

Summary Brief

Social protection and climate change: scaling up ambition

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Introduction

Climate change, once perceived as a long-term environmental issue, is now an immediate threat to safety and prosperity, especially for the most vulnerable people that are hit hardest by increasing weather extremes. The impacts cannot be managed just by reducing greenhouse gas emissions or by small tweaks and adaptations to our investments. We also have to manage the reality of social and economic impacts – of climate change, but also of climate change mitigation measures – right now, especially given that these impacts often degrade future resilience, resulting in a downward spiral of climate impacts and rising vulnerability. The unprecedented increases in global poverty in 2020 as a result of COVID-19 exemplify the multidimensional impacts that a global and complex risk can create. Even before the pandemic, climate change threatened to push over 130 million more people into poverty in the next decade alone (Hallegatte, 2016). While we cannot perfectly predict risks, it is essential to have risk management systems in place to save livelihoods, property, and lives.

The COVID-19 crisis has brought to the forefront the importance of protecting people in times of shocks through large, established risk management tools such as national social protection systems. Social protection is a key policy instrument to manage social risks, which are those arising from life cycle and income risks (old age, job loss, etc.). To respond to the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, over 200 countries and territories invested over \$800 billion in more than 1,400 social protection measures in 2020 alone (Gentilini, 2021). Similarly, social protection can play a central role in managing climate risks by addressing chronic poverty, providing temporary support during periods of acute economic and livelihood disruption, and ultimately building resilience preparing people better for shocks.

The next few years are a crucial time to take action on making social protection a strategic tool for climate risk management, building on the high-profile agenda for climate action, combined with recognition of the need for greater investment in social protection that has been so clearly demonstrated through the response to COVID-19. Importantly, the window of opportunity to reduce poverty and vulnerability and prepare for larger impacts from climate change is quickly narrowing.

In this note, we articulate the role of social protection in addressing major socio-economic challenges arising from climate change, especially for low- and middle-income countries, and the need to strategically link social protection and national climate change responses.

State of play: new risks and the need for social protection

Climate change presents a significant challenge to humanity and the planet, with negative impacts already a reality. While managing the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 continues to be an immediate priority, it is now crucial to consider the role of social protection in climate risk management for multiple reasons.

First, a changing risk landscape is emerging due to climate change, with already significant adverse social and economic consequences, particularly in terms of increased poverty and vulnerability, and decreased well-being across the world. Climate change is perpetuating and increasing poverty for groups that are already vulnerable, while also decreasing overall wellbeing across the non-poor and contributing to making new groups vulnerable, affecting societies as a whole.

Second, current disaster response, adaptation, and mitigation measures to address climate vulnerability and risk are insufficient, and the existing humanitarian system is already overstretched. On one hand, climate change adaptation efforts are not large scale nor strategic enough, while climate change mitigation policies may have negative social and economic impacts that have not been significantly addressed in climate and social policies. More pressingly, the current reliance on ex-post emergency response and humanitarian action is unsustainable with an increase in climate-related extremes. The IFRC (2019) predicts that 200 million people every year - twice as many as today - could need international humanitarian aid as a result of increased climate risks.

Finally, a fundamental shift in global and national thinking to reduce climate risk and vulnerability is needed; the adoption of new cross-sectoral approaches and policies is key. Strategic, large-scale, successful social and economic development policies - especially those

tackling poverty and vulnerability - can rapidly reduce the adverse impacts of climate change. Some estimates suggest that combining rapid, inclusive, and climate-informed development with targeted interventions and stronger social protection would largely reduce the short-term threat from climate change and offer a window of opportunity to address the long-term threat beyond 2030 (Hallegatte et al. 2016). While social protection has been recognised as an important tool to deal with climate risks for over a decade, an ambitious strategic and programmatic joint agenda at global and national levels has yet to materialise for this potential to be achieved.

