



Strengthening Social Protection for Pandemic Response



Objective: To strengthen national capacities to design and implement social protection policies, with a gender perspective, for rapid recovery from COVID-19 and increase resilience, especially of the most vulnerable populations, to the negative impacts of future exogenous shocks.

Challenges posed social protection by COVID-19: COVID-19 is having a three-fold impact whereby a severe health shock has led to domestic containment measures with serious economic and social impacts. The local economic fallout, combined with a subsequent slowdown in the global economy are having significant social consequences across the globe that are, in turn, becoming increasingly likely to be felt for years, and generations to come. By some estimates, as many as 400 million people may fall into extreme poverty, reversing a declining trend that lasted over two decades. Some 1.6 billion working in the informal sector could see their livelihoods at risk, and many lack access to any form of social protection.

Demand from Member States: Nearly 40 countries requested support for social protection activities and informed the design of the project, including Member States in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Europe and the Arab regions.

Project components: The project brings together all the five Regional Commissions (ECA, ECLAC, ESCAP, ECE and ESCWA) together with UNCTAD to facilitate interregional cooperation and sharing of experiences in addressing the impact of COVID-19 and building resilient societies through social protection. The project will address three areas of social protection impacted by the COVID-19 crisis:

- 1) Strengthening existing capacities and emerging gaps of core institutions responsible for the planning, design and implementation of social protections systems, in order to “build back better” as a response to COVID-19*
- 2) Addressing gender inequalities that have been exacerbated by COVID-19, by developing innovative capacities and cooperation mechanisms to better integrate the care economy into social protection and other public policies*
- 3) Building better knowledge and understanding about those in need of social protection, including the newly-exposed, leading to a more nuanced understanding of multi-dimensional poverty*

Project activities will include:

- ESCWA, along with other Regional Commissions, will facilitate the development of a COVID-19 Global Observatory, an interactive platform that facilitates Member States and other stakeholders' easy navigation of social protection measures and responses to the pandemic.
- Technical support will be provided to Member States to build capacities for the design of gender-responsive recovery policies based on the care economy, including through national workshops.
- New survey tools pioneered and shared by the project will allow national statistical offices to adapt their procedures for different modes of data collection and to apply in practice the recent methodological guidance on disaggregated poverty measures.
- Dialogue between countries will be established at the regional level to facilitate exchanges on integrating the care economy as a key driver of urgent recovery efforts in order to more equitably respond to socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 and build resilience against future shocks.
- Beneficiary countries will be provided with the tools to produce timely estimates of poverty and analyze the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on poverty trends. This will include an overview of available methodologies, making use of different data sources; the development of methodologies for timely estimates; as well as the development of simulation tools.
- Training workshops will showcase national case studies and policy briefs to encourage learning and best practice sharing, as well as raise awareness and understanding of specific social protection, care economy and poverty measurement issues.