing lessons with its network of diverse partners. This report is based on the final reports of the joint programmes². The next chapters highlight some of the multi-faceted contributions of the joint programmes to SDG acceleration with a view to inform future programming and foster new partnerships.

Chapter 1: highlights the key achievements of the portfolio, also positioned along its Theory of Change. Several lessons formulated by the joint programmes are also proposed.

Chapter 2: focuses on the Fund's experiences and lessons in strengthening social protection systems through joint UN action. The chapter explores the contribution of the portfolio to extending social protection coverage through interventions spanning from reforming the policy and legislative frameworks, to strengthening implementation mechanisms, or supporting national partners in increasing social protection financing.

Chapter 3: reviews the achievements of the fund in bringing systemic change to accelerate the SDGs. All joint programmes have designed and implemented system-wide interventions that bound several SDGs to ensure coherent and catalytic transformations.

Chapter 4: illustrates the synergies enabled by the Fund and how enhancing UN coherence and policy integration brought scaling and spill over effects.

Chapter 5: focuses on the added value that the portfolio of 35 Joint Programmes realized in promoting and integrating Human Rights in national action.

Chapter 6: reviews some achievements of the portfolio in empowering women and promoting gender equality, including by promoting women's participation and leadership.

Chapter 7: covers one of the priority groups of the portfolio by presenting different modalities of interventions through which joint programmes addressed the needs of people with disabilities.

Chapter 8: recalls that the portfolio was launched at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter addresses Shock Responsive Social Protection and also presents how joint programmes adapted to the new context and responded to COVID-19.

Chapter 9: showcases some of the joint programmes' agility, innovation, knowledge creation, and learning, which were common strands across the portfolio.

Conclusion: highlights the joint programmes' entry points for strengthening social protection systems and accelerating the SDGs. The chapter also provides the way forward for the Fund, building on the Social Protection and LNOB portfolio, including upcoming SDG transformation priorities from the Fund's 2023-2026 Strategy.

2. This report relied on the final reports of 34 joint programmes. Information from South Africa was based on the joint programme's 2022 annual report and on a semestrial update. The Joint SDG Fund requested every joint programme to carry out an external independent evaluation in line with the policies and procedures of the leading participating United Nations organization. The evaluations of the joint programmes were reviewed and informed this report. However, this report is not an evaluation synthesis.



Photo: UNDP PAPP / Abed Zagout

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PORTFOLIO ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND



Photo: UNICEF

As the United Nations flagship global development fund, the Joint SDG Fund (the Fund) operates on a two-fold strategic mandate to **supercharge the United Nations Development System to be fit for purpose**, and to catalyse systemic transitions at the country level in areas of integrated policy and financing **to accelerate the achievement towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Amidst a global health and socio-economic crisis caused by COVID-19, the portfolio has made a significant contribution to achieving the objectives of the Joint SDG Fund.

Altogether, joint programmes covered 11 SDGs and a total of 53 SDG targets. The most frequently covered SDGs were: SDG 1 – No poverty (35 joint programmes); SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities (23); SDG 5 – Gender equality (19); SDG 2 – Zero hunger (16); SDG 16 – Peace, justice, and strong institutions (14); and SDG 3 – Good health (14). On average, joint programmes contributed to four SDGs, and the most cross-sectoral programme extended to as many as nine.

Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinators, the joint work of United Nations agencies has supported governments reach 147 million additional persons who benefited from the Joint SDG Fund's investment by expanding access to new or extended social protection benefits.

The vast majority of the joint programmes reported the achievement of all or most of their expected final results. A total of **30 joint programmes** contributed to design integrated multi-sectoral policies that **accelerated SDG progress** in terms of scope³, and **25 joint programmes** contributed with multi-sectoral policies that **accelerated SDG progress in terms of scale**⁴.

Based on the final and progress reports⁵, **34 joint programmes reported an improvement in the overall coherence and coordination of the UNCTs**. The implementation of the programmes was found to be more efficient as a result of improved coordination among participating United Nations agencies and to cross-sectoral interactions with national, regional and local authorities, and with public entities.

In promoting systemic interventions, overall, the theory of change of the portfolio proved to be robust across the impact pathways, i.e. policy development, capacity development, financing development, partnership and advocacy, and global management and facilitation (Figure 3). However, one of the most common challenges faced by the joint programmes was induced by the pandemic. Programme implementation was frequently delayed due to lockdowns or travel restrictions often resulting in the shutdown of most operations for several months. Many joint programmes turned to online solutions and to relying on increased local capacities to mitigate the effects of the crisis. All joint programmes were granted an automatic no-cost extension of 2 to 3 months and were able to repurpose up to 20 per cent of their funding in 2020 to emergency response to the COVID-19 crisis. Joint programmes adapted to the new context and responded to COVID-19, particularly given that social protection for the most vulnerable proved essential to address the immediate and systemic impact of the pandemic. All joint programmes contributed to mitigate the health and socio-economic impact of the crisis, mostly through shock-responsive social protection.

Despite the remarkable achievements of the portfolio, numerous challenges remain towards achieving universal social protection as a critical policy intervention ensuring no one is left behind. Furthermore, with the prolongation of the COVID-19 pandemic, growing economic uncertainties, and rising political instabilities, the world is off track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, financing for the SDGs was falling short of expectations. **Looking forward, the Fund will continue incentivizing high-quality, integrated policy advice and support that leverages the comparative advantages and capacities of United Nations entities to provide integrated transformative support for the SDGs**⁶.

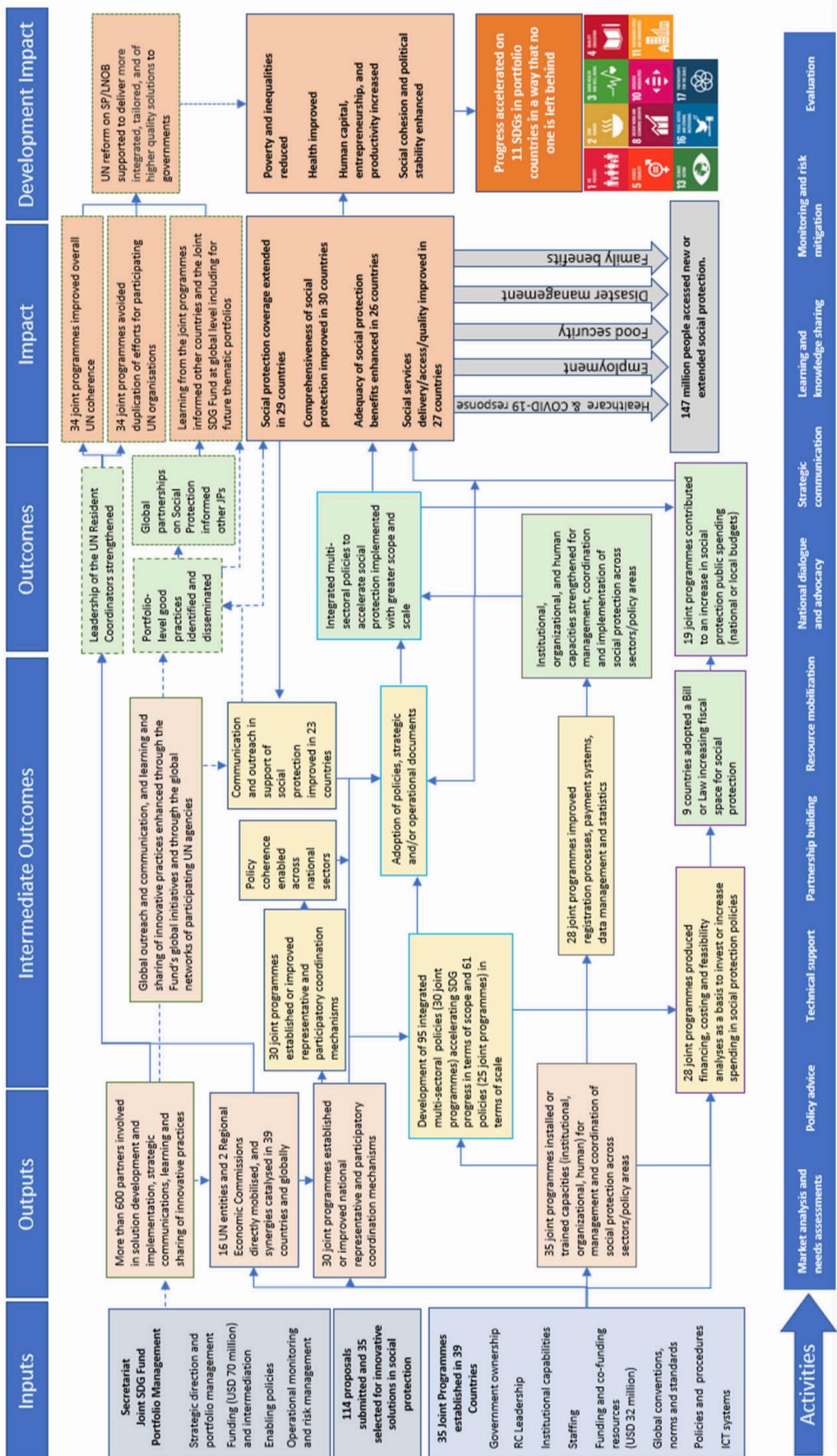
3. Scope = substantive expansion: additional thematic areas/components added, or mechanisms/systems replicated.

4. Scale = geographical expansion: local solutions adopted at the regional and national levels, or a national solution adopted in one or more countries.

5. This report is based on the final implementation reports and questionnaires submitted by 34 joint programmes and on the 2021 annual progress report for one joint programme (South Africa).

6. United Nations, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council. 2021. Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 71/243 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System: Report of the Secretary-General, A/76/75 (26 April 2021). New York.

FIGURE 3: A SIMPLIFIED THEORY OF CHANGE AND HIGHLIGHTED ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PORTFOLIO





Top: UN Montenegro / Milos Vujovic Left: UNICEF Gabon / Harandane Dicko Right: UNICEF Ecuador / Marcos Pin Mendez



Photo: UNICEF Samoa / Alvaro Hoyos

STRENGTHENING SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS THROUGH JOINT UNITED NATIONS ACTION

Protecting people against life-cycle risks and covariate shocks to ensure at least basic income security and access to health and other crucial services has become a critical matter for people around the world suffering from compounded shocks caused by poverty, droughts, floods, violent conflicts, loss of livelihoods and price shocks of basic commodities. The massive social and economic consequences of these shocks, including of the COVID-19 pandemic, are painful reminders of the importance of social protection systems, which has long been recognized by the international community and embedded in the human rights treaties, and also reaffirmed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Yet, more than half of the world's population, over 4 billion people, do not have access to any social protection.



Photo: United Nations Flag / UN

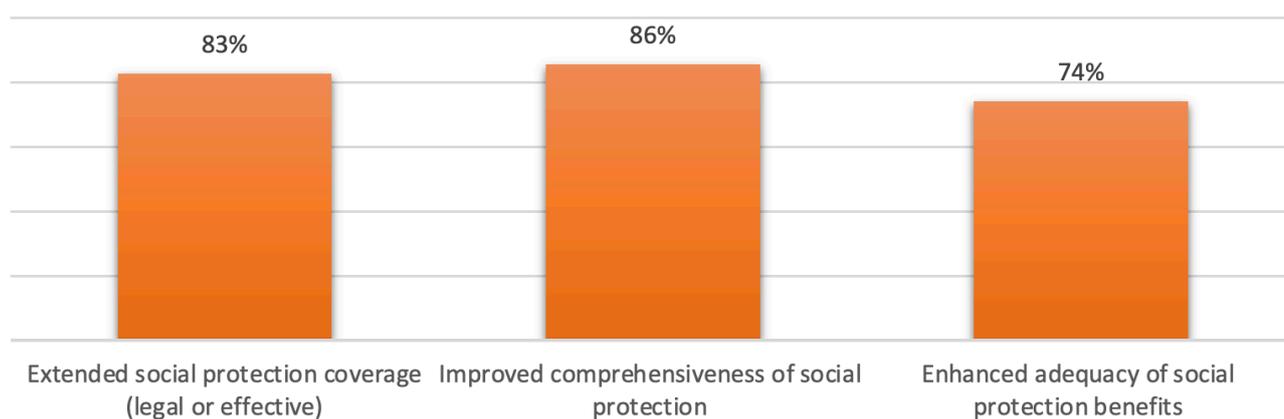
“The Joint SDG Fund was essential in enabling UN agencies to come together and provide a joint response on integrated social protection in Albania and Montenegro.”

-Fiona McCluney, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Albania, 2022.

EXTENSION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

To move towards universal social protection and LNOB, the joint programmes funded by the **Joint SDG Fund contributed to extend social protection coverage (either legal/effective coverage or both) in 29 countries** (83 per cent of the portfolio). In 30 countries, the programmes improved the comprehensiveness of the social protection system, while 26 countries engaged in enhancing the adequacy of the benefits, usually by increasing cash benefits (Figure 4). An estimated **147 million** additional persons benefited from the Joint SDG Fund’s investment, including from new or extended access to social protection benefits.

Figure 4. Percentage of joint programmes that contributed to expanding social protection systems



While government leadership in making political commitments for expansion is the decisive factor in achieving progress, the United Nations’ support has played a crucial role in such decision-making, particularly during the global pandemic. This is a significant and concrete step forward in addressing the global gaps in reaching universal social protection. Increased access to social protection was mainly supported by the joint programme’s activities on the development or reform of policy or legal frameworks, addressing the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, strengthening the identification of target vulnerable populations, and improving benefit delivery mechanisms to reach more households. Across each modality, participating United Nations organizations maximized their comparative advantages and complementarities, including technical expertise and networks, to foster systemic approaches and accelerate results at scale.

National policies and legal frameworks are the foundation of social protection systems, and joint programmes are engaged in them to expand coverage towards universal social protection. Legal frameworks create an entitlement to social protection benefits, ensure the permanence of these initiatives, and give rights-holders the legal basis to invoke their rights⁷. Policies serve to shape the plan of action set out by the government, and in so doing put the executive’s vision and strategy regarding social protection into practice⁸. As such, engaging in policy and legal frameworks as part of the joint programme is a strategic and necessary lever that is fundamental to ensure predictability in the delivery of the various social protection benefits

“The Joint SDG Fund’s support made it possible for the United Nations to partner with Brazil on a crucial public policy aimed at early childhood development, which was scaled up to reach one and a half million people who are among the most vulnerable families in the country.”

-Samantha Salve United Nations Resident Coordinator, Brazil, 2022.

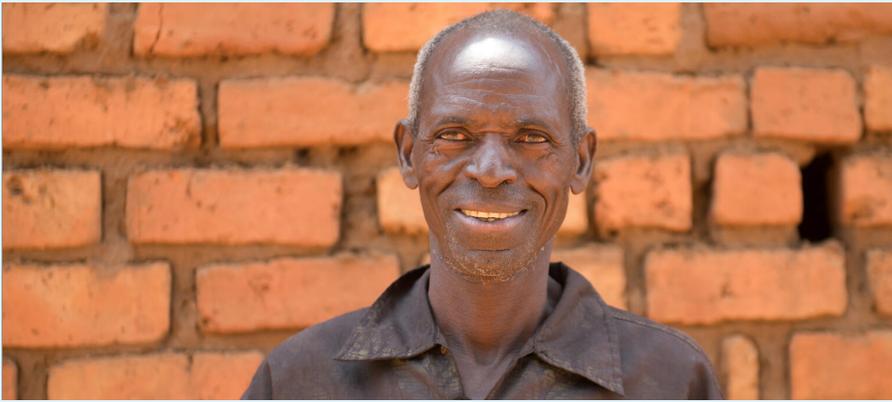
As the joint programmes were implemented during 2020–2022, it coincided with the surge of cases and restriction measures related to the COVID-19 outbreak. A rapid reallocation of up to 20 per cent of the joint programmes’ budgets to respond to the crisis supported the horizontal emergency expansion of either new or existing social protection cash transfers across different population groups at most risk of deeper poverty. More specifically, joint programmes provided technical support to adapt the design of social protection programmes to meet the most urgent needs, for example, by relaxing the targeting criteria to expand coverage, increasing frequency of payments and simplifying the processes for verifying eligibility criteria (e.g. in **Viet Nam**, or in **Malawi**, as illustrated in Box 2).

“Collectively the UN Country Team supported the strengthening the social protection system in Viet Nam to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of the population, including children, women (especially ethnic minority women), adolescents, persons living with disabilities, and the elderly.”

-Caitlin Wiesen, United Nations Resident Coordinator (a.i.), Viet Nam, 2022.

7. Sepulveda, M. and Nyst, C. 2012. The Human Rights Approach to Social Protection. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

8. The Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI) What Matters Guidance Note. <https://ispatools.org/tools/CODI-What-Matters.pdf>



SOCIAL PROTECTION TO ACHIEVE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN MALAWI

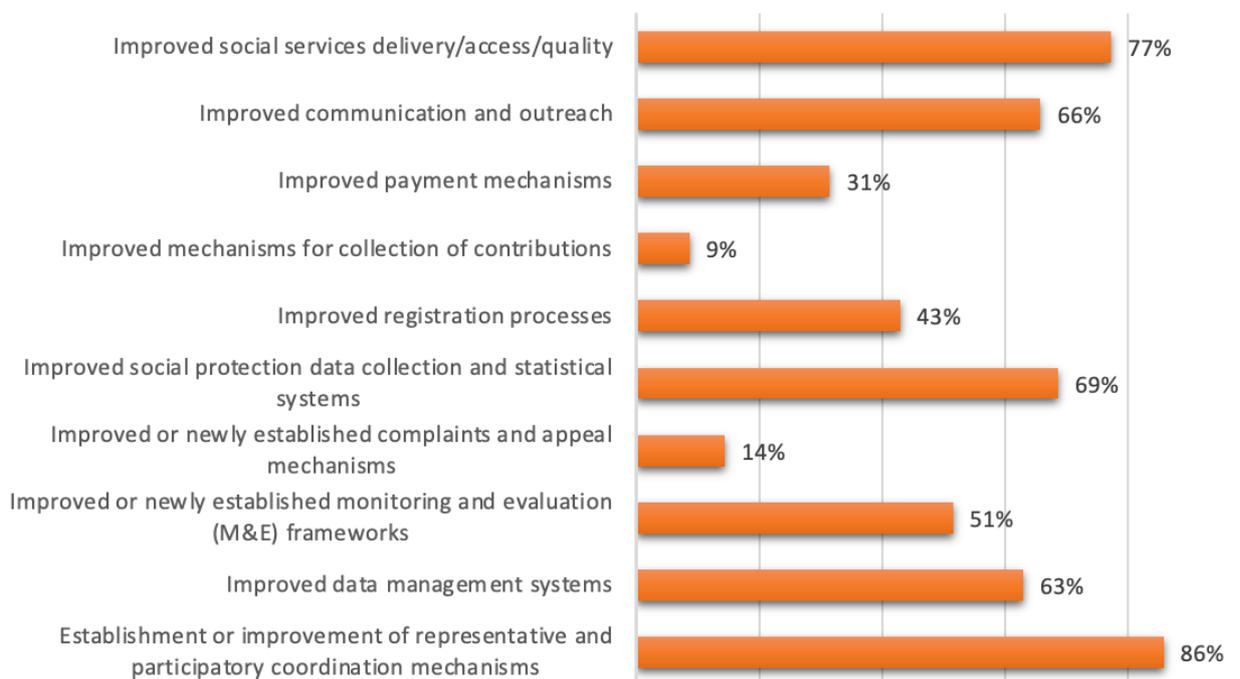
Box 2

The joint programme in [Malawi](#) linked up humanitarian and social protection processes, actors, and systems while reinforcing the financial and policy framework of social protection. The joint programme supported the Government to develop targeting tools, processes, and guidelines for the urban crisis cash response to identify geographical hotspots of vulnerability which were likely to be the most affected by the economic effects of COVID-19. In addition, the programme informed the Lean Season Response. Instead of using the international humanitarian system to target and deliver additional assistance, the national social protection system was strengthened and leveraged to meet both chronic and acute needs in the future.

The joint programme prompted **adaptations to the existing social protection system**, as well as supported a multisectoral participatory consultative process for a government-led review of the National Social Support Policy. This policy informed a policy framework document, which in turn will lead to an updated comprehensive policy. The latter, in addition to the advocacy on new social protection schemes, and specifically an old age pension scheme, will advance a more comprehensive and integrated social protection system, which may increase social protection coverage. The reviewed National Social Support Policy includes expanding the scope of social protection schemes, providing increased social security for the working age population, promoting productive activities, decent job creation, and fostering an enabling environment for job formalization. Contributory social insurance schemes are earmarked to be incorporated in the new Social Protection policy, including extension of the schemes to the informal economy. The extension of social insurance schemes is expected to provide coverage to potentially **8 million people in the labour force. In addition, critical work has paved the way for the adoption of an old age pensions scheme that, once adopted, is expected to support more than 600,000 people aged 65 and above.**

The joint programmes also contributed to the **strengthening of the implementation mechanisms** (e.g. social registries, data management systems) **to expand access to vulnerable individuals and households in order to ensure that the policy commitments would translate into direct impacts.** In particular, a range of joint programmes supported the improvement of data management systems and beneficiary registries to support better implementation of the social protection programmes (e.g. in Cambodia, as presented in Box 3). This support included establishing social registries and centralizing existing ones, utilizing new social registries to simplify the registration process, and expanding the functionalities of the management information systems to support the expansion in coverage. Improvement of data management systems was an area of focus for 22 joint programmes (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Percentage of joint programmes that contributed to enhance social protection mechanisms



“The Joint SDG Fund’s support helped catalyse immediate collective action in Cambodia. Nearly 2.8 million more Cambodians are now covered by social protection.”

-Pauline Tamesis, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Cambodia, 2021.

SUPPORTING THE NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY FRAMEWORK IN CAMBODIA



Photo: UNDP Cambodia

Box 3

With a total funding of US\$ 3.2 million, the joint programme in [Cambodia](#) focused on ensuring that government institutions are equipped to enhance policy coherence and provide better oversight over the social protection system. It also aimed to extend the scope and coverage of social protection benefits to uncovered groups through improved delivery of services. This included supporting the roll-out of the Cash Transfer Programme for Pregnant Women and Children under Two (CTPWCP) and the harmonization of social assistance programmes under the Family Package. The proposed Family Package integrates the four core social assistance programmes following a life-cycle approach, which covers pregnant women and children under two as well as persons with disability, an expanded Scholarship Programme, and the new Cash Transfer Programme for the elderly. The programme also sought to review and improve the comprehensiveness and consistency of the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) Framework and to build capacity within government institutions through training and digitalization of processes, such as online registrations, e-payments, and more efficient monitoring and evaluation.

A catalytic contribution of the programme consisted in the integration of the social protection sector through the development of integrated data systems, including the integrated cash transfer management information system, monitoring and evaluation dashboard, e-registration and e-payments of social protection benefits. The programme also proved to be catalytic in its contribution to the nationwide roll-out of the NSPP Framework. The Policy Framework and delivery systems built with contribution of the programme served as the basis for the rapid expansion of the national COVID-19 Cash Transfer Programme for the Poor and Vulnerable (COVID-19 CTP). The digitalized system built for the routine CTPWCP was upgraded to support the COVID-19 CTP and to reach significantly more households in need. During the two-year programme period, the coverage of the extremely poor expanded from very low and fragmented coverage to over **2.8 million people covered under COVID-19 cash transfer programmes**, and over **0.5 million children** from pre-birth to 18 years of age covered via routine programmes. CTPWCP currently covers **243,376 pregnant women and children under 2**. Extension of the Health Equity Funds to vulnerable workers in the informal sector was also done in 2021 and resulted in more than 50,000 new informal workers covered. Additionally, the program supported the development of a disability management information system that allowed identification and registration of 230,000 persons with disabilities.

Note: \$2 million by the Joint SDG Fund and \$1.2 million in co-funding by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labour Organization (ILO).

SOCIAL PROTECTION FINANCING AND UNITED NATIONS COLLABORATION UNDER THE JOINT SDG FUND

“The Joint SDG Fund’s investment in social protection has enhanced human capital and enabled our blue economy financing strategy. For each \$1 from the Fund, we leveraged \$2.3. The Fund became our most precious instrument as a Resident Coordinator to make real change on the ground.”

-Didier Trebucq, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, 2022.

In 2020, an additional US\$ 77.9 billion would have been needed to close the social protection financing gap in low-income countries, representing 15.9 per cent of these countries’ GDP⁹. These figures illustrate that it will not be possible to achieve universal social protection and other SDGs without further mobilising the necessary financial resources.

The primary responsibility to provide adequate social protection for the population lies with the government. In line with this principle, United Nations efforts social protection financing focused on supporting countries in public financial management. This included mobilising domestic resources and improving budgeting processes, and increasing the volume, effectiveness and efficiency of public social protection expenditures. Social protection financing figured prominently in 32 joint programmes of the portfolio. Only 3 joint programmes did not carry out any work related to financing social protection, and 26 joint programmes engaged in two or more of the following financing-related outputs, with joint programmes in **Viet Nam**, **Uzbekistan** (see Box 4), **Mongolia** and **Montenegro** engaged in all four areas of work: increasing public social protection expenditure; approving a related bill; improving efficiency or effectiveness of social protection investments; or carrying out analytical work regarding social protection financing.

9. Durán Valverde, F., Pacheco-Jiménez, J., Muzaffar, T. and Elizondo-Barboza, H. 2020. Financing Gaps in Social Protection: Global Estimates and Strategies for Developing Countries in Light of COVID-19 and Beyond. Working paper. Geneva: International Labour Office.

FISCAL SPACE ANALYSIS TO INFORM THE DESIGN OF THE NATIONAL SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY



Photo: UNICEF Uzbekistan / Shehzad Noorani

Box 4

In [Uzbekistan](#), the joint programme supported the development of a national social protection policy. This included developing reform scenarios to extend social protection, a costing of the related measures and an analysis of how these costs could be absorbed by the government budget, ensuring also sound budget management and execution.

The fiscal space analysis to increase social protection spending considered a comprehensive scope of possible measures and the potential revenues that they could generate under different scenarios. The options considered: additional revenues from taxation, including VAT, corporate tax, personal income tax, financial transaction tax, tourism tax, tax on luxury goods; improved tax compliance and social contributions; combating of illegal financial and trade flows; budget reallocations; borrowing and debt restructuring; use of reserves, external aid; and adopting a more accommodating macro-economic policy.

This provision of an evidence base to inform policymaking was greatly appreciated by national stakeholders, as one key informant said: “[The joint programme] **did not provide us with the solutions. They provided us with options and discussed them openly with us... and we discussed how each option would affect the system. But the final decision was ours.**” (United Nations Joint Programme Final Evaluation 2022)

The analysis carried out informed the work on the national social protection policy. One concrete result of the work carried out was a strategy embarked on by the government to extend social insurance coverage to those with contributory capacities, which would considerably impact on increasing sustainable social protection financing. A related concept for the draft social insurance code allowing for the extension of coverage was discussed with constituents.

Importantly, the programme not only carried out the technical work and delivered the related report with the results, but it **also engaged in capacity building of national counterparts on social protection floors and social security standards, costing and fiscal space analysis to ensure national counterparts would be able to carry out such analysis in the future.** The interviews of the final evaluation revealed that the Ministry of Finance followed up with more in-depth fiscal space analysis studies, building on the data and skills generated through the work performed by the joint programme.

Both the social protection entitlements and government budgets allocated to finance these benefits and services are typically codified in law. Nine joint programmes supported governments in preparing a bill or law increasing the fiscal space for social protection and **19 joint programmes** reported having contributed to **increasing public investments** in social protection. Figure 6 shows that analytical work was carried out in the vast majority of Joint Programmes (80 per cent). Improving efficiency of operations and generating cost savings was the second most frequent support provided by the programmes (63 per cent). Several joint programmes also contributed to strengthen budget management capacities and allocations for social protection at the **sub-national levels**.

Figure 6. Percentage of joint programmes that contributed to expanding social protection systems



The financing efforts will be even more important going forward given the risks of fiscal constraints caused by COVID-19, conflict and climate. Programmes under the Joint SDG Fund already faced constraints in enhancing fiscal space due to COVID-19. For structural changes to financing, a much longer-term, major reform of the sector/system may be as important, building on what has already been invested. The question of SDG financing, including for social protection, is a central global priority and has been recently re-emphasized by the **Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions** launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in September 2021 and the current discussion of a Social Protection Window under the SDG Joint Fund. The achievements, as well as lessons learned from the joint programmes, will be relevant and critical to further support the expansion of social protection systems and further mobilise financing for social protection in order to address the coverage and financing gaps.



Photo: UN BiH / Zajedno idemo dalje



BRINGING SYSTEMIC CHANGE TO ACCELERATE ACHIEVEMENT TOWARDS THE SDGS



Photo: UNDP

Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been slow and uneven but moving in the positive direction overall until 2020. With the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional 119–124 million people were pushed into extreme poverty in 2020¹⁰. Approximately 2 billion people also live in conflict-affected countries¹¹. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, SDG financing was falling short of expectations, with an estimated annual gap of US\$ 2.5 trillion¹².

Against this backdrop, the 35 joint programmes enabled approximately **147 million people** to access new or extended social protection services (Figure 7). They also mobilised at least **\$211 million in additional financing** to sustain and expand social protection systems, and protect the most vulnerable.

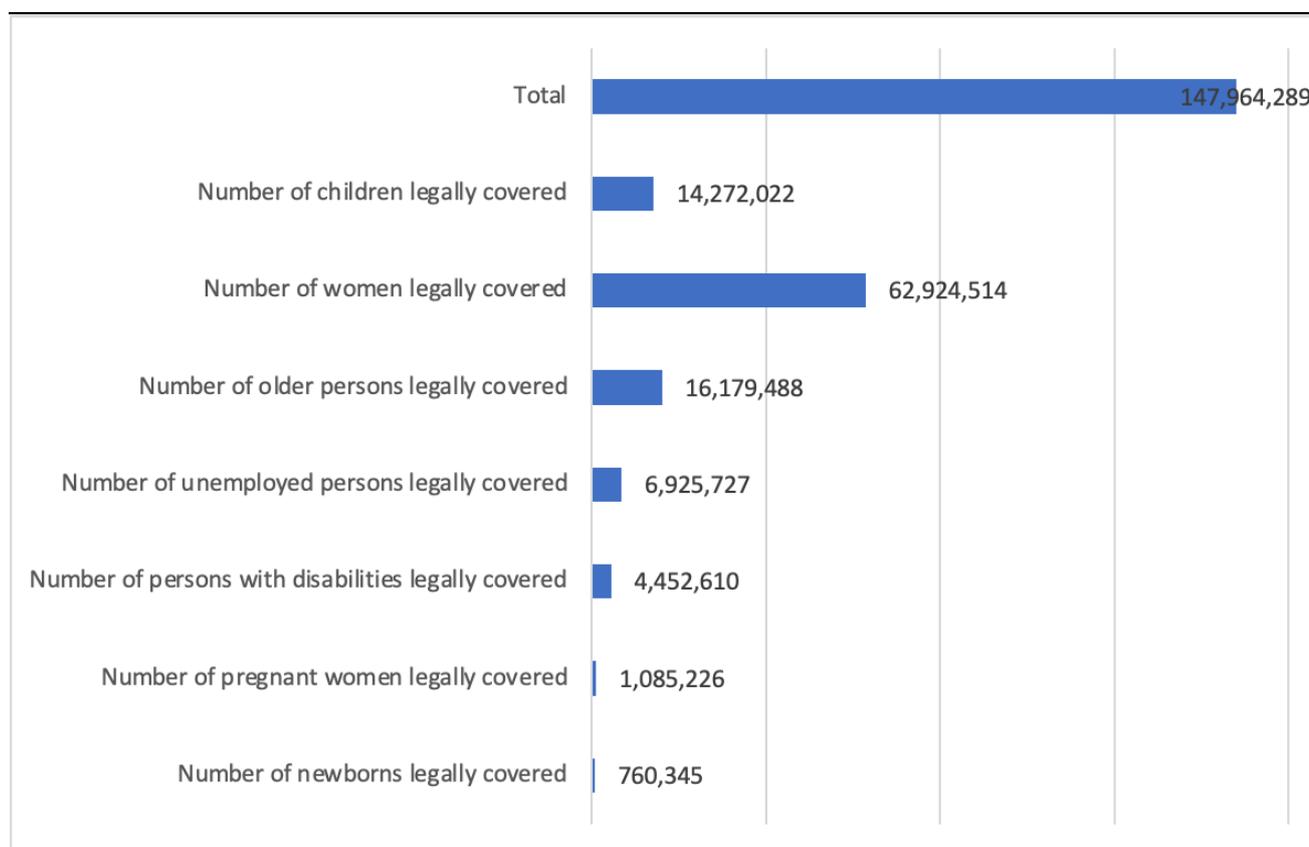
Working together, participating United Nations organisations designed innovative solutions that contributed to expand the reach of social protection schemes while enhancing their targeting. Joint programmes helped to bridge social protection models and sectors and to establish cross-sectoral coordination platforms to produce systemic change. They contributed to integrate policies across sectors and institutions and to “break down the silos”. Catalytic effects were reported in terms of creating space for Social Protection to leave no one behind in strategies and structures and by installing new partnerships. Multi-sectoral dialogues and partnerships, joint advocacy work, and knowledge development and capacity building were among the modalities implemented to support coherent approaches.

10. United Nations. 2021. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021. New York.

11. Ibid. 2022.

12. OECD. 2020. Global Outlook on Financing for Sustainable Development 2021. Paris.

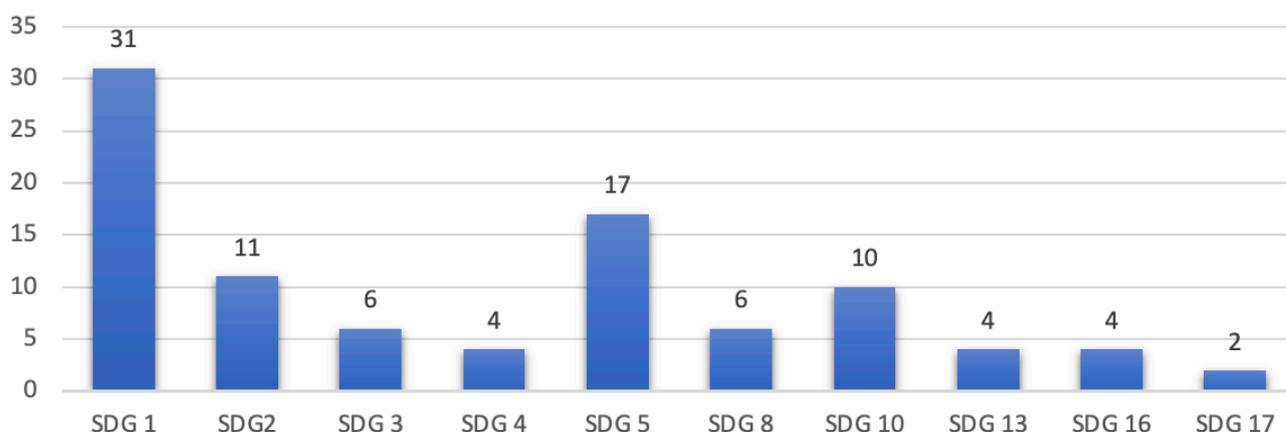
Figure 7. Number of persons that accessed social protection as a result of the national social protection strategy, social protection programmes' extension and policy or legal framework to which the Joint Programme contributed



Overall, the 35 joint programmes on Social Protection and LNOB **accelerated progress towards the 11 SDGs**. The main focus was on SDG 1 (No poverty), targeted by 89 per cent of the joint programmes, followed by SDG 5 (Gender equality) targeted by 48 per cent of the programmes (Figure 8). The emphasis on the extension of integrated and more coherent social protection systems to LNOB increased the overall scope and reach of SDG contributions. There was a major impact was **on gender and reducing inequalities**. A second impact was based on the cross-sectoral and multiplier effects of social protection coverage and improved access to social protection benefits, which has linkages with improved livelihoods (including decent jobs), education, and health and well-being¹³.