Social protection: background and relevance

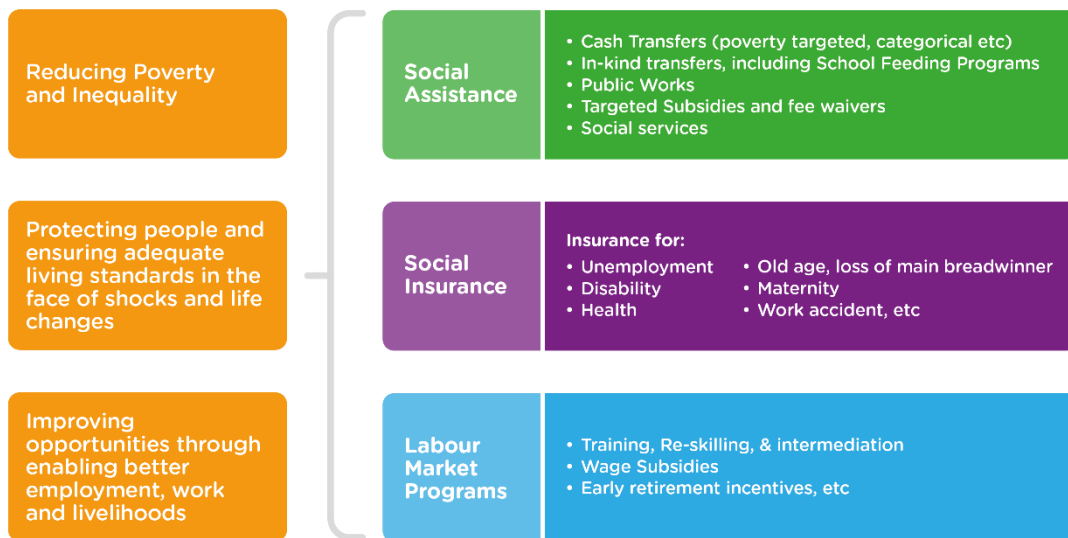
Social protection is recognised by governments and the international aid sector as a key instrument for addressing socioeconomic challenges, not only helping to address individual risks but also playing a key role as a social, economic, and political stabilizer. Overall, social protection policies and programs have three objectives: (i) Reducing poverty and inequality; (ii) protecting people and ensuring adequate living standards in the face of shocks and life changes; (iii) improving opportunities through enabling better employment, work and livelihoods. Social protection achieves these objectives by helping individuals and families manage life-cycle and income-related risk through a range of interventions (see Figure 1). At a societal level, social protection has played a key role in managing emergent risks, especially at times of transition and severe economic disruption, for example, following the industrial revolution and the disruption of the first and second wars in high-income countries (Johansson et al. 2014) and as a tool to address poverty in LMICs following the economic liberalisation reforms in the 80s and 90s, and as a response to the 2007/8 financial crisis. COVID-19 has illustrated how existing social protection systems can be used to provide support in response to large shocks to lives, incomes and livelihoods.

Box 1. Definition: Social protection

Social protection measures are “public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation, which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity and society” (Conway et al., 2000). The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines it as “set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle” (ILO, 2017). In practice, social protection consists of social assistance (non-contributory, tax-financed benefits and services to avert poverty and deprivation); social insurance (contributory schemes financed by individuals, companies and the state in advance, such as work-related pensions and unemployment insurance); and labour market interventions. In most countries, social protection operates as a system: at ‘policy level’ it is embedded in strategy, policy and legislation and is underpinned by specific governance and coordination arrangements and financing streams; at ‘programme design level’ it develops context-specific approaches to defining eligibility and setting benefits and services; at ‘administration level’, it delivers on its mandate via a set of processes/functions, often supported via a digital information system: outreach and communications, identification and registration, enrolment, payments/delivery, complaints and appeals (grievances), case management, monitoring and evaluation.

Social protection has recently played a significant role in the COVID-19 response, as provision has significantly expanded, albeit temporarily, enabled by a leap in digital and financial infrastructure. The magnitude of the social protection response to the COVID-19 crisis is of historical proportions and has demonstrated the potential of social protection to respond to mass covariate shocks. Although much of the expansion has been through temporary safety nets, rather than sustained systems expansion, the crisis has accelerated innovations in programme design, utilising digital and financial infrastructure in a way that has enabled scaling of social protection systems in ways not previously feasible (Lowe, et al, 2021).

Figure 1. Social protection objectives and instruments



Source: Authors, adapted from World Bank, 2018

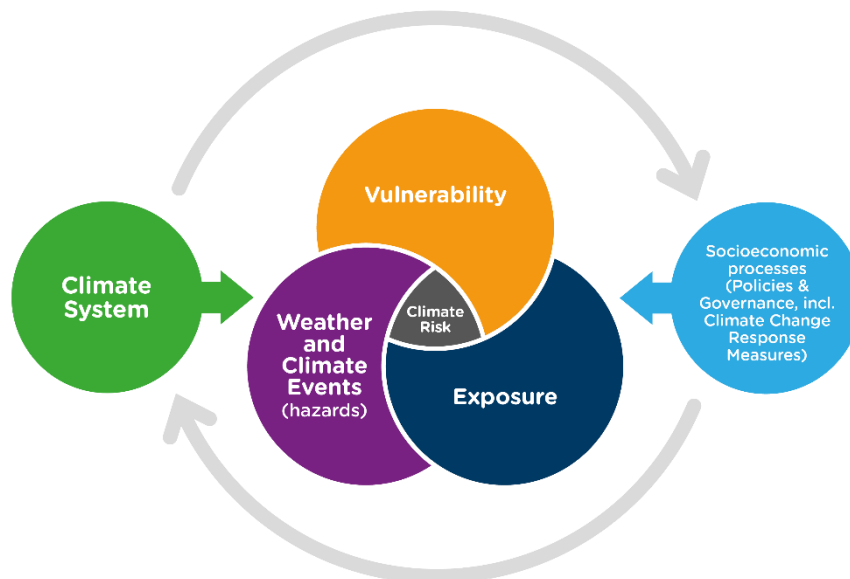
Social protection coverage and investments have also grown significantly in the last two decades, with significant expansions in LMICS, though it is still limited in comparison to need. Coverage has increased from 20% to 45% of the global population in the last decade (McCord et al, 2021). However, around the world, only 29% of the population enjoys access to comprehensive social protection benefits (ILO, 2017). Globally, countries spend over US\$2 trillion on social protection every year but estimates indicate that at least an additional US\$500 billion is required annually to enable developing countries to make basic provision available to all (Durán-Valverde et al, 2020).

Climate risks and social protection: towards a comprehensive framework

Climate change is creating new risks and exacerbating existing ones through a combination of direct and indirect drivers, leading to increases in chronic poverty and vulnerability:

- **Risk drivers mainly associated with changes in the climate system:** Hazards in the climate system are changing due to human-induced global warming, which has driven changes in weather patterns, the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, and gradual changes to the physical environment. The growing frequency and intensity of extreme events combined with the cumulative impacts of multiple consecutive shocks and gradual changes to the physical environment will compound negative effects on social, health, and economic factors.
- **Risk drivers mainly associated with non-climate socioeconomic processes that interact with climate change:** Socio-economic development, demographic changes, and policies and governance, in general, are resulting in new patterns of exposure to a range of climate risks (e.g., increasing poverty, urbanisation, etc.). These risks are related to processes outside the climate system but are exacerbated by climate change. They drive not only negative effects but also potential positive effects when risks are reduced. They include risks associated with changes to the physical environment and use of natural resources (e.g. the reduction of ecosystem services, natural resources, deforestation), demographic processes (migration, urbanisation), poverty, inequality and vulnerability (gender, disability, etc.), as well as risks from non-climate related shocks or disruptions (e.g. earthquakes, conflicts). Their main effect is to increase exposure, vulnerability, inequality, amplifying and exacerbating the impacts of climate change.
- **Risk drivers arising from measures to respond to climate change, including mitigation and adaptation policies:** These drivers are similar to those just above as they also arise from socioeconomic processes, policies, and practices, but they are specifically connected to the physical, economic, financial, technological, and social measures adopted to help reduce greenhouse gases (climate change mitigation measures) and to adapt to the consequences of climate change (climate change adaptation measures). These measures can have both direct and indirect impacts, particularly during the 'transition' period, on employment; housing; food prices, livelihoods, etc.

Figure 2. Adapted climate risk equation from IPCC report



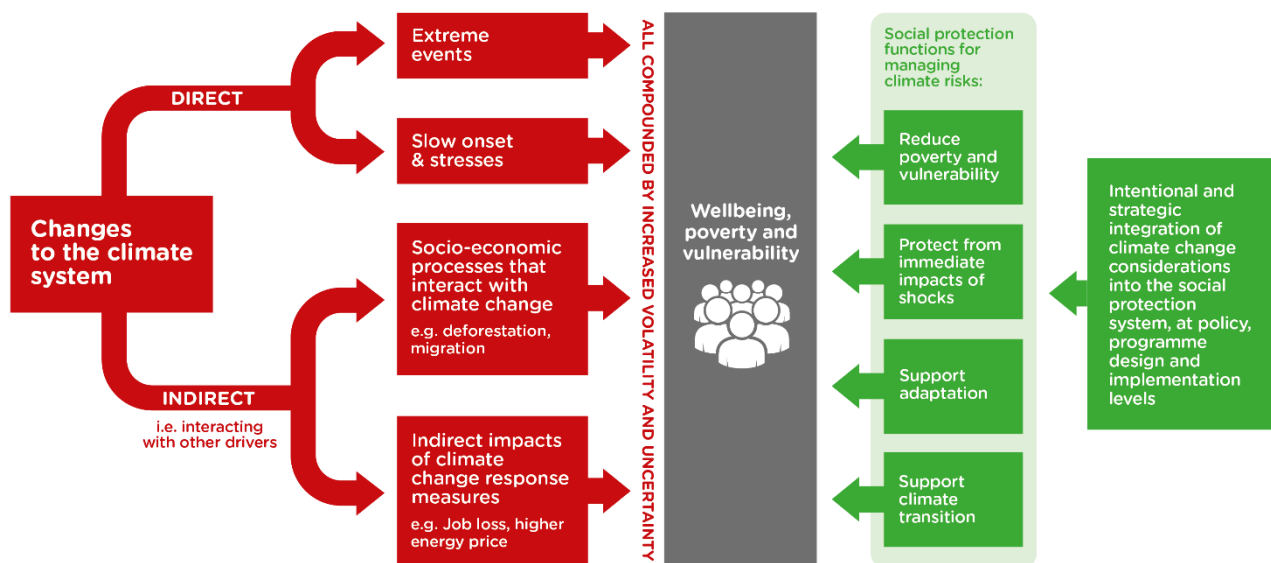
Source: Adopted from Oppenheimer et al. 2014.

In this context social protection has a key role to play in:

1. Reducing poverty and vulnerability, both ensuring basic wellbeing¹ and enhancing the ability to deal with climate shocks and stressors *ex-ante* (before these hit).
2. Protecting people from the immediate impacts of climate shocks through shock-responsive measures at times of shocks.
3. Contributing to climate change adaptation by helping to reduce disaster risk - and by enhancing adaptive capacity.
4. Compensating for or incentivising measures that support a just societal transition to a climate-resilient future and a green economy.

The two first functions are core functions of social protection. The second two are processes that social protection can contribute to through accessory functions, and which are key for climate risk management.

Figure 1. Force field of climate risk drivers, impacts, and social protection climate functions



Source: Authors.

¹ The term is intentionally wide, but encompasses a wide range of areas including increases food security, income, savings, assets, human capital, etc.

Social protection and climate: opportunities and gaps

The climate functions of social protection become evident in several areas. These areas are presented below, starting with those where the evidence is stronger to those that are relatively new and less explored:

- **Increasing incomes and food consumption, reducing poverty as well as vulnerability to shocks.** Social protection provides direct income transfers, in the form of cash or in-kind transfers, usually on a regular and long-term basis. This income helps individuals and families get out of poverty, and enables them to be more prepared to deal with the impacts of climate shocks.
- **Providing immediate support in the case of shocks.** Social protection helps smooth consumption and avert losses in the face of shocks, for instance through transfers or other direct measures concerning a specific shock.
- **Promoting human development outcomes,** through health, education, and increased basic service utilisations. Social protection increases demand for these services, and in the long term contributes to a households' human capital development. Improved incomes, education, and health are likely to enable households to better manage its impacts by building resilience (Agrawal et al. 2019).
- **Contributing to managing natural resources and the physical environment.** If linked to complementary programming or incentives, for example through interventions with the dual objectives of supporting households and managing natural resources, such as Public Works Programmes, social protection can support disaster risk reduction and natural resource management objectives
- **Contributing to improved employment, and income and livelihood opportunities.** If sufficiently adequate and linked to complementary programming, social programmes - such as social assistance programmes - combined with asset transfers or skills training can lead to improved employment or livelihoods.
- **Providing compensation for losses caused by climate change response measures.** For instance, social protection approaches can support workers affected by transitions to cleaner energy, through re-skilling, training, and compensation payments.
- **Incentivising positive behaviours and activities that contribute to managing climate change.** When coupled with complementary measures, social protection policies and programmes can incentivise individual behaviours that help manage climate risks, for instance by incentivising individuals to take care of ecosystem functions or greening behaviours and adopting more climate-resilience livelihood strategies.
- **Contributing to strengthening governance, by among others, empowering vulnerable groups.** Strengthened governance, active citizen participation, and increased social inclusion will be key elements for a fair transition to a climate-resilient future. Rights-based and universal approaches to social protection may be able to support progress to achieve these societal objectives.

At the same time, several gaps need to be addressed to enable social protection to become a key instrument in managing climate change risks:

- **Low coverage and financing of social protection hinders the management of increasing climate risks.** Under the provision of social protection is significant and investments are still low compared to the need. The core functions of poverty and vulnerability reduction, as well as shock response cannot be achieved adequately without long term investments in national social protection systems. Having basic social protection systems in place can be a significant enabler of responsiveness, and systems development has long been identified as key. While responses to COVID-19 evidence the potential of these systems, investments need to be maintained, even as interest and funding for social protection in response to the pandemic decrease.
- **Strategic integration of social protection and climate policies and sectors is low at country and global levels.** Climate policy at global and national levels has not sufficiently considered social protection as a large, strategic, and country-owned instrument to achieve climate change goals. Simultaneously, social protection programmes are yet to fully and explicitly integrate climate change challenges into a comprehensive national or global vision. Lack of strategic integration can be ascribed to limited coordination across sectors and between levels, especially under a unifying national vision.

- **Climate risks are not yet significantly quantified and integrated into social protection programming.** Social protection systems seldom integrate specific climate risk and vulnerