



## Economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty

### Rural Social Protection

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### The issue

COVID-19 poses significant challenges to already strained rural areas, where most of the world's food-insecure and poor people reside. The pandemic is exacerbating long-term complex crises triggered by economic downturn, conflict and extreme weather events. Limited basic social services and a lack of essential risk-management mechanisms, such as social protection, are further adding to the risk of infection in rural areas. Vulnerable groups, such as children, women, youths and indigenous peoples, face additional challenges. Moreover, their economic activity, particularly in developing countries, is primarily informal, exposing them to income volatility and poor enforcement of health and safety norms.

Putting in place new and expanding existing social-protection measures is key to containing the spread of the virus, to protecting livelihoods during the response and to empowering and strengthening the capacities of rural communities for longer-term recovery.

### The action

The programme will support inclusive recovery in the short and medium term, while strengthening long-term resilience to multiple shocks and any potential resurgence of the pandemic. Specifically, it will:

- 1 address potential disruption to existing social-protection programmes in rural areas, due to movement restrictions or closures;
- 2 enhance immediate COVID-19 responses in rural areas, by designing new structures or expanding existing social-protection and/or cash-based interventions;
- 3 support evidence-based advocacy to ensure that budget allocations are prioritized to maintain support for social-protection systems and their expansion to rural areas, to protect them in periods of fiscal contraction and ensure their inclusion economic recovery strategies;
- 4 provide technical assistance to ensure the protection of vulnerable households that are not eligible for social assistance programmes;
- 5 strengthen the risk and shock responses of existing systems, supporting the creation of contingency funds and enhancing ties with early-warning, conflict-sensitive programming and climate adaptation;

### Budget

USD 16 to 21 million  
(Budget will affect the scale of interventions)

### Time frame

January 2021–January 2023

### SDGs



### Related FAO policy notes on COVID-19

- ▶ [Social Protection and COVID-19 response in rural areas](#)
- ▶ [Impact of COVID-19 on informal workers](#)
- ▶ [Migrant workers and the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- ▶ [Public employment programmes in the time of COVID-19](#)



- 6 support continued access to healthy diets and the prevention of all forms of malnutrition by scaling up nutrition-sensitive social protection, including homegrown school feeding;
- 7 support the capacity of social-protection participants to enhance their economic potential and the resilience of rural households to multiple threats posed by COVID-19 and climate change;
- 8 strengthen linkages with economic inclusion processes at territorial level, including productive interventions, natural resources management, climate-smart technologies, rural finance options (such as credit and insurance) and advisory services;
- 9 generate solid evidence on the short- and medium-term impacts of anticipated action and inclusive recovery via social protection;
- 10 foster the exchange of best practices through South-South and Triangular Cooperation to support countries in identifying solutions to address the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.

## Expected results

- 1 Vulnerable and poor households in rural areas will be effectively supported through social-protection schemes during and after the pandemic.
- 2 Innovative, inclusive approaches will be in place to effectively reach and cover informal workers with social protection, also by coordinating with social groups, farmer registries, fisheries and forestry, and climate-related information systems.
- 3 Rural social-protection systems will be strengthened to effectively integrate risk-informed and shock-responsive components and linkages with early-warning, conflict-sensitive programming and climate adaptation measures.
- 4 The economic potential and resilience of rural households will be strengthened by linkages with economic inclusion processes at territorial level.
- 5 Evidence will be generated and disseminated on the impact of social protection in managing risk, promoting economic inclusion and natural resource management, supporting nutrition and healthy diets and building resilient livelihoods, also in the context of climate change and conflict.
- 6 Stakeholder knowledge and capacity will be enhanced on the role of social protection in managing crises in rural areas, including through South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

## Partnerships

Ministries of agriculture, labour, economy and youth; financial institutions; youth, producers and workers organizations; centers for technical and vocational education and agribusiness incubators; the private sector; development organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UN Women and the Inter Agency Network for Youth Development.

## Programme links

The programme will tie in with FAO's Integrated Country Approach for boosting decent jobs for youth in the agri-food system, the Green Jobs for Youth initiative and the FAO-UNIDO Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA) joint programme. It complements FAO's programmes on rural women's economic empowerment, social protection, collective action and inclusive finance and links directly with the Hand-in-Hand Initiative.

## Country focus

**Africa:** Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Zambia

**Asia and the Pacific:** Afghanistan, India, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines

**Europe and Central Asia:** Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey

**Latin America and the Caribbean:** Dominican Republic, Eastern Caribbean, Guatemala, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Peru

**Near East and North Africa:** Iraq, Lebanon, Tunisia

## Contact

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