13. The short timeframe of the interventions together with the SDG reporting cycles, incomplete data sources, and limitations in quantifying attribution usually prevented joint programmes from reporting on the progress made on specific SDG indicators. In Albania, for example, the joint programme reported that the percentage of persons effectively covered by a social protection system, including the social protection floors, was estimated at 57.1 per cent for 2021, slightly higher than the one measured in 2020 (for 2019), which was 53.6 per cent. While stressing the catalytic impact of the joint programme, the Resident Coordinator's Office also indicated that 12 United Nations joint programmes were under implementation by the UNCT, including five joint programmes related to social inclusion. National progress on SDG indicator 1.3.1 would not, therefore, be solely attributable to the joint programme on integrated social protection and LNOB.

Figure 8. Number of joint programmes that targeted the Sustainable Development Goals primarily covered by the portfolio



DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING SYSTEMIC INTERVENTIONS TO ACCELERATE THE SDGS

All joint programmes provided increased trust to national processes. Joint programmes contributed to set up cross-sectoral governance structures and facilitate coordination mechanisms between and among ministries and national agencies to break down institutional and organizational silos and bolster systemic change. Limited coordination capacity was one of the frequent bottlenecks that joint programmes addressed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the social protection delivery. Building on these cross-sectoral structures, United Nations agencies brought their expertise and comparative advantages to national processes to design multi-faceted interventions that expand basic models and delivering systemic effects that accelerated the implementation of the SDGs. On average, joint programmes **contributed to four SDGs**, while the most cross-sectoral joint programme extended to **as many as nine**. In **Bangladesh**, where women workers in tea gardens gained improved access to better equipped health centres for ante- and post-natal needs, the programme contributed to nine SDGs (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 16 and 17). Another illustration is **Argentina**, as further explained in Box 5. All joint programmes also reported that they expanded partnerships to accelerate progress on the SDGs, with 600 partners involved across the portfolio (SDG 17).

DESIGNING PROGRAMMES WITH SYNERGIES THAT ACCELERATE PROGRESS TOWARDS SEVERAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Box 5

In [Argentina](#), the programme was designed to provide a comprehensive and strategic response to the problems arising from the absence of an integrated care system for early childhood. To achieve its objective, the programme included interventions based on the multiple dimensions of early childhood and care policies and the specific mandate of each of the implementing agencies.

The actions implemented by the joint programme in Argentina sought to strengthen a comprehensive early childhood development, care and education public policy (SDG 4.2), **contributing at the same time to the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work** (SDG 5.4), and to the **generation of decent jobs related to early childhood educational and care services**, and policies. In this way, the programme contributed to productive employment for all (SDG 8.5) and amplified the coverage of social protection systems and measures, so that they reach the poor and most vulnerable (SDG 1.3) and empower and promote social inclusion (SDG 10.2).

Alliances were a key enabler of the programme. At the national level, in addition to the Undersecretariat for Early Childhood and the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies, the programme was implemented together with the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity, and with key actors within the areas of Social Development, Economy, Labor, Social Security and the Head of Cabinet of Ministers. Partnerships were also created or strengthened with representatives from at least four provinces and 18 municipalities. The establishment of the joint programme's Steering Committee and the Advisory Council contributed to strengthen partnerships. Through the Advisory Council, coordination was also strengthened with representatives of social organizations, trade unions, companies, and academia, as well as other key state agencies. The First Lady was designated as President of the Advisory Board, which supported the programme's visibility.



DEVELOPING NATIONAL POLICIES FOR SDG ACCELERATION

Many joint programmes contributed to accelerating the achievements of specific SDGs through policy advice provided to national partners and stakeholders. In **Mexico**, progress on the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work (SDG target 5.4) was achieved with a constitutional reform for the creation of a National Care System approved by the Chamber of Deputies, and a National Care System Law initiative presented in the Senate, pending approval. Technical support and inputs were provided by the programme, in coordination with the National Institute of Women (INMUJERES) of Mexico, to both the development and design of the proposal and its legislative process.

In **Turkmenistan**, with regard to increasing the coverage of social protection programmes (SDG target 1.3), an analysis of the national social protection legislation, policies and regulations was carried out, which informed the new Law on Social Services. This allowed to expand the range of social services and improve access and coverage of wider vulnerabilities. As a nation-wide policy, the entire population of six million are now eligible for these new services.

“The Joint SDG Fund accelerated progress and transformed our approach in delivering social protection.”

-Gita Sabharwal, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Thailand, 2022.

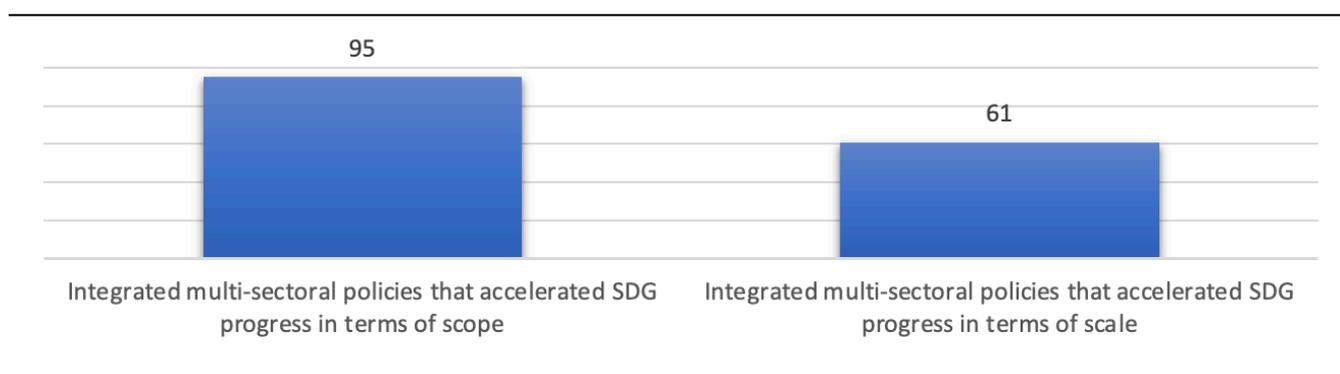
Thirty joint programmes supported the development of integrated policies and strategies that accelerated SDG progress in terms of scope¹⁴, and 25 joint programmes supported policies and strategies accelerating SDG progress in terms of scale¹⁵. Altogether, joint programmes contributed to the development of 95 integrated policies that accelerate SDG progress in terms of scope and 61 policies in terms of scale (Figure 9).

14. i.e. substantive expansion: additional thematic areas/components added or mechanisms/systems replicated.

15. i.e. geographical expansion: local solutions adopted at the regional and national levels, or a national solution adopted in one or more countries.

In **Lebanon**, for example, the technical support provided by the programme increased policy integration within the social protection sector for the development by the Government of a comprehensive and rights-based social protection strategy. This strategy includes reforms under each of the five main priorities of Lebanon’s National Social Protection Strategy as well as high-level systemic reforms across different institutions and ministries. In **Thailand**, the programme delivered key messages and ideas through workshops and reports that were reflected in the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan. The strategies included the enhancement of social protection coverage for all age groups as well as the integration of the social protection systems and database, and the evaluation of all social protection schemes. In **Samoa**, the formulation of the National Social Protection Policy enhanced policy integration and coherence across sectors and stakeholders such as health, education, employment, youth, children, women, the private sector, CSOs and development partners.

Figure 9. Number of integrated policies for social protection and LNOB developed with the support of the joint programmes



BUILDING SUB-NATIONAL CAPACITIES TO ACCELERATE THE SCALING OF SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES

Various joint programmes helped to expand dialogue between central and local governments, contributing to anchor social protection schemes and approaches at local level. In **Madagascar**, the joint programme contributed to reducing fragmentation across the various social protection programmes, and fostered collaborative work on the development of a unified social protection system. A set of common tools was developed as part of the programme, including the set-up of a single window and unique registration tools for social protection. This contributed to strengthen the national social protection system, particularly at the decentralized level. In **Albania**, the joint programme developed a framework and model of integrated social and health services that supported the localization of the SDGs at subnational levels. Local Government Units were supported in starting policy dialogues on these issues and in scaling up efforts to ensure that people in the most vulnerable situations would have access to quality health and social protection services.

ENSURING THAT PROGRESS TOWARDS UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS LEAVES NO ONE BEHIND

In addition to addressing leverage points for social protection system change towards universal floors, the strategic emphasis of the joint programmes was on the **most vulnerable**: including children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, young people in the informal economy, and rural and indigenous populations. Overall, the 35 joint programmes improved the well-being and supported protect the livelihoods of approximately **147 million people** with access to new or extended social protection services. In **Viet Nam**, the joint programme went beyond ‘business as usual’ by strengthening the linkages between social insurance and social assistance through a multi-tiered social protection system approach that included child benefits, maternity and paternity benefits, old-age pensions, and disability benefits, with a focus on making the system more inclusive for those at risk of being left behind.

In **Montenegro**, social protection benefits increased, as well as the number of people covered. The number of recipients of child benefits tripled by extending the benefits to all families with children aged 0–5 and up to a maximum five children (previously only up to a maximum of three). At the same time, the amount of the monthly benefit received by the most vulnerable families with children (i.e. the beneficiaries prior to the reform) nearly doubled. Acceleration of progress towards the SDGs was also derived from introducing new models to identify social protection beneficiaries. In **Georgia**, for instance, the reform of the disability assessment, focused on the shift from a medical to a biopsychosocial model of disability contributes to more inclusive and more informed eligibility determination for disability support leading to better coverage, especially for children and adults with intellectual and psycho social disabilities who were more likely to be excluded with the former approach.

“Thanks to the Joint SDG Fund supported initiatives, 87.6% of boys and girls in families benefiting from social protection schemes remained in school throughout the lean season. This can help to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and build more resilient communities.”

-Maria Do Valle Ribeiro, United Nations Resident Coordinator (a.i.), Malawi, 2022.



Photo: UNDP Turkmenistan / Claire L.

“Improvement of social services has been a key priority area of cooperation between UN and the Government for the last several years. This is the first joint UN endeavour that offers holistic approach to transforming the model of social service delivery.”

-Elena Panova, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Turkmenistan, 2020.

ENHANCING UNITED NATIONS COHERENCE AND POLICY INTEGRATION TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND



Photo: UNDP Madagascar

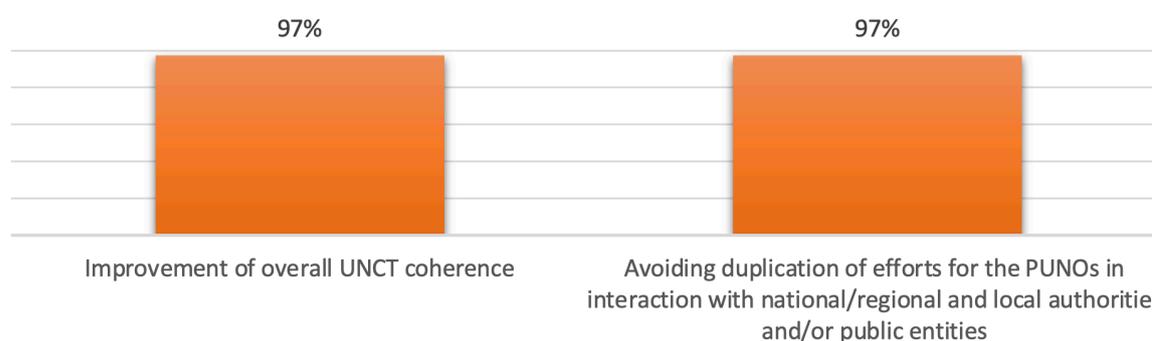
The SDGs have highlighted the interconnected nature of sustainable development and the need to approach policymaking in a holistic manner. As the United Nations flagship global development fund, the Joint SDG Fund operates on a two-fold strategic mandate to **supercharge the United Nations Development System to be fit for purpose** and to **catalyse systemic transitions** at the country level in areas of integrated policy and financing to **accelerate the achievement towards the SDGs**. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, joint programmes provide coherent, cross-sectoral support to national stakeholders to ‘break down silos’ and achieve the SDGs.

The joint programmes contributed to strengthen UN coherence while leveraging the comparative advantages of the participating UN organisations. In many instances, the joint programmes served as an effective mechanism to strengthen the role of the UN Resident Coordinator while Resident Coordinators supported the joint programmes in gaining increased political reach, visibility, and management efficiency. Several joint programmes emphasized the relevance and added value of joint programming to support systemic change and pointed out sustainable benefits in terms of UN collaboration and cultural change.

INCREASING UNITED NATIONS COHERENCE ACROSS THE ENTIRE PROGRAMME CYCLE

All joint programmes stressed the value added of the Joint SDG Fund in boosting the coherence of the UNCTs by fostering joint work that capitalizes on the comparative advantages of the various United Nations agencies and in avoiding duplication of efforts (Figure 10). Closer collaboration between United Nations organizations was reported across the entire programming cycle. In **Brazil**, for example, participating United Nations organizations worked together in a more coordinated manner than in previous interagency projects during every stage of the programme, including: during the design stage with discussions on the theory of change and results framework; during implementation with results and activities delivered by two or more agencies; and during programme monitoring and evaluation through quarterly checks to harmonize information.

Figure 10. Percentage of the joint programmes that contributed to United Nations Country Team coherence and efficiency



Note: PUNOs = participating United Nations organization; UNCT= United Nations Country Teams.

It also emerged that in various countries, the joint programmes established long-lasting collaboration and facilitated the building of a common sectoral strategy and vision while anchoring a common external voice with government partners. This process brought a cultural shift to participating United Nations agencies, which was sometimes promoted to the entire UNCT. In **Mexico**, the Resident Coordinator Office convened a session to present the joint programme to all personnel and representatives of the United Nations system (25 agencies) and national partners. Strengthened inter-agency collaboration was reported in **Mauritania**, not only between the participating United Nations organizations (United Nations Children’s Fund, World Food Programme, International Labour Organization), but also with other agencies present in the country (UNHCR, WHO) and with other social protection actors such as the World Bank.

“The Government of Lao PDR acknowledges the importance of social protection and the UN Joint Programme, which has contributed to the government policy of building a society with solidarity, conciliation, democracy, prosperity and justice. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, as the chair of the National Social Protection Commission and its Secretariat, will play a central role in coordinating and mainstreaming social protection into national socio-economic development as well as the sectoral development plans at central and local level. We will systematically monitor, evaluate and develop legal frameworks for the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy, particularly the three pillars of health insurance, social security and social welfare.”

-Baykham Khattiya, Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Lao PDR, 2022.



Photo: UNICEF Lao PDR / Irem Karakaya

MAXIMIZING THE COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES OF UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES AND ‘DELIVERING AS ONE’

Delivering as One requires shared commitment to overcome existing competition for funding, reduce duplications, and produce coherent action that **leverages comparative advantages** of United Nations entities. Recognizing that social protection is an area that is beyond the mandate and capacity of any single agency, many joint programmes stressed the added value of binding complementary specialities, technical knowledge and expertise, and networks in supporting national partners and stakeholders to improve social protection systems. In **Indonesia**, Joint SDG funds were used to support inter-ministerial coordination on adaptive social protection, aimed at strengthening government coordination and advocating for greater leadership amongst local governments. The programme proved instrumental in demonstrating the strengths of the Delivering as One concept. The programme, as a collaborative approach, delivered several benefits by building on each agency’s area of expertise and networks, and by sharing resources, knowledge, and information. This enriched and improved implementation, and supported the effective and efficient delivery of programme outputs.

In **Ecuador**, the integrated approach of the joint programme allowed the agencies to interact as one front with government counterparts and other stakeholders such as employers’ and workers’ organizations, youth organizations, women’s rights organizations, and academia. This facilitated strategic partnerships and strengthened cooperation with various actors across programme activities. In the **Philippines**, the joint programme forged closer alignment and collaboration within the United Nations with the creation of an inter-United Nations Technical Working Group on shock-responsive social protection. This aimed to ensure that parallel initiatives on shock-responsive social protection were coordinated, particularly in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and with the national government, and that key messages on shock-responsive social protection were mutually reinforced within and outside the United Nations system. In **Chile**, inter-agency work contributed to reinforce the transversality of the gender and human rights approaches through courses, training and certifications of government counterparts, civil society organizations (CSOs) and other partners.



Photo: UNDP / Paulo Filgueiras



LEVERAGING AND STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE RESIDENT COORDINATOR

The involvement of the Resident Coordinator during the entire programme cycle was fundamental in leading the entire intervention. Joint programmes provided an opportunity for Resident Coordinators to exercise their convening power while installing a platform for United Nations agencies to work together. In many countries, Resident Coordinators reached out to high government officials to present a joint United Nations offer to tackle matters of strategic importance for social policy that would improve the lives of the most marginalized groups. The Resident Coordinator in **Thailand** led the political and advocacy dialogue at the higher levels to ensure that social protection for all remained visible on the political agenda, and to ensure that the joint programme delivered a harmonized advocacy message as one United Nations. In **Costa Rica**, the Resident Coordinator's Office played a very important role in building and strengthening relationships with the national political leadership and with the SDG Fund donors (Box 6).



PERCENTAGE OF THE JOINT PROGRAMMES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM COHERENCE AND EFFICIENCY

Box 6

In [Costa Rica](#), the Resident Coordinator connected donors and the highest political counterparts of the programme with the work carried out at the community level. These actions had a positive impact on the communication and public positioning of the key messages of the United Nations and the Joint SDG Fund. This facilitated the **involvement of high-level officials, which catalysed systemic and integrated transformations at the national and subnational levels while strengthening the joint work of institutions at all levels**. According to the final independent evaluation of the joint programme:

“The involvement of the Minister of Human Development and Social Inclusion, and the Resident Coordinator, provides political leadership that promotes the articulation of public institutions and United Nations system agencies, in addition to facilitating high-level agreements that enable the coordination of actions in the territories, inclusion in institutional policies and technical instruments from an intersectional gender approach. Additionally, the close coordination of efforts between the agencies involved, facilitated through biweekly meetings of the interagency committee and collaboration in implementing specific activities, was key to obtaining the expected results.”

APPLYING MANAGEMENT APPROACHES THAT IMPROVE THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF UNITED NATIONS OPERATIONS

All Joint Programmes contributed to increase the overall efficiency of the United Nations system by applying integrated approaches to limit scattered efforts and maximize results, avoiding duplications and seeking complementarities. United Nations partners significantly reduced operation costs by leveraging each other's existing resources. For instance, in **Rwanda**, where possible, consultancy assignments were designed jointly and often co-financed, and in **Chile** and in **Nigeria**, generating synergies between the agencies in terms of communications saved costs and favoured a greater impact for the dissemination of the project on diverse scales. Inter-agency partnerships also reduced transaction costs and expedited the process related to selecting research firms, as in **Mauritania**, where a long-term agreement between World Food Programme (WFP) and a research firm was also made available to UNICEF and the World Bank within the framework of a joint study on social registry.

Several United Nations organizations and external partners reported a learning curve with regard to joint United Nations programming. As stated in the evaluation of a joint programme¹⁶:

While there are many benefits to working as 'one UN family', both internally for the United Nations and externally for the United Nations partners for programme success, it demands effort and time from the agencies, individuals, and their supervisors to ensure it works.

To facilitate joint work, the United Nations in **Indonesia** developed an internal resource document, General Guidelines on Joint Programme Implementation in Indonesia, which capitalizes on the joint programme's good practices and lessons learned.

16. UNICEF. 2022. Final evaluation of the UN Joint Programme for Accelerating Integrated Policy Interventions to Promote Social Protection in Rwanda. UNICEF Evaluation Office, New York.

“The Joint Programme on Strengthening Social Protection is a fantastic opportunity to reduce fragmentation in the social protection system of Uzbekistan. Spending on social protection should be seen as an investment into achieving the national sustainable development priorities, including in the area of reducing poverty and inequality, ensuring healthy lives and wellbeing, gender equality, as well as decent work and economic growth.”

- Helena Fraser, former United Nations Resident Coordinator, Uzbekistan, 2020.

ESTABLISHING CROSS-SECTORAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES AND ENLARGING COLLABORATION MECHANISMS

One of the key enabling mechanisms set up by joint programmes to improve systemic coherence involved establishing governance structures that connected agencies and cut across sectors (Box 7). In **Sao Tome and Principe**, installing a strong governance structure allowed for a coordinated and coherent United Nations approach when working with various sectors (education, health, social protection, and youth), leading to a joint advocacy for integrated policymaking. The joint programme’s objective of fostering cross-sectorial coordination for a transformative social protection system incentivized an effective interagency collaboration. Agencies coordinated technical meetings with the relevant directorates while jointly elaborating a presentation of the programme that was delivered to the council of ministries.



Photo: UNICEF Uzbekistan / Giacomo Pirozzi

MAXIMIZING THE REACH OF CROSS-SECTORAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Box 7

In [Turkmenistan](#), the programme installed a high-level steering committee chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Protection and by the United Nations Resident Coordinator—and was represented by all the national partners at the Deputy Ministry level and heads of United Nations agencies. This mechanism facilitated the **establishment of a government inter-sectoral coordination mechanism for promoting reforms related to the introduction of community-based social services in the national social protection system.** One of the remarkable achievements of the joint programme was to inform the new law on social services, which expanded the range of social services offered and improved access and coverage of wider vulnerabilities extending the opportunity to access social services to all those who need them, including children, women, people with disabilities, and other experiencing difficult life situations. The law on social services will benefit the entire country's population of six million.

ENGAGING IN SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

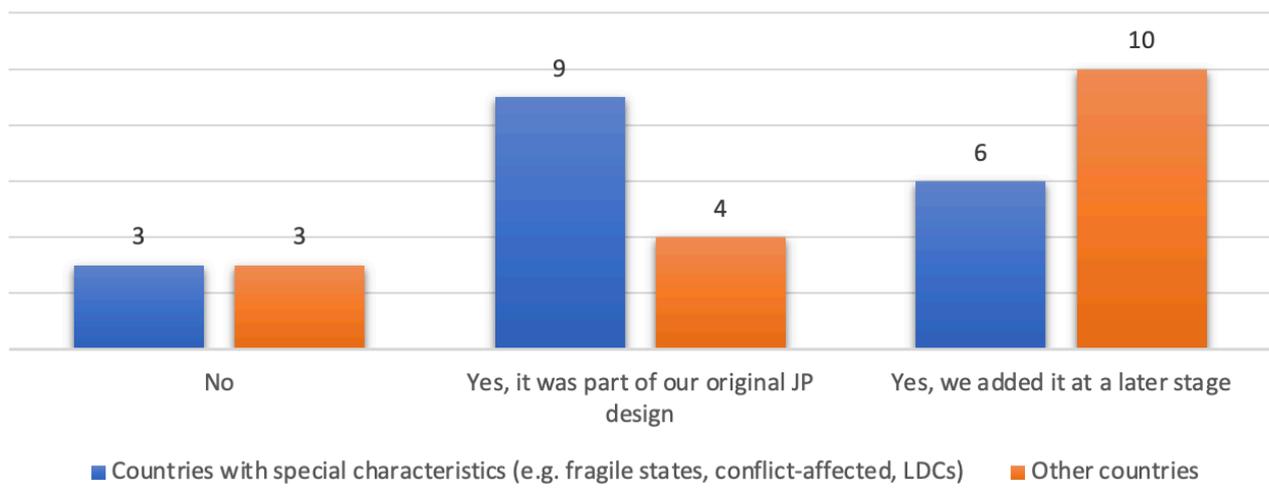


Photo: UNICEF/Pintado

More than 80 per cent (29) of the joint programmes addressed shock-responsive social protection by developing integrated national policies, mechanisms, programmes, or initiatives that were newly designed or incorporated into existing social protection systems in 2020–2022. While most the joint programmes implemented in countries with special characteristics (e.g. fragile states, conflict-affected countries, least developed countries) planned from the outset to address shock-responsive social protection, countries in non-crisis situations (mostly middle-income countries) added a component on shock-responsive social protection after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 11). Across the portfolio, shock-responsive social protection covered a range of capacity- and systems-building areas, including advocacy on national policy issues, addressing social protection programme design and management, and improving delivery systems. Most programmes supported multiple areas of systems strengthening, while several joint programmes also had a categorical focus on specific population groups in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, on gender, and on the needs of the elderly.

The majority of the joint programmes recognized that social protection systems must be shock-resilient to absorb the impacts of unexpected large-scale crises. External shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, were sometimes found an opportunity to press for the achievement of the SDGs, stressing the importance of having a system that enables an adequate access to social protection of the most vulnerable population. More than 80 percent of the joint programmes addressed shock-responsive social protection by developing integrated national policies, mechanisms, programmes, or initiatives that were newly designed or incorporated into existing social protection systems.

Figure 11. Number of joint programmes that addressed shock-responsive social protection



POLICY-ORIENTED PROGRAMMES

One example of guidance in national policy was in **Rwanda**, where the joint programme filled a core gap in the new Disaster Risk Reduction and Management policy. The programme guided the creation of linkages in the Disaster Risk Reduction policy on shock-responsive social protection (SRSP) and formalized the role of social protection in disaster management. The joint programme hosted a high-level forum on shock-responsive social protection to lead this national policy discussion, which was complemented by technical support to the Seasonal Livelihoods Programme to provide evidence on effective pathways of support to reduce vulnerabilities and generate information based on seasonal shocks. A common experience of the joint programmes engaged in Shock-responsive Social Protection (SRSP) was also to use a piloting methodology to inform policymaking. For example, in the Philippines, the joint programme focused on contributing to the establishment of a national risk-informed SRSP programme by demonstrating proof of concept initially at a sub-national level (Box 8).

INTEGRATING ELEMENTS OF SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN A MULTIPURPOSE CASH TRANSFER IN THE PHILIPPINES

Box 8

In the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), one of the poorest regions in the [Philippines](#), which is highly vulnerable to social conflict and natural disasters, the joint programme completed the design of a multipurpose cash transfer social assistance programme consisting of shock-responsive social protection for vulnerable and poor families. Funded jointly by the Joint SDG Fund and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as part of the joint programme scale-up, the multipurpose cash transfer targeted **7,137 farmer-headed households and families with children aged 0–5 and pregnant and lactating mothers in four municipalities**. Co-designed with the Ministry of Social Services and Development, the pilot informed a more sustainable approach to the provision of future social assistance by demonstrating the use of the minimum expenditure basket (MEB) in determining benefit levels (i.e. this process allowed the programme and government to understand what a Bangsamoro family requires to meet basic needs in times of displacements and ensure that the assistance provided to them are adequate for these needs) and by exploring the use of other financial service providers for efficient delivery of pay-outs. The intervention strengthened the capacity of the local institutions to analyse and monitor both natural and human-induced risks, and to improve synergy and coordination between social protection programmes, climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness and management. The pilot helped guide the **roll-out of a national emergency cash transfer programme** in the country by informing analytical work, guidelines and tools to prove the added value of having a risk-informed, shock-responsive social protection programme. Advocacy from this pilot resulted in the establishment of a national working group that leverages the internal expertise of member ministries and existing regional coordinating structures on disaster risk management. This aims to develop anticipatory action protocols for various hazards and early warning system monitoring processes that will allow BARMM to **activate pre-emptive responses to safeguard communities and build the resilience of agriculture-based livelihoods in the Bangsamoro Region**. The technical group also supports learning on improved registry systems to include better risk and hazard vulnerability assessments, predictive analytics, inclusive targeting and effective monitoring.



Photo: UNICEF Philippines / Martin San Diego

MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 AND ENHANCING SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

In the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments around the world focused on improving the responsiveness of their national social protection systems to counter the socioeconomic impacts on their most vulnerable populations. The Joint SDG Fund's thematic focus on LNOB responded to this emerging priority policy area with programmes that were already designed to improve national response capacity, as well as a number of joint programmes that adjusted their objectives to include an SRSP component as a result of the pandemic. The Joint SDG Fund provided the opportunity to repurpose 20 per cent of the joint programme funds in 2020 to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and other covariant shocks to act as a stabilizer and prevent people from falling into poverty, resulting in 18 joint programmes adjusting their workplans to respond to the effects of the pandemic. The joint programmes supported the horizontal expansion of coverage of social protection across different population groups (e.g. in **Costa Rica** and **Kenya**) to comprehensively address the increased vulnerabilities. It also contributed to enhancing the benefit amount of cash transfers (i.e. vertical expansions) given the increased needs and risks of poverty and destitution.

In **Mongolia**, for instance, the Child Money Programme was instrumental in providing timely assistance by increasing an existing cash transfer, which helped protect the livelihoods of herder families. More specifically, joint programmes provided technical support to adapt the design of social protection programmes to meet urgent needs, for example, by relaxing the targeting criteria to expand coverage, making payments more frequent, and simplifying the processes for verifying eligibility criteria. The programme also contributed to strengthening institutional capacity to mainstream shock-responsiveness into the national social protection system (Box 9). In **Viet Nam**, the government simplified the eligibility criteria for emergency cash transfers to reach over 3 million additional children, over 1 million older people, and over 1 million persons with disabilities at risk of poverty. The joint programmes also engaged in enhancing shock-responsive social protection to mitigate the impact of environmental, political, economic and public health crises, and to build the resilience to preclude shocks from becoming disasters in the first place. In **Saint Lucia**, the support provided by the **Barbados** Multi-Country Office (MCO) to population groups in vulnerable situations (including poor households; single mothers; children with disabilities; children in foster care; and people living with HIV/AIDS) as a response to COVID-19, and a shock-responsive social protection pilot following Hurricane Elsa helped the country to expand coverage of social protection and set a precedence for increasing benefits in times of shocks.

“The Joint SDG Fund is transformative and lifesaving. Thanks to the support of the Fund, UNICEF has scaled up operations to respond to the urgent needs of children and young people in 27 countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

- Henritta H. Fore, former UNICEF Executive Director, 2021.

INTRODUCING THE RESILIENCE INDEX MEASUREMENT AND ANALYSIS IN MONGOLIA

Box 9

The joint programme began introducing the Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA-II) to mainstream the concept of resilience of pastoral communities into relevant reforms of national policies on shock-responsive social protection, climate change adaptation and disaster risk assessment (drought and death of livestock in the harsh winter known also as dzud). The RIMA tool aims to assist the Government's effort to define the targeted population in need of shock-responsive assistance. In addition, the joint programme piloted and supported the herder cooperatives' contingency fund as a shock-responsive and income generation tool.



Photo: UNDP Mongolia / Nicolas Petit

IMPROVING OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Several joint programmes focused on a range of different aspects of institutional and technical support, including coordination, evidence generation, enhancement of registries, data analytics for decision-making, and the financing of SRSP responses. Support to delivery systems covered functions from registration and data management to payments and grievance response mechanisms. In the **Eastern Caribbean**, the MCO in **Barbados** sought to strengthen institutional capacities specifically by improving operational tools, planning roadmaps and strategies, and developing financing strategies to support integrated service delivery and responsiveness. This programme piloted new shock-responsive social protection options for beneficiary data collection and payment delivery in the aftermath of a hurricane to prove effectiveness in real time. In **Malawi**, building on the investments to fast-track the development of a shock-responsive social protection prototype, **6,386 shock-affected and vulnerable households** were reached with emergency food assistance during the 2020/2021 lean season, providing the Government with a model to be replicated at scale to improve targeting, harmonization and expansion of the e-payment system, coordination, Standard Operating Procedures, and mass media communication (Box 10).

INTEGRATING SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SYSTEMS INTO SOCIAL PROTECTION

Box 10

In [Malawi](#), the joint programme facilitated coordination and innovation that allowed traditional Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) contributors to finance both vertical and horizontal expansions of the national social protection system in response to the lean season in 2021 and 2022. Hence, resources could be mobilised to **assist more than 114,000 households through cash transfers via the national social protection system**. In addition, the cash provided enabled 87.6 per cent of boys and girls from beneficiary households to remain in school throughout the lean season period, which has the potential to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and ensure resilient livelihoods and long-term pathways for graduation out of poverty.

Over 30,000 of these shock-sensitive social protection **cash transfers were delivered via innovative e-payment mechanisms**. This was the first time that a geographical approach with universal registration to targeting was undertaken for such an intervention in the country. Specifically, this innovative approach conducted the targeting and hotspot verification through satellite imagery, igniting the discussions of and laying the foundation for scaling up social protection by targeting new geographical areas and by addressing urban vulnerabilities beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

The joint programme also supported **the roll-out of the national Management Information System for Emergencies**. This enabled the national social protection system to be expanded both vertically and horizontally for the first time in four districts, reaching those most in need during the 2021/2022 Lean Season. **New functionalities, such as the SMS Broadcasting to beneficiaries and remote data collection for surveys, as well as new programmes** (e.g. Social Cash Transfer Programme, Emergency Management Information System, Child Protection) **are being gradually integrated**. Further, in collaboration with the private sector, the United Nations has supported Know-Your-Customer validation exercises with mobile phones and the National ID. This exercise has fed into the ongoing conversation on categorical targeting approaches for social programmes and was aimed at ensuring that emergency responses are not leaving persons in vulnerable situations behind.



Photo: UNICEF Malawi / Bennie Khanyizira

PROMOTING AND INTEGRATING HUMAN RIGHTS INTO NATIONAL ACTIONS

The LNOB pledge is fundamentally rooted in commitments of Member States to human rights and the principles of equality and non-discrimination. States' duty to establish social protection systems flows directly from **the right to social security**, which is recognized in a range of human rights conventions, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹⁷. Joint programmes were anchored in the objectives and principles of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (Figure 12), and interventions were often designed to align with the recommendations of various human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, treaty bodies¹⁸ and special procedures¹⁹, as well as labour conventions and standards. This provided a normative basis for framing the objectives and interventions of the joint programmes, as required under a human rights-based approach (HRBA)²⁰. Almost 86 per cent (or 30) of the joint programmes contributed to the **implementation of specific recommendations from human rights mechanisms**.

Most of the joint programmes contributed towards the implementation of specific recommendations from human rights mechanisms. The vast majority of the joint programmes contributed to address structural drivers of exclusion, inequalities and/ or discrimination in social protection, aligning laws and policies with international human rights standards. Over two thirds of the portfolio included relevant National Human Rights institutions in the programme implementation. More than 90 percent of the joint programmes generated additional data on groups left behind and strengthened accountability systems.

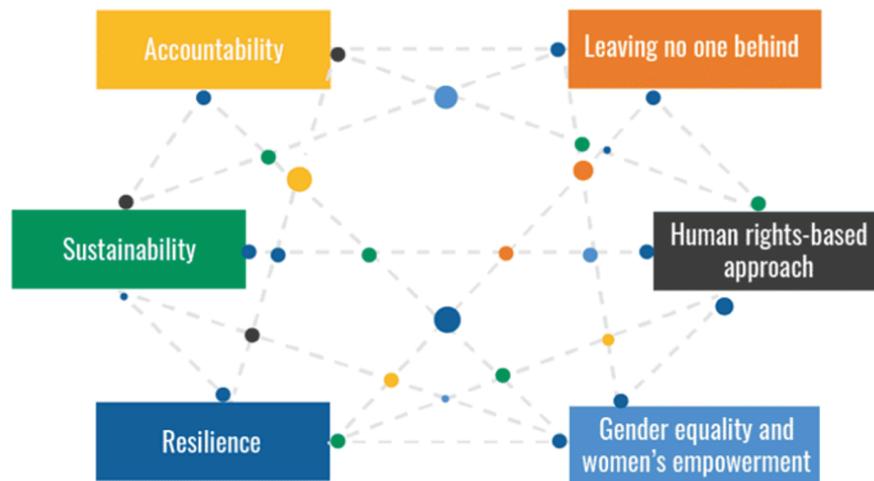
17. Article 22.

18. Treaty bodies specifically referenced by the joint programmes include: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), Convention on the Rights of People of Disability (CRPD), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Committee Against Torture (CAT) as well as ILO Conventions and recommendations and regional mechanisms such as the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), (the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) by the Parties).

19. These include: Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty; Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women (SRVW); Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

20. Under the human rights-based approach (HRBA), all plans, policies and processes of development are anchored in a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by international law, including all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, and the right to development. HRBA requires that human rights principles (universality, indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, participation, accountability) guide United Nations development cooperation and ensure a focus on developing the

Figure 12. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Guiding Principles



Source: United Nations System Staff College, 2022.

ALIGNING LAWS AND POLICIES WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS

In many cases, the support provided by the joint programmes proved conducive to policy and legal changes at the national level. In **Georgia**, for example, the joint programme advocated for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Joint efforts of relevant national authorities, participating United Nations agencies, and the disability community produced synergies and spill-over effects that helped advance the rights of persons with disabilities. Participating United Nations agencies worked together to lobby for the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Committee serving as national implementation body under the CRPD. The joint programme assisted the Government in **the creation of a decree** that established an inter-agency coordination committee responsible for the implementation of the CRPD, thus also advancing the process and eventual ratification of the Optional Protocol in 2021. Joint United Nations efforts were also engaged in supporting the formulation of the **Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and the elaboration of the National Human Rights Strategy, thus strengthening the alignment of national frameworks with the CRPD. In **Argentina**, the programme produced evidence on the persistence of discriminatory stereotypes about caregiving roles and the inequitable distribution of care work overburdening women (drawing on standards and recommendations from, inter alia, the Universal Periodic Review, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Based on this, and to distribute care work more equitably, the programme provided technical assistance in the design, funding and implementation of **public policies** that contribute to guarantee and enlarge the offer of early childhood educational and care services, especially in indigenous and rural communities. In **Uzbekistan**, the joint programme supported the ratification and implementation of the CRPD (Box 11).

RATIFICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Box 11

In [Uzbekistan](#), the joint programme advocated for the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The programme indirectly contributed to the adoption of the law on the rights of persons with disabilities in 2020, which follows most of the principles and rules of the CRPD. **In 2021, Uzbekistan ratified the CRPD and drafted the National Plan of Action.** Advocacy activities and technical assistance provided by the joint programme were instrumental for government decrees on: simplified disability application and registration; the development of a dedicated case-management based database of persons with disabilities; tax incentives and financial rewards for disability-inclusive employment; increased disability benefits; and the inclusion of family members who are caregivers for children with disabilities in the disability benefit scheme as beneficiaries. **An estimated 700,000 persons with disabilities directly benefited from access to social protection as a result of the joint programme.**



Photo: UNICEF Uzbekistan / Giacomo Pirozzi

INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS STRUCTURAL DRIVERS OF EXCLUSION, INEQUALITIES AND/ OR DISCRIMINATION IN SOCIAL PROTECTION

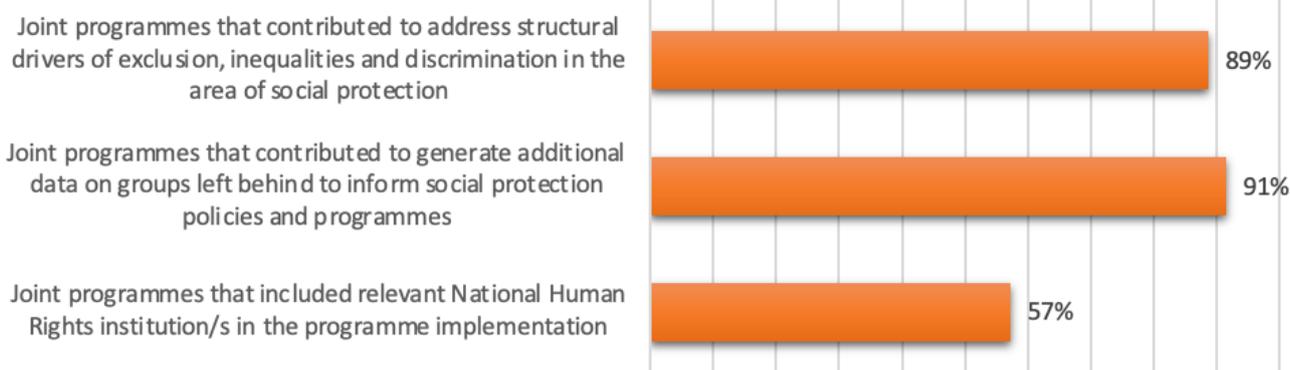


Figure 13. Percentage of joint programmes integrating human rights mechanisms

About 89 per cent (or 31) of the joint programmes contributed to specific measures to address structural drivers of exclusion, inequalities and/or discrimination in the area of social protection (Figure 13). In **Mauritania**, for example, the joint programme improved the ability of vulnerable populations to access basic services by upgrading the **targeting methods** of the social register, which is the reference tool for identifying beneficiaries in the event of a shock. Over 890,000 people were reached through the joint programme activities in 2020 and 2021. In **Gabon**, the lack of birth registration and documentation is a major barrier to accessing social protection. The programme contributed to the **amendment of the law on the period for the declaration of births and free birth certifications** in hospital services, which was extended to 15 days in urban areas and one month in rural areas (against three days in the previous laws). This paved the way to reduced structural barriers at the national level to access legal identity and social protection for undocumented citizens.

STRENGTHENING DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Data gaps are a frequent hurdle to identifying who is being left behind and why. Indeed, 91 per cent (or 32) of the joint programmes reported contributing to **generating additional data on groups left behind to inform social protection policies and programmes** in 2020–2021. This ranged from national statistical systems to community-level data and feedback mechanisms, which are elements of meaningful engagement under the HRBA. For example, in **South Africa** the programme addressed exclusion from existing provisions of social protection programmes through working with Statistics South Africa to produce the first-ever **multidimensional poverty tool for children** (aged 0–17). This tool significantly enhanced the available data for this specific population and led to a number of policy and advocacy activities on fiscal space for addressing child poverty and inequality. In **Rwanda**, the programme supported the finalization of the first comprehensive **Household Profiling report** in 2020, which assessed people’s socio-economic status and access to different services. It also instituted **community-based participatory planning** in five districts in 2020, which contributed to the identification of key drivers of poverty and priorities for economic empowerment and resilience-building initiatives. Several joint programmes contributed to the development or **strengthening of national identification mechanisms and registers of persons with disabilities** in line with the Convention on the Rights of People of Disability and other relevant standards (e.g. the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health), including in **Palestine, Cambodia, Indonesia, Niue and Tokelau, Sao Tome and Principe, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam**.

STRENGTHENING THE PARTICIPATION OF GROUPS LEFT BEHIND

Box 12

In **Mongolia**, advancing social protection as a fundamental right is critical for ensuring that groups left behind are protected from, and become resilient to, climate and non-climate shocks through an income guarantee and improved income generation. In collaboration with the Confederation of Mongolian Trade Union (CMTU), the awareness of over 400 herders (48 per cent of whom women) was raised **on freedom of association, rights to collective bargaining, labour rights and benefits of social insurance**. The adoption of the Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) tool will facilitate the **systematic identification of human rights issues at the herder household level and assist Government efforts in defining the targeted population** in need so that they may receive shock-responsive assistance.

ADVANCING PLATFORMS AND CAPACITIES FOR MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF GROUPS LEFT BEHIND AND OTHER RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

Almost 57 per cent (or 20) of the joint programmes engaged relevant national human rights institutions in programme implementation. For example, in **Nigeria**, the joint programme supported the revision of the **National Social Protection Policy (NSPP)** and development of the **Social Protection Bill**, which was guided by relevant recommendations from the 2018 Universal Periodic Review of human rights. The joint programme applied a human rights lens to embed mechanisms in the NSPP that would extend social protection access to previously excluded persons in vulnerable situations. The process included consultations with populations without access to social protection (e.g. youth, persons with disabilities, women’s groups) and with the National Human Rights Commission. The NSPP and the Social Protection Bill are nation-wide initiatives that would impact the whole country (206,139,587 people). In **Chile**, the joint programme worked strategically through Interactor Boards that included relevant stakeholders, both **private and public institutions**, the National Institute of Human Rights, and CSOs of older persons, advancing, inter alia, the 2019 UPR recommendation to “streamline efforts and include the participation of relevant stakeholders including civil society, to reduce marginalization of older persons and increase their inclusion in civil society”. The joint programme developed an emergency platform that manages requests from older persons and their families and links them with and refers them to an institutional support network across the country, supporting directly almost 50,000 requests between 2020 and 2021.



Photo: UN Lao PDR

In **Lao PDR**, the joint programme addressed social inequalities and social exclusion experienced by poor mothers and children in rural areas through the design of the Mother and Early Childhood Grant pilot programme, which places **cash transfers directly in the hands of women**, thereby aiming to **promote empowerment and to strengthen rural women’s participation in family and community affairs**. The cash transfer is linked to welfare services, which ultimately impact health, gender and nutrition markers. In the **Republic of the Congo**, the programme established a series of mechanisms such as advocacy and awareness raising, capacity development and coordination structures to enable Indigenous people to contribute to decision-making and to ensure their inclusion in social protection programmes. In **Bangladesh**, the joint programme focused on expanding social protection to tea-garden workers, most of whom women, and strengthened their capacity to influence national social protection policies through awareness training on the role of employers and the Government to hold them accountable as duty bearers. Under a similar approach, **Mongolia**, the joint programme advanced the capacities of herders to lobby for their rights to social protection (Box 12).



EMPOWERING WOMEN AND PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

Social protection can play a key role in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, but much of this potential remains unrealized. Across the globe, **women continue to face disadvantages with respect to social protection coverage and adequacy**²¹, while gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities remain inadequately recognized and addressed in social protection systems, policies and programmes²². The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored these challenges: although women's jobs and livelihoods were disproportionately impacted by the crisis, response efforts often remained blind to their rights and needs. Indeed, **out of over 3,000 social protection and labour market measures** adopted in response to the pandemic, **only 12 per cent targeted women's economic security** and only 7 per cent provided support for rising unpaid care demands in the face of large-scale and prolonged school and day-care closures²³.

To encourage the integration of a gender perspective into all joint programmes, all joint programme proposals were asked to submit a self-assessment of their level of gender mainstreaming and ambition in their workplans according to the areas included in the United Nations System-wide Action Plan. As a result, **all 35 joint programmes designed specific interventions to promote gender equality**. Two-thirds (22) of the programmes included gender indicators; roughly half included gender equality outputs (17); and over one-third included gender equality outcomes in their results frameworks (13). Of the total Joint SDG Fund budget of \$70 million, 11 per cent was allocated specifically to SDG 5, although proportions varied widely across countries, with an average budget allocation of 16 per cent. Additional co-funding and allocations to other goals also often benefited women and girls, including by improving their access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, family planning, education and decent work.

All joint programmes addressed gender equality, most often by promoting women's leadership and participation in decision-making, closing gender gaps in coverage and adequacy, and preventing and responding to gender-based violence. About two third of the joint programmes aimed explicitly at improving coverage and adequacy among women. Efforts to close gender gaps in social protection coverage and adequacy often focused on women in vulnerable and highly feminized sectors and occupations. Close to half of the joint programmes reported contributions to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work.

21. ILO. 2021. World Social Protection Report: Social Protection at the Crossroads. Geneva.

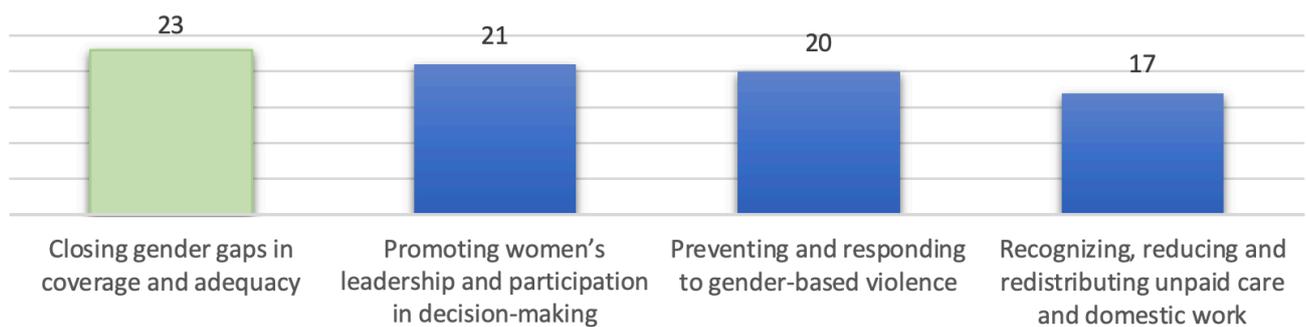
22. Camiletti et al. 2021. Mainstreaming gender into social protection strategies and programmes: Evidence from 74 low- and middle-income countries. UNICEF Innocenti and UN Women. Florence.

23. UN Women and UNDP. 2022. Government Responses to COVID-19: Lessons on Gender Equality for a World in Turmoil. New York.

FROM EXTENDING COVERAGE TO ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES

Extending coverage and improving adequacy are considered the core business of social protection and have been a focus of many joint programmes, with 23 out of 35 explicitly aiming at improving coverage and adequacy among women. Nevertheless, a significant share went beyond efforts to close gender gaps in social protection and deliberately aimed at addressing structural barriers to gender equality and women’s empowerment, including gender-based violence (GBV), women’s exclusion from decision-making, and their disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work (Figure 14). Nine joint programmes, including Mexico (Box 13), reported addressing all three barriers while also aiming to close gender gaps in coverage.

Figure 14. Number of joint programmes contributing to specific gender equality results



“The Joint SDG Fund provided valuable resources to Small Island Developing States in the Pacific to develop social protection floors including social benefits for persons living with disability, design integrated National Financing Frameworks for the SDGs, value ecosystem services and analyse potential for blue and green bonds, and rethink food systems to ensure no one is left behind”

- Simona Marinescu, United Nations Resident Coordinator, MCO Samoa, 2022

CLOSING GAPS: MAKING SOCIAL PROTECTION WORK FOR WOMEN IN MEXICO

Box 13



The joint programme in [Mexico](#), co-led by UN Women, International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), had two main focus areas: **increasing coverage** for groups of women frequently excluded from social protection; and supporting the establishment of a national care system. In terms of coverage, a simplification of the social security enrolment framework at the national level led to the coverage of **49,161 domestic workers between 2020 and 2022**. Further, a law reform to establish a permanent and mandatory social security regime for domestic workers was proposed. In the states of Oaxaca and Jalisco, **strategies have been implemented to expand social protection and support the formalization of women agricultural workers, with potential to impact 35,000 women**. In addition, the salaries of temporary agricultural workers have been increased by almost one-third compared to the minimum wage. With the onset of COVID-19, the joint programme provided support to female domestic and temporary agricultural workers by creating a guide on occupational safety and leading communications on COVID-19 prevention in indigenous languages.

A particularly innovative and catalytic component of the programme was to establish a **national care system** as a critical fourth pillar of the social protection system, alongside social insurance, social assistance and active labour market policies. Accordingly, the programme brought together stakeholders from across sectors, including the National Institute of Women (INMUJERES), the Finance Ministry, the Gender Equality Committee and the Labor and Social Security Committee of the Senate. **It provided technical assistance for the development of a general law on the national care system and a constitutional reform proposal that would recognize the right to care**, both currently pending approval by the Mexican Senate.

The programme supported these important developments through a range of actions: providing technical knowledge about social protection and care in support of legal reform; bolstering evidence on what works via a care services pilot in Iztapalapa municipality; mapping the public and social solutions to care services; capacity building through **training almost 2,000 people in social protection issues**; and running a communications campaign promoting domestic work as decent work, which reached over 12.5 million views.



CLOSING GENDER GAPS IN SOCIAL PROTECTION COVERAGE AND ADEQUACY

Efforts to close gender gaps in social protection coverage and adequacy often focused on women in vulnerable and highly feminized sectors and occupations. In **Mexico** and **Thailand**, the joint programmes comprised technical assistance to governments to improve coverage for domestic workers. In **Bangladesh**, the entire joint programme focused on expanding social protection coverage to tea garden workers, most of whom are women (see Box 14). Other programmes promoted the revision of vulnerability and targeting criteria of existing social protection programmes to increase the number of women and girls who are eligible. In **Indonesia**, the joint programme worked with the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions and Transmigration (MoV) to expand vulnerability criteria of the country's unconditional cash transfer and cash-for-work programmes to include girls, women-headed households, elderly women and pregnant women. In **Lebanon**, the joint programme prioritized advocacy and engagement to address the need for a non-contributory social pension scheme, recognizing that such a programme would disproportionately benefit women who, due to a combination of high levels of informal employment and unpaid care work, often fail to qualify for contributory pensions. Overall, an estimated 62 million additional women benefited from new or extended social protection benefits and access to social protection under the Fund's joint programmes, accounting for 50.4 per cent of overall beneficiaries.

BANGLADESH: ENHANCING SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR FEMALE TEA GARDEN WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Box 14



Photo: UNICEF Bangladesh / Habibur Haque

In [Bangladesh](#), the joint programme focused on improved social protection for tea garden workers, who mainly consist of women workers in a rural location isolated from the mainland. Tea worker communities experience an estimated 61.4 per cent poverty rate (three times the national rate) and face widespread discrimination in accessing basic social protection coverage. The joint programme took a dual approach of building capacity for improved access to health care and social services while also raising community awareness of rights among tea workers and supporting them to self-organize.

Regarding improved access to health care, the joint programme carried out a range of actions with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights. As a result, 14 health centres in tea gardens have built labour rooms or wards, and improved their provision for quality health services for pregnant and lactating tea workers. **These facilities are now connected with government health facilities for specialist care via referral systems that are expected to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality, including child mortality due to malnutrition.** During the COVID-19 lockdown, the joint programme adapted interventions including promoting COVID-19-friendly sexual and reproductive health services on billboards.

Bolstering the agency, participation and leadership of female tea workers was a key enabler for the outcomes above, which the joint programme achieved by providing training, education and opportunities for advocacy. In total, **625 women and female adolescent workers** were trained on topics including management and negotiation strategies, knowledge of their rights, as well as available services; and **2,119 tea garden workers** were provided information on social protection programmes and how to access them. A monthly ‘gender talk’ series at 25 tea gardens provided space for discussions on gender-based violence, child marriage prevention, and the importance of girls’ education. As a result, **264 cases of gender-based violence (GBV)** were identified and support provided by developing action plans. To improve the receptivity of duty bearers to advocacy by workers, the joint programme ran training for **100 tea garden managers** on national labour laws, gender equality and their responsibility to ensure decent working conditions. Consequently, 60 per cent of **397 issues identified** by workers were addressed by the garden authority and local government, including installing toilets in tea gardens and constructing roads.

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-Based Violence is a human rights violation, with often devastating immediate and long-term consequences, including for women's economic security. The fact that 20 joint programmes reported integrating GBV prevention and response is a clear indication of the role that social protection must play in this area. The extent and ways in which the integration of GBV was operationalized varied significantly, however. Six of the 20 joint programmes claiming to contribute to GBV prevention and response did not report any specific activities in their reports. Four focused on raising awareness as part of broader training for women, youth and/or public officials. This is an important first step, but falls short of true integration. The remaining 10 joint programmes aimed more deliberately at catalysing lasting institutional change by establishing coordination mechanisms, protocols and referral pathways, alongside training of social protection implementors, such as health workers, social workers and community outreach workers. In **Madagascar**, as a result of the joint programme, GBV survivors were included among the beneficiaries of the country's cash transfer, agricultural insurance and health insurance programmes, and increased their access to counselling and legal support. In **Georgia**, the program supported inclusive access to quality GBV and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights services for women and young people with disabilities through extensive engagement with women with disabilities, revision of guidelines, standard operating procedures, regulation, and staff training. In **Costa Rica**, the joint programme raised awareness about GBV as a key driver of the feminization of poverty and supported the development of procedures, tools and coordination mechanisms between social protection and gender equality agencies to enhance identification and referral of cases.

RECOGNIZING, REDUCING AND REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID CARE AND DOMESTIC WORK

Unpaid care and domestic work are essential for families, communities and economies to thrive, but due to lack of recognition and support, it is also a key driver of income insecurity among women, constraining their ability to engage in paid work and confining them to less protected, lower-paid jobs, with important ripple effects that hinder access to social protection and adequacy of benefits²⁴. Slightly under half of the 35 joint programmes (17) reported that they had contributed to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work. In the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, in particular, joint programmes advanced the notion of care services as a key pillar of social protection, together with social insurance, social assistance and active labour market policies. Indeed, all joint programmes in the LAC region reported contributions in this particular area. In **Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Ecuador**, joint programmes worked across sectors and levels of governance harnessing the specific expertise and networks of each agency to support the creation of care systems and strategies that address the needs of populations requiring care and support. These included children and older persons, as well as their caregivers, including young women and men in the informal economy.

PROMOTING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

A rights-based approach to social protection recognizes the indivisibility and interdependence of civil and political rights, on the one hand, and economic and social rights, on the other. Strengthening women's voice, agency, participation and leadership – from the household and community level to the highest echelons of political decision-making – is therefore critical to ensure that social protection systems meet their rights and needs. Contributions to this outcome were reported by 63 per cent of the joint programmes (22). Slightly over one-third of joint programmes (12) reported that they had involved feminist and/or women's organizations, 23 reported the involvement of CSOs more broadly, and 17 reported that they had engaged with national gender equality mechanisms. In **Viet Nam**, the programme partnered with the Viet Nam Women's Union to conduct an assessment of gender gaps in the social protection system and used it to advocate for policy reforms to address these gaps. In **Turkmenistan**, the Women's Union as well as women-led CSOs were critical partners in the design and implementation of GBV operating procedures and training modules for social workers. In **Bangladesh**, the empowerment of female tea workers was a key part of the joint programmes strategy to improve their access to social protection (see Box 14). In **Mexico**, the expertise, networks and participation of the national gender equality mechanism were important drivers of policy innovation (see Box 13).



DSG Amina Mohammed visiting Kenya
Photo: UN Joint SDG Fund / Duncan Moore

24. UN Women. 2015. Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights. New York.
25. Sepulveda, M. and Nyst, C. 2012. The Human Rights Approach to Social Protection. Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION

In many countries, data on social protection coverage and adequacy that are systematically disaggregated by sex and other characteristics are still lacking, making it hard to assess who benefits and who is left behind by current policies and programmes. Generating data, evidence and knowledge on gender and social protection was therefore a key strategy pursued by joint programmes (Figure 15), with context-specific assessments of social protection systems often providing a critical starting point to raise awareness and propose reforms and adjustments. In **Brazil**, a survey among social workers and other frontline implementors of the country's Happy Child Programme (HCP) revealed significant gaps in their capacity to address gender issues in their day-to-day interactions with beneficiaries, leading to the development of dedicated training modules for the over 18,500 HCP workers. Another 24 joint programmes also invested in developing the capacity of policymakers, programme officials and frontline workers. In **Viet Nam**, a comprehensive gender impact assessment of the social insurance system provided the basis for a high-level policy dialogue that ushered in a new decree on social protection that expands paid maternity and paternity leave. In **Georgia**, the programme produced a mapping of Gender and Disability Data with recommended indicators to support tracking progress towards national commitments on gender equality and disability inclusion.

Figure 15. Number of joint programmes engaged in the main activities undertaken to advance gender equality and women's empowerment



Overall, it remains unclear whether or not the translation of evidence into action occurred systematically across joint programmes. On the one hand, less than half (14) reported activities to promote gender equality by supporting the adaptation of an existing programmes and less than a quarter (7) by supporting the design of a new programme. On the other hand, a significant number of joint programmes (22) relied on policy dialogues and advocacy, highlighting efforts aimed at unlocking systemic policy shifts, including the promotion of laws, regulatory and policy frameworks, towards strengthening the rights of women and girls. Joint programmes that relied on policy dialogues and advocacy were more likely than others to regard their work as being transformative. Advocacy for these systemic policy shifts also effectively harnessed the comparative advantage of each participating agency, enabling joint programmes to bring together different types of evidence, sectors, levels of government and civil society groups, as in the cases of Mexico (Box 13) and Bangladesh (Box 14).

While several joint programmes achieved catalytic results, many also acknowledged that even with the right data and evidence, knowledge transfer and awareness raising about the gender implications of social protection design and implementation features require time and investments in long-term relationships with national stakeholders, including at the local level.

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Photo: UNICEF Syria / Antwan Chnkdti

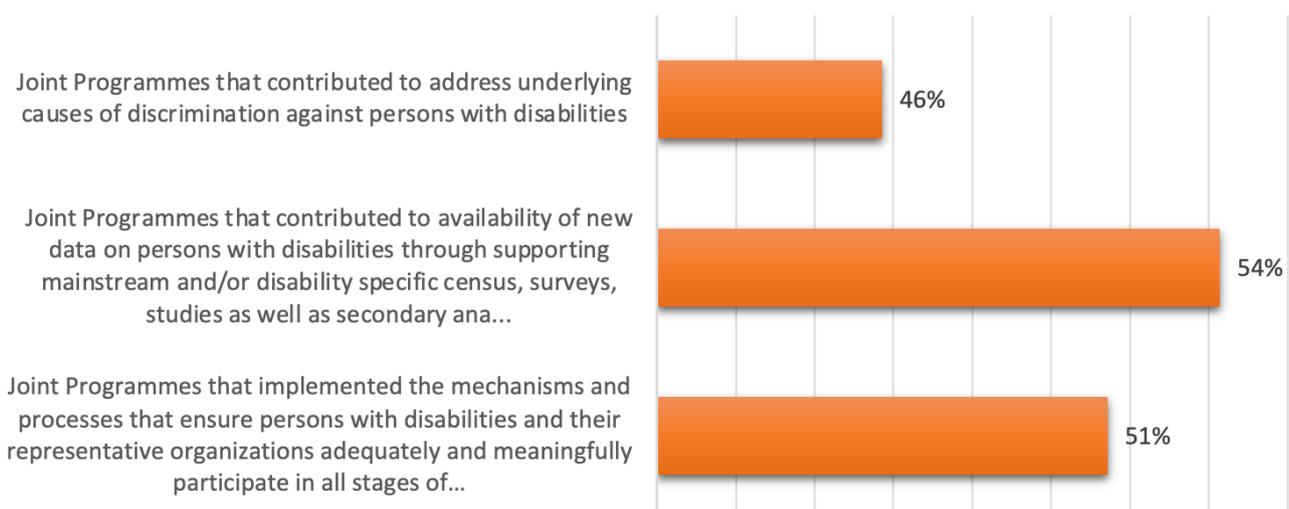
With more than two-thirds of the joint programmes providing specific attention to persons with disabilities, **the portfolio made a significant contribution to supporting a shift towards more inclusive social protection systems extending access to over 4 million persons with disabilities to new or extended social protection services.** The joint programmes addressed disability with a wide diversity of approaches and innovations. This created a rich source of learning on the type of entry points that a country could use to move towards a disability-inclusive social protection system.

The majority of the joint programmes implemented mechanisms and processes that ensure persons with disabilities and their representative organizations adequately and meaningfully participate in all stages of programme implementation. Joint programmes contributed to strengthen legal and policy frameworks for inclusive social protection in line with the Convention on the Rights of People of Disability. More than half of the joint programmes also strengthened evidence generation and disability related data collection and analysis to inform social protection reforms.

PROMOTING GREATER PARTICIPATION OF ORGANIZATIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SOCIAL PROTECTION REFORMS

A total of 18 joint programmes (51 per cent of the portfolio) reported implementing mechanisms and processes to facilitate adequate and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations (organization of persons with disabilities, or OPDs) in all stages of programme implementation (Figure 16). The human rights-based approach to disability inclusion affirms that persons with disabilities have the right to participate fully and effectively in decisions that affect their lives; being able to do so is critical to the removal of systemic barriers to their full inclusion and participation in society. Joint programmes consulted with persons with disabilities through direct engagement with OPDs and through the creation of new consultative groups that were made up of persons with disabilities and other key partners. For example, in **Madagascar**, OPDs were consulted in the development of a national advocacy strategy. In **Lebanon**, the programme engaged in an intensive consultation and capacity building process with OPDs covering the development of national social protection strategy, the response to COVID 19 and the Beirut blast as well as the design of the pilot disability allowance. The MCO covering **Samoa, Niue, Cook Islands and Tokelau** established a Disability Reference Group which contributed to the adoption of a new disability allowance in Samoa, among other reforms. In **Palestine**, a new body made up representatives from OPDs and other relevant CSOs was established, the Engagement and Inclusion Panel. These groups informed critical elements of the social protection initiatives including the design and implementation of the needs assessment and the definition of priority areas to ensure a minimum social services' package reached the most marginalized. In Palestine, **4,669 persons** with disabilities were among the direct beneficiaries of the programme.

Figure 16. Joint programmes that implemented interventions targeting persons with disabilities



STRENGTHENING LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR INCLUSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN LINE WITH THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE OF DISABILITY

In order to support the dialogue between the government and OPDs, joint programmes have worked in different ways to ensure that support to persons with disabilities is enshrined in laws. Some supported disability-specific legislation and policies, while others prioritized social protection-related frameworks. In **Uzbekistan**, for example, the joint programme supported the CRPD ratification process and contributed to the disability-inclusive National Strategy for Social Protection. In **Georgia**, joint efforts of relevant national authorities, participating United Nations agencies and organizations of persons with disabilities produced synergies and spill-over effects that helped accelerating disability-related work in the country. The joint programme contributed to improving the legal framework for persons with disabilities (Box 15), reform disability certification, and support for more inclusive efforts in addressing GBV. An estimated 127,648 persons with disabilities directly benefited from social protection due to the joint programme.

DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE POLICYMAKING

Box 15

In **Georgia**, the joint programme has supported the reform of the current disability certification mechanisms, which has certified around 3 per cent of the total population. The support included a pilot use of a revised process aligned with the Convention on the Rights of People of Disability (CRPD) recommendations and the international standards in two regions of Georgia. The joint programme also carried out a legal analysis on the laws and by-laws pertaining to the disability assessment and status determination process with respect to the CRPD, and initiated the draft amendment of the **Law of Georgia on Medical-Social Expertise**, which determines the rules for granting disability status. The joint programme contributed to improving the legal framework for persons with disabilities, with specific attention to women and children. This work has been informed by the Disability Advisory Committee, consisting of disability leaders representing the diversity of the movement, which provided its analysis on the process.

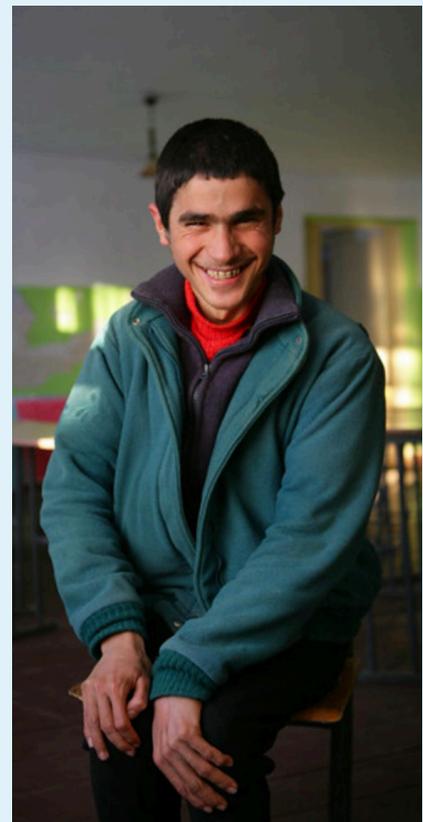


Photo: UNICEF Georgia / Giacomo Pirozzi

STRENGTHENING EVIDENCE GENERATION AND DISABILITY RELATED DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS TO INFORM SOCIAL PROTECTION REFORMS

Disability-related evidence generation has been a strong component across the portfolio; 19 joint programmes (54 per cent of the total) were engaged in disability-related data collection and analysis. These programmes enjoyed diverse contributions ranging from training of the national statistics officers and needs assessment, to carrying out a national disability survey. In **Kenya**, the joint programme provided training on disability inclusion in statistical data collection and analysis for the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) to strengthen the capacity of officers to collect, disaggregate and analyse national-level data. These data are not only useful for social protection, but also for other government sectors that engage the services of the KNBS. In **Lebanon**, extensive disability disaggregation of the Labor, Household Income and Expenditures Survey informed the development of the national social protection strategy and the rationale for a disability allowance. In **Palestine**, the joint programme carried out a comprehensive needs assessment for persons with disabilities and older persons to identify the gaps in availability and quality of social services essential to the well-being of these two target groups.

“Through this process the United Nations has learned the great value of engaging with the disability movement, enhancing representation and ensuring all pillars of a social protection system are reviewed through a disability inclusion lens. Social assistance is an enabler for full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in social and economic life, while ultimately it is inclusion in the labour market that will lead to the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in social and economic life.”

-Najat Rochdi, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Lebanon, 2022

THE DISABILITY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM IN CAMBODIA

Box 16



Photo: UNICEF Cambodia / Giacomo Pirozzi

In **Cambodia**, the joint programme contributed to the development of the Disability Management Information System (DMIS), and capacity building and roll-out of its mechanism. This resulted in **identification of 230,000 persons with disabilities** (1.4 per cent of total population), which shows a strong performance. The joint programme leveraged digitization to develop a mechanism where an assessment is carried out by community workers with a validation process at the district, provincial and national levels, including access and reliability. The support involved the revision of the disability identification and assessment guidelines, training of **4,000 commune officials in 1,646 communes**, the development of the DMIS and the roll-out of the identification process through a 100-day campaign. The development of the disability identification process and tools resulted from the extensive consultative processes including organizations of persons with disabilities and other civil society organizations, and inter-ministerial consultations. The DMIS and the identification process have already been implemented, with data dissemination to line ministries and development partners, including for the provision of cash transfers, social care and employment. The process was also used to screen and prioritize eligible persons with disabilities in accessing COVID-19 vaccinations.

DISABILITY IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT MECHANISMS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Among the main requests for technical assistance from countries is disability identification assessment and certification. There are competing requirements because persons with disabilities primarily request mechanisms that are easily accessible, streamlined and transparent, and not solely focused on assessing impairments, whereas governments are often concerned by fraud and put an emphasis on reliability. This creates tension when making these mechanisms more accessible, comprehensive and reliable. Joint programmes supported efforts to resolve this difficult situation in different ways, starting with simplifying eligibility procedures for specific benefits. In the **Philippines**, the joint programme supported the revision of the guidelines on the social protection scheme of persons with disabilities in BARMM, with the aim to streamline the eligibility process and provide easier access to the necessary interventions for persons with disabilities. In **Tokelau**, a national survey informed the establishment of a national register of Persons with Disabilities.



Photo: UNICEF Republic of the Congo / Diana Zeyneb Alhindawi

The emergence of digitization and management information systems in the social protection field have also provided new opportunities to support better and more accessible disability identification and assessment, either with more inclusive social registries, or with the development of a disability management information system, such as in **Cambodia** (Box 16).

Whereas the disability registry concerns persons with disabilities, the social protection registry usually concerns vulnerable households. There are also increasingly combination and integration sought between disability and social registries. In **Palestine**, the joint programme supported the development of a database of persons with disabilities in order to better identify them and understand their needs in line with the efforts by the Ministry of Social Development to put in place a social registry, and thereby accelerate the availability of an integrated dataset to enable better targeting of the most vulnerable.



SCALING INNOVATIONS AND CREATING NEW KNOWLEDGE



Photo: UNDP Rwanda / Cyril Ndegeya

A key objective of the Fund is to enable joint programmes to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs by ‘doing things differently’ and ‘breaking down the silos.’ This entails designing business models and policies that facilitate innovative solutions that scale up rapidly and ensure sustainable impact. About 77 per cent (or 27) of the joint programmes tested innovative solutions in 2020–2022. Across the portfolio, **89 innovative solutions** were implemented to accelerate SDG progress.

Various joint programmes embarked on testing and implementing innovative approaches to enhance social protection targeting, coverage and delivery. Innovation took various shapes, being in the form of new technologies, methodologies, or work processes. Many joint programmes also emphasized that installing cross-sectoral governance and collaborative structures was in itself a major innovation. Similarly, learning and sharing initiatives have taken many different forms, from the joint development of publications and training courses to the establishment of knowledge sharing platforms, supported by various dissemination instruments and events.

PILOTING AND SCALING INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

In line with its objective of catalysing SDG policies and financing, the progress made by the joint programmes was replicated and scaled by governments in partnerships with United Nations entities and development partners. This includes, inter alia, providing technical support to enact new policies and legal frameworks that scale up innovations. In **Indonesia**, the programme introduced a model for innovative financing for social protection which involved implementing a pilot in two provinces (Central Sulawesi and West Nusa Tenggara). The pilot contributed to the economic strengthening of 3,200 beneficiaries and offered policy options to cover excluded populations who are left out from government social protection programmes. In **Saint Lucia**, the programme initiated an innovative pilot that provided women recipients of the Public Assistance Programme (PAP), the country's main cash transfer programme, with additional services to tackle the multiple dimensions of women's poverty and vulnerability, including through technical and vocational training, childcare vouchers and counselling in the case of GBV survivors. The results of the PAP pilot informed the social protection component of a 4-year joint programme launched in May 2022 to boost women's economic resilience. In **Viet Nam** and **Mongolia**, the Governments also piloted social protection initiatives developed with the joint programmes and scaled up with dedicated funding and legal amendments.

Bringing different foci, UN agencies also created bridges between sectors and between social protection models. In **Rwanda**, for example, links were developed between the social protection and emergency management sectors, with the relevant ministries engaged in discussions on how to strengthen policy linkages and coordination to support emergency response through social protection mechanisms. In many cases, joint programmes also contributed to mainstream social protection across several sectors. In **Albania**, the joint programme supported the development and piloting of innovative models of integrated social care services and established local linkages between health and social protection services, addressing several target groups, including people with disabilities, children with disabilities, families in need, and older people.

“The Joint SDG Fund provided opportunities for the four United Nations specialized agencies to work together with the national counterparts to create innovative and non-traditional approaches for improving the shock-responsiveness and extending social protection to herders in Mongolia”.

*-Tapan Mishra, United Nations Resident
Coordinator, Mongolia, 2022*

INNOVATING IN THE MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY OF SOCIAL PROTECTION ASSISTANCE

Around 86 per cent (or 30) of the joint programmes contributed to establish or improve representative and participatory coordination mechanisms. Horizontal or vertical collaborative platforms and approaches were flagged by more than one third of the programmes as key innovations. Horizontal bridges were established between ministries and/or between municipalities, and vertical channels opened between national and sub-national levels. These governance structures opened new avenues for cross-sectoral transformations and learning. In **Argentina**, for example, the promotion of joint work between the different provinces was considered a learning experience and a milestone in terms of innovation in the preparation of provincial public policies.



Photo: Photo: UNDP Lebanon

In many cases, innovation also took the form of new technologies or information systems integrated in the management of social protection schemes. In **Uzbekistan**, a single registry for various social protection programmes was rolled out in all regions providing simplified access to social benefits. As of December 2021, the single registry covered over 1.2 million people. In **Kenya**, where mobile money services are widespread, the Universal Child Benefit pilot introduced this modality to transfer cash to beneficiaries to ease payment processes, which represented an innovation compared to the transfers on bank accounts utilized to date. In **Samoa, Niue, Cook Islands and Tokelau**, the programme supported the accessibility for persons with disabilities of mobile payment system of social benefits. In **Sao Tome and Principe**, the programme introduced an open-source web-based application in the national health system that supports data collection and analysis of transactional or disaggregated data. This innovation is expected to transform the management of National Health System data because it can be used to track individual data, either in a community or in a health facility, and to track aggregated data, generally at the district level.

INTRODUCING NEW METHODS TO IDENTIFY PERSONS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

Box 17

In **Sao Tome and Principe**, an innovative methodology was introduced for identifying vulnerable families for the social registry. This was based on two approaches: a mixed targeting approach, which combined pre-identification of vulnerable families by communities; and the National Statistics Institute (INE), which applied a proxy means testing survey to determine the degree of vulnerability of each pre-identified household. This method was complemented by a selective approach for identifying individuals or households that were not structurally vulnerable but would fall into extreme poverty due to a shock.

IMPLEMENTING NEW METHODS AND TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE THE TARGETING OF PERSONS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS

Across the portfolio, a range of innovations in social protection focused on reaching the most vulnerable population groups. Joint programmes designed innovations aiming to leave no one behind, especially by enhancing the targeting and delivery of social protection programmes, and by leveraging digital technologies to expand their coverage and financing. For instance, the programme in **Argentina** supported the Government in designing and launching a new platform with georeferenced information on care services for early childhood services. The programme also provided training on georeferenced information systems and database management for those in charge of administering the platform. In order to identify the location of social services, in **Georgia**, the programme created an interactive map of available social services for persons with disabilities, providing information to policymakers on geographical coverage of certain services and identifying gaps. In **South Africa**, the joint programme piloted the use of computer-assisted telephone interviewing to survey hard-to-reach populations during COVID-19 restrictions and to provide evidence for the country's first multidimensional poverty assessment focused on children. **Sao Tome and Principe** also introduced new methods to identify vulnerable persons (Box 17).

USING PROVEN INNOVATION METHODOLOGIES TO ACCELERATE ACHIEVEMENT TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Tapping into the innovation toolbox, joint programmes relied on approaches such as Innovation Labs, Innovation Challenges, Design Thinking, Behavioural Insights and prototypes. In **Costa Rica**, four Innovation Labs were developed to find solutions to structural challenges at the local and national levels and to improve the economic autonomy of women in their territories. In **Ecuador**, applying Design Thinking, the programme used an Accelerator Lab to create a digital prototype to help young people identify misleading job ads. An Innovation Challenge was also launched to find a digital solution to collect young informal workers' information. Other examples of innovation methodologies include small-scale pilots in **Viet Nam**, which were used to test the feasibility of models such as an integrated care for the elderly. Fast, iterative experimentation was also applied to test innovative e-solutions for service delivery, such as e-registration and payment of benefits. This approach helped to select and refine the most effective solutions for national scale-up. In **Montenegro**, to improve human-centred integrated service delivery, the programme used innovative human-centred design methodology for the co-design of services for labour activation of the most vulnerable, especially the youth. Based on the insights from beneficiaries and service providers, several solutions were identified, including improved services as well as policy action, due to many institutional, legal and policy-related bottlenecks identified during the process.

CREATING AN EXTENSIVE BODY OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AND LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

A vast pool of knowledge was created by the joint programmes in many formats, including strategic studies and technical reports, manuals and guidelines, info sheets, tutorials and courses. These resources served to inform policymaking, equip advocacy campaigns, and develop institutional capacities. To further ensure the sustainability of programmes' outcomes, these materials were also frequently integrated into training courses targeting government officials and CSOs. In **Costa Rica**, after testing the contents through pilots, the programme developed learning manuals, courses, video tutorials, info sheets and other educational resources to increase awareness and develop competencies among government officials. In **Georgia**, the Accessibility Plan and the guidelines for standards of web accessibility for persons with disabilities served as the basis for future legislation and policies, and for the development of university syllabuses for bachelor's and master's degree students. In **Brazil**, the programme developed a new online platform for Open and Distance Learning, which offers more than 40 online courses to improve the expertise of professionals on national social policies under the Ministry of Citizenship.

INSTALLING NEW AVENUES AND MECHANISMS FOR KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION AND LEARNING

Joint programmes supported the development and delivery of a large collection of online databases, e-learning courses, and virtual capacity-building events such as online conferences and webinars. Capacity development contributing to the sustainability of programme results; in most countries, multiple training and learning activities were carried out for national and sub-national officials, social organizations, specialists in various fields of social policy, community leaders, family groups and CSOs. For the implementation of these activities, innovative processes were used, many of which were virtual due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Online training platforms were designed and created, and manuals, audio-visual materials and podcasts were also produced to support learning activities.

“By helping link the Enhanced Single Registry to other Government of Kenya databases, establishing a Kenya Community of Practice for Social Protection and supporting sector-specific initiatives like the Kenya Agriculture Management Information System, we’re helping the Kenyan Government strengthen leadership, coordination and policy design for the future of Social Protection”.

-Stephen Jackson, United Nations Resident Coordinator, Kenya, 2022

Communities of practice were established in two countries. The Kenya Community of Practice for Social Protection, launched in 2020, provided an interactive forum for the sharing of knowledge and skills, the exchange of information, mentorship and sharing of best practices among organizations and individuals involved in the social protection space in **Kenya**. Four learning sessions were held on the following: the national 2018–2022 monitoring and evaluation framework; the social protection adaptations to COVID-19 and the innovations and lessons learned; the financing and sustainability of social protection interventions; and the response to COVID-19 to best support persons in vulnerable situations. In 2021, multisectoral best practise exchange events focusing on social protection for temporary female agricultural workers took place in **Mexico**, reaching 650 people from local and federal governments, agribusiness companies, civil society and academia.

Other communication channels and tools were leveraged to disseminate knowledge, including podcasts, video clips, social media and national TV. In **Somalia**, social media was widely used to relay learning information on the Joint Programme. In **Viet Nam**, success stories, important events and publications were highlighted through social media platforms, including the United Nations Viet Nam and Joint SDG Fund websites, Facebook and Twitter, as well as printed media and national TV. In **Argentina**, social media was used to promote care work (Box 18). These initiatives were amplified by the Secretariat of the Joint SDG Fund through a series of blog posts and webinars.

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH

Box 18

In **Argentina**, the communication campaign “Someone Cares” was carried out on social networks in March 2021 with the aim **to provide visibility and show the value of care work, particularly unpaid care work and its impact on women’s labour insertion**. It included videos, posts, activation slogans, chat through IGTV (Instagram) and dissemination with influencers. The **messages reached 8 million users, the IGTV talk had 13,000 reproductions and the campaign was declared of social interest by the Legislature of Buenos Aires and the province of Río Negro**. In addition, the podcast “Someone Cares” was created to raise awareness of the importance of care and possible improvements to generate a fairer and more equitable organization of care. Specialists and officials from different United Nations agencies – International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) – participated in all six episodes; UN Women reviewed the content. The podcast was launched on 19 January 2022, and by the end of the joint programme it had 5,115 total views and 710 followers on the Spotify platform. In addition to being broadcast in Argentina, it was broadcast in Mexico, Spain, Uruguay and Colombia. To promote the programme, two talks were held on IGTV with an influencer and a journalist who had a total of 6,800 views.

Note: * Podcast available at: [Alguien Cuida](#) | [Podcast on Spotify](#)



Photo: UNICEF Argentina / Sebastián x Gil

CONCLUSION



Photo: UNICEF Somalia / Tobin Jones

With a total budget of US\$ 102 million, the portfolio of 35 joint programmes on extending social protection and LNOB has made substantial contributions in supporting governments to expand coverage, comprehensiveness and the adequacy of social protection during a time of acute needs. In just over two years, **147 million people in 39 countries benefited from increased social protection, including 62 million women and 4 million persons with disabilities.** While the main focus was on SDG 1 with its target on universal social protection, this portfolio contributed to 11 SDGs²⁶ overall. It should be reiterated that these results were achieved **in the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic** and would not have been possible had the joint programmes not forged agile, responsive and innovative strategies focusing on system change and addressing socio-economic impact on the most vulnerable.

Joint programmes engaged with national partners to address local challenges within the framework of international laws and conventions, including human rights conventions and prioritizing gender equality and empowerment. **The value-added of the Fund translated into multi-dimensional interventions spanning across sectors to yield systemic results that leave no one behind.** Joint programmes identified and removed a range of institutional, financial, legal, and policy related bottlenecks to accelerate achievement towards the SDGs (Box 19).

26. SDG 1: No poverty; SDG 2: Zero hunger; SDG 3 Good health and well-being; SDG 4: Quality education; SDG 5: Gender equality; SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth; SDG 10: Reduced inequalities; SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities; SDG 13: Climate action; SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions; and SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals.

JOINT PROGRAMMES' ENTRY POINTS FOR STRENGTHENING SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Box 19

ACCELERATION OF POLICY INNOVATIONS

Joint programmes supported national partners in accelerating transformative policy change by introducing innovative policies and interventions that were integrated across sectors and across organizations to break down the previously siloed approach. This resulted in more than 150 innovative, integrated policy solutions that were developed across the portfolio. They demonstrated that systemic policy change requires long-term investments in evidence, advocacy, technical support, and relationships with diverse national and local stakeholders.

FINANCING OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

The risks of fiscal constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and conflicts emphasize the importance of ensuring sustainable financing of social protection. Joint programmes supported governments in needs assessments, costings, fiscal space analyses and actuarial valuations, thereby laying important foundations for enhancing government capacity for domestic resource mobilisation and management of finances for social protection. Nine programmes successfully supported the passing of a bill or a law to increase social protection expenditure, and 54 per cent (19) of the programmes contributed to an increase in social protection public spending.

MANAGING SOCIAL PROTECTION

Almost 89 per cent (or 31) of the joint programmes improved governance and/or implementation of social protection systems. Binding their technical expertise and networks, United Nations organizations supported ministries and agencies to break down sectoral silos at the national and sub-national levels. Thirty joint programmes established or improved representative and participatory coordination mechanisms for social protection. Persons in vulnerable situations participated in these governance mechanisms in more than half of the joint programmes. In many countries, cross-sectoral governance structures were perceived as a major innovation facilitated by the programme calling to be institutionalized by partners and endured.

ACCESS AND DELIVERY

Better targeting of populations in vulnerable situations contributed to enhanced social protection coverage and to improving the well-being of the most vulnerable. Additionally, human rights-based advocacy and communications campaigns, and capacity development of key institutions and actors in social protection provided a critical basis for increased accessibility to social protection. Management and delivery of social protection assistance were an entry point for all joint programmes, with 28 improving data and information management systems, including registration, payment systems and data.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Across the portfolio, more than 600 partners were involved in the implementation of the joint programmes. This contributed to ensuring local ownership in the design and implementation of policy and institutional change, and facilitated the sustainability of results. The meaningful engagement in such partnerships of persons in vulnerable situations at risk of being left behind encouraged the adoption of new initiatives. Joint programmes stressed that significant investments in capacity development were also required to ensure that partners continue to play key role in policy reforms and programme adaptations.

An integrated, multidimensional approach aimed at systemic policy change enabled United Nations agencies to strategically capitalize on their comparative advantages, which further supported the Fund's objective of enhancing United Nations **collective action**. **Thirty-four joint programmes reported that participating United Nations organizations worked more efficiently and effectively together, reducing duplication and transaction costs for governments, development partners and the United Nations system.** Under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinators, the joint programmes' alignment with national priorities and development plans contributed to the mobilisation of wide range of stakeholders and continuous strategic engagement with high-level policymakers. United Nations organizations jointly provided enhanced access to the expertise and resources of the United Nations system, improved the coverage of cross-cutting issues, and demonstrated a coherent United Nations system approach. Furthermore, United Nations organizations increased resources and funding where the United Nations system adds substantive value to national development.



Photo: UNDP Indonesia / Fieni Aprilia

THE WAY FORWARD: BUILDING ON THE SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND PORTFOLIO

Systemic effects continue even after the end of the current joint programmes, as the governments continue to scale up solutions incubated. For example, the ripple effect of the constitutional amendment in Mexico, which introduced a national care system, will benefit 45 million people, if the corresponding law is passed. Over 10 programmes (e.g. the Philippines, Lao PDR, Madagascar and the Multi-Country Office Barbados) catalysed additional funding, and in Mongolia, the successful pilot of the Child Money programme led the Government to invest \$200 million to scale up child benefits.

The first portfolio of the Joint SDG Fund on social protection has also set the example for new joint programmes in the SIDS. From the 2021 call for proposals on SIDS, a total of 18 joint programmes focus on LNOB. Launched in 2022, these new programmes are expected to accelerate the SDGs in 27 SIDS, with close to half focusing on social protection and others on data systems and digitalization, food security and decent jobs. The joint programmes that are at the intersections of humanitarian and development work address disaster risk reduction and shock-responsive social protection systems. The Leaving No One Behind principle will continue to be at the core of our joint programmes to ensure that the rights and needs of vulnerable groups and those who face structural inequalities and disadvantages remain at the centre.

While the case for universal social protection and leaving no one behind has proven to be a catalyser across the SDGs and remain a priority for the Secretary-General as outlined in Our Common Agenda²⁷, **the global cost-of-living crisis catalysed by the war in Ukraine has compounded the devastating effects of COVID-19 and the global climate crisis.** The vulnerability increases in scope and space, and the ongoing crises deepen existing inequalities that require a genuine systemic overhaul. Therefore, while the Fund continues to support social protection, it will use the opportunities to cross-fertilize and build synergies with other strategic priorities to further drive the impact in a whole-of-society approach.

As the Joint SDG Fund enters a new phase in 2022–2023, the focus will be on **upscaling the investment in key priorities for SDG transformation, including in food systems, digital technology, energy and climate, decent jobs and social protection, education, localization of SDGs, and development solutions for internal displacement.** The comprehensive scope of policy issues addressed through an integrated approach to social protection and LNOB in the 35 joint programmes of this portfolio produced a sound foundation for these SDG transformations. The primary pathway for building on this will be through the upcoming support to the Global Accelerator for Jobs and Social Protection, but the 35 joint programmes will provide entry points also for other thematic priorities of the Fund so that social protection is mainstreamed in other relevant thematic areas.

27. United Nations. (2021). Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General. New York: United Nations. www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf

CONTRIBUTION TO EMERGING THEMATIC PRIORITIES OF THE JOINT SDG FUND

Universal social protection, in conjunction with decent jobs, is in the focus of the **Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions** launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in September 2021, which aims to create 400 million jobs and include 4 billion people in social protection systems. The Joint SDG Fund is incubating a dedicated window for catalytic funding for the ‘pathfinder countries’ of the Global Accelerator to **build on the achievements, as well as lessons learned, from the first generation of joint programmes focusing on social protection**. In addition to possible scaling up of social protection in countries such as Viet Nam (see Box 20), particular emphasis will be placed on the integration of social protection with decent jobs, as exemplified in the joint programmes in Ecuador, Costa Rica, Bangladesh (see Box 14), Cambodia and others. In Ecuador, for instance, an innovative strategy to extend social protection to the young, the unemployed, the self-employed and informal economy workers included a plan for a progressive coverage extension through reduced contribution rates and flexible payment plans. It also offered health coverage for their partners and incentives for collective bargaining affiliation to social security.

Safeguarding human rights is at the frontier of digital transformation challenges with the digital divide becoming the new face of inequality, leaving the most vulnerable further behind. To address digital challenges and harness possibilities, the United Nations Secretary-General launched the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation for joint action towards a more inclusive, equitable and safer digital world that serves the needs of all. As the Joint SDG Fund incubates a thematic window on digital transformation it aims to complement the strategic investments already made in the social protection portfolio. As of 2022, the Fund has invested \$23 million in **15 Joint Programmes which include core results or activities in support of digital transformation**. The social protection joint programme in **Chile** paved the way for a joint programme that successfully models the digitization of social protection, thus underpinning social inclusion outcomes (Box 21). Concurrently, other programmes leveraged digital technologies for data systems, agriculture, social services and disaster risk management.



Photo: UNDP Chile / Romina Ayala. NODE Project

ACCELERATING VIET NAM'S TRANSITION TOWARD INCLUSIVE AND INTEGRATED SOCIAL PROTECTION

Box 20

As part of the concerted efforts towards an integrated and inclusive **social protection system in Viet Nam**, the joint work of the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has:

Strengthened the linkages between social insurance and social assistance through a multi-tiered social protection system approach, including child benefits, maternity and paternity benefits, old-age pensions and disability benefits, with a focus on making the system more inclusive for those at risk of being left behind.

Developed the social care system along the lines of the life-cycle approach in addition to advocating for a more rights-based, progressive and efficient use of state resources.

Rapidly iterated solutions for digitizing the social protection system on a national scale to facilitate and support the e-registration of beneficiaries, e-delivery payments and service, and monitoring and evaluation.

Developed shock-resilient mechanisms to deliver rapid assistance and absorb the impacts of unexpected large-scale crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, **reaching up to 26 million vulnerable people**.

By 2030, these above efforts are expected to reach 60 per cent of workers participating in the social insurance system, 100 per cent of children benefiting from social protection, 100 per cent of women who have access to paid maternity leave, 60 per cent of older persons who have pensions, and 2 million people with disabilities benefiting from assistance.



Photo: UNICEF Viet Nam / Pham Ha Duy Linh

IMPROVING SOCIAL PROTECTION AND INCLUSION OF OLDER PERSONS THROUGH INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN CHILE

Box 21

Co-led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the joint programme in [Chile](#) **increased social inclusion and social protection for the elderly by strengthening community networks and improving access** to the various programmes, services and social benefits available to them. This was achieved through the online platform “NODO”, which became **the largest and most comprehensive digital ecosystem for older persons and their networks**. To mitigate the impact of COVID-19, the joint programme created an online emergency platform that was introduced as new digital social service that manages requests from older persons and their families and links them with and refers them to an institutional support network across the country. Between 2020 and 2021, the initiative directly supported almost 50,000 requests, reinforcing the value of partnerships as an essential element of social inclusion and **using technologies as a key element to confront new challenges**. As a result, older persons, of whom 61 per cent were women and almost half from rural communities, were directly impacted by the strengthening of social ties and support of community networks.

The following three digital services were also developed to facilitate:

Connecting people aged over 60 with the public municipal social services through an app.

Connecting caregivers with each other.

A website that provides free online courses targeted at people that assist older persons.

The Food Systems Summit held during the 2021 United Nations General Assembly set the stage for **global food systems transformation to accelerate achievement towards the SDG by 2030**. The focus is placed on SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 2 (food/nutrition), SDG 3 (health/well-being), SDG 6 (water), SDG 14 (oceans) – as well as SDG 12 (consumption), SDG 13 (climate), and SDG 15 (land). The Joint SDG Fund is expected to draw from past experience and further invest in the systemic, transformative impact of food policies and financing. As a part of the Summit follow-up and in collaboration with the Food Systems Coordination Hub, the Joint SDG Fund is incubating a new thematic window to provide **catalytic funding for national food system pathways**.

The above will build on the achievements of the portfolio on social protection and LNOB within the broader Fund investment of \$29 million in food systems. Joint programmes in the Philippines, Indonesia, Mongolia, Rwanda (see Box 22) and Malawi addressed, inter alia, **food, agriculture and climate change in the context of shock-responsive social protection**. Other joint programmes **supported job creation and entrepreneurship in agriculture**, including for tea garden female workers in Bangladesh and female agricultural microentrepreneurs in Costa Rica.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION STRATEGIES TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY IN RWANDA

Box 22

Led by United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the joint programme in [Rwanda](#) supported disaster risk reduction and management policy to guide **national disaster preparedness plans that mainstream disaster management across strategic sectors**, particularly social protection, food security and nutrition, and water and sanitation. The core government policy was aligned with international commitments and best practices to reflect **the contribution that social protection makes to managing shocks**, and to provide better guidance for shock-responsive and climate-sensitive social protection.

New cash transfer components of the national flagship social protection scheme, Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP), will enable more inclusive delivery of social protection programmes in the future. The Investment included scaling up of the ‘cash plus’ programmes through para-social workers and the roll-out of village savings and lending associations. These associations **funded business plans through an innovative seed funding facility** and by providing productive agricultural assets (e.g. small livestock), inputs (e.g. fertilizers, vegetable seeds and fruit tree seedlings) and infrastructure (terraces, boreholes and poultry houses).



The Local 2030 Coalition supports takeholders at the global, regional, national and local levels in **collaboratively incubating and sharing solutions, unlocking bottlenecks, and implementing strategies that advance the SDGs at the local level.** In order to localize development, it is necessary to take into account subnational contexts in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, from the setting of goals and targets, to determining the means of implementation and measuring progress. The achievement of the SDGs depends more than ever on the ability of local and regional governments to promote integrated, inclusive and sustainable development.

To date, the Joint SDG Fund has already invested \$40 million in 19 joint programmes, primarily through social protection, that engaged **neighbourhoods, villages, communes, municipalities, districts, provinces, counties, departments and states (in federal contexts) on innovative policy solutions.** Examples from the social protection portfolio span a large number of countries and was best exemplified in Albania (see Box 23). These and other past achievements will contribute to build further support to SDG localization, including through the collaboration with the Local 2030 Secretariat that seeks to bring localization to scale through dedicated funding from the Joint SDG Fund.

As demonstrated above, the foundation built by the 35 joint programmes on integrated social protection and LNOB serves to effectively **incubate emerging thematic priorities of the Joint SDG Fund to further the cause of key SDG transformations.** While recognizing the success of this first portfolio of joint programmes and leveraging it with further investment, it will be essential to effectively incorporate institutional and operational (see box 24) as well as strategic lessons learned. The key strategic lessons are: **a much stronger focus should be placed on advanced frameworks for accelerating the achievement towards the SDGs through catalytic designs that produce a multiplier effect in the broader development eco-system; the bar should be raised on multi-stakeholder collaboration, co-creation and financing; and the priority focus should be placed on the most vulnerable.** This also echoes the vision of the Secretary-General in the Our Common Agenda, which calls for inclusive, networked and effective multilateralism to respond to humanity's pressing challenges.



Photo: Philippines / Danilo Victoriano

ADAPTING SOLUTIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN ALBANIA

Box 23

In **Albania**, the joint programme led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN Women and World Health Organization (WHO) supported six municipalities in developing **integrated and budgeted local social care plans**, which will be scaled up across the entire country. This was achieved by replenishing the Social Fund with local revenues and the national social protection budget, and **piloting new models of integrated social care services**, linking local health and social protection services, and empowering persons in vulnerable situations in the context of mutual decision-making. Support also ensured the mainstreaming of gender in the municipal social protection services and **engendering their social care plans**. Institutional capacities of municipalities were also strengthened for the use of Management Information Systems on social care services.

The joint programme also provided capacity building on overall integration of social policies, which resulted in **linking social protection cash assistance schemes with integrated social care services for persons in vulnerable situations at the local level**. Three small local government units, in Devoll, Puka and Rrogozhina, now offer public social care services for the first time in addition to providing “traditional” cash assistance supports.



Photo: UNICEF Albania / Olsi Beci

SELECTED OPERATIONAL LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT PROGRAMMES

Box 24

Final evaluations of the joint programmes as well as portfolio level reviews and knowledge sharing events organized by the Fund's global management team conveyed a range of **operational lessons** that can inform the design of future joint programmes. Some of the recurring lessons learned were as follows:

Assessment and Planning: It is valuable for joint programmes to assess and plan risks such as changing governments' priorities, economic and financial downturns, elections, weaknesses of local services, among other constraints.

Leadership: The participation of the Resident Coordinator and the Resident Coordinator's Office Team is very important for the success of the joint programme. It opens the door to high-level political coordination and influence with national government authorities. Support from the Resident Coordinator may require the joint programme to commit ad hoc capacity to the Resident Coordinator's Office to manage the workflow adequately.

Buy-in and cooperation: At the central level, political support from authorities such as ministers and governing bodies, or in some countries, the Presidential House is essential to promote inter-institutional support and cooperation. Political willingness, both at the central and local levels, is crucial to scaling up, funding and sustaining successful efforts.

Coordination: Active coordination across institutions, policy sectors and levels of government creates a conducive environment for implementation.

Participation and social dialogue: Involving social partners and civil society organizations can prove crucial for the success and sustainability of social protection programmes.

Ownership: Involvement of authorities at all levels, including local governments, civil and social organizations, and communities gives a higher level of identification and ownership of initiatives at the local level, nurtures trust, and encourages the adoption of new interventions. Involving most marginalised groups increases the likelihood of sustained advocacy and monitoring.

Timing: Policy timeframes are different from programming timeframes. Legislative change can catalyse the achievement towards the SDGs, but is bound to national policymaking and timeframes.

Capacity development: The coordinated strengthening of the technical capacity of the main local counterparts is crucial for the replication of knowledge and programme sustainability.

Spill-over effect: Complementarity can be promoted between joint programmes and the bilateral programmes of each of the agencies with the same partners.



Photo: UNDP NYC / Freya Morales

The new phase of catalytic investment of the Fund in social protection and transformative priorities will require continued exploration of **strategic opportunities that will encourage stakeholders to work together in innovative ways and produce ‘whole-of-society’ impact that rapidly brings individual countries, regions and the globe back on track towards achieving the SDGs.** As exemplified by 35 joint programmes on social protection and LNOB that operated in the challenging context of the global pandemic and still ensured systemic results, the escalating impact of current global crises will require going beyond ‘business as usual’ and embracing policy, institutional and financing innovation at an unprecedented scale to ‘rescue’ the SDGs.



Photo: UNICEF Nigeria / Nelson Apochi Owoicho

ANNEX 1: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CTPWCP	Cash Transfer Programme for Pregnant Women and Children under Two
DMIS	Disability Management Information System
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRBA	Human Rights-based Approach
ILO	International Labour Organization
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MCO	Multi-Country Office
NSPP	National Social Protection Policy
OPD	Organization of persons with disabilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SRSP	Shock-responsive Social Protection
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDCO	United Nations Development Coordination Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

ANNEX 2: LIST OF THE 35 JOINT PROGRAMMES

Albania	<u>Improving Municipal Social Protection Service Delivery</u>
Argentina	<u>Early Childhood and Sustainable Development: Towards a Comprehensive Care System</u>
Bangladesh	<u>Enhancing Social Protection for Female Tea Garden Workers and their Families in Sylhet Division, Bangladesh</u>
Brazil	<u>Building Better Lives through Integrated Early Childhood Interventions: Investing in the Happy Child Programme to Accelerate the Achievement of SDGs in Brazil</u>
Cambodia	<u>Social Protection Floors in Cambodia</u>
Chile	<u>Nodo Platform: Improving Social Protection and Inclusion of the Elderly through ICT</u>
Congo, Republic of	<u>Improving the Quality of Life of Indigenous Peoples in the Department of Lékoumou through Improved Access to Social Protection Programmes in the Republic of the Congo</u>
Costa Rica	<u>Strengthening of the National Social Protection Strategy Puente al Desarrollo to Break the Cycle of Poverty at the Local Level with a Gender and Environmental Perspective</u>
Ecuador	<u>Expanding the Social Protection System for Young Men and Women in the Informal Economy</u>
Gabon	<u>Citizenship and Social Protection in Gabon</u>
Georgia	<u>Transforming Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities in Georgia</u>
Indonesia	<u>Leaving No One Behind: Adaptive Social Protection for All in Indonesia</u>
Kenya	<u>A Progressive Pathway Towards a Universal Social Protection System in Kenya to Accelerate the Achievement of the SDGs</u>
Lao PDR	<u>Leaving No One Behind: Establishing the Basis for Social Protection Floors in Lao PDR</u>
Lebanon	<u>Transforming National Dialogue for the Development of an Inclusive National SP System for Lebanon</u>

ANNEX 2: LIST OF THE 35 JOINT PROGRAMMES

Madagascar	<u>Development of an Integrated Social Protection System for Madagascar, Sensitive to the Needs of People Living with Disabilities</u>
Malawi	<u>Social Protection for the SDGs in Malawi: Accelerating Inclusive Progress Towards the SDGs</u>
Mauritania	<u>Developing an Integrated Social Protection Model in the Region of Guidimakha, Mauritania</u>
MCO Barbados	<u>Universal Adaptive Social Protection to Enhance Resilience and Acceleration of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Eastern Caribbean</u>
MCO Samoa	<u>Strengthening Resilience of Pacific Island States Through Universal Social Protection</u>
Mexico	<u>Closing Gaps: Making Social Protection Work for Women in Mexico</u>
Mongolia	<u>Extending Social Protection to Herders with Enhanced Shock Responsiveness</u>
Montenegro	<u>Activate! Integrated Social Protection and Employment to Accelerate Progress for Young People in Montenegro</u>
Nigeria	<u>Institutionalizing Social Protection for Accelerated SDG Implementation in Nigeria</u>
Palestine	<u>Towards a Universal and Holistic Social Protection Floor for Persons with Disabilities and Older Persons in the State of Palestine</u>
Philippines	<u>Ensuring Inclusive and Risk-Informed Shock-Responsive Social Protection Resulting in More Resilient Communities in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)</u>
Rwanda	<u>Accelerating Integrated Policy Interventions to Promote Social Protection in Rwanda</u>
Sao Tome and Principe	<u>Reaching the Furthest Behind First: A Catalytic Approach to Supporting the Social Protection in Sao Tome & Principe</u>
Somalia	<u>Toward a Somali Led Transition to National Social Protection</u>
South Africa	<u>An Integrated and Universal Social Protection Linked to Developmental Social Welfare Services in South Africa</u>
Tanzania, United Republic of	<u>Strengthening the Social Protection System in Tanzania</u>

ANNEX 2: LIST OF THE 35 JOINT PROGRAMMES

Thailand	<u>Accelerating Progress Towards an Integrated and Modernized Social Protection System for all in Thailand</u>
Turkmenistan	<u>Improving the System of Social Protection through the Introduction of Inclusive Quality Community-Based Social Services</u>
Uzbekistan	<u>Accelerating Agenda 2030 in Uzbekistan through Inclusive Transformation of the Social Protection System</u>
Viet Nam	<u>Accelerating Viet Nam's Transition Toward Inclusive and Integrated Social Protection</u>

Inspired by the Secretary General's reform of the United Nations, the Joint SDG Fund supports the acceleration of progress across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. We incentivize stakeholders to transform current development practices by breaking down silos and implementing programmes built on diverse partnerships, integrated policies, strategic financing, and smart investments. To get the 'world we want' we need innovative solutions that fast-track progress across multiple development targets and results, and contribute to increasing the scale of sustainable investments for the SDGs and 2030 Agenda.

The Joint SDG Fund receives support from the European Union and governments of:

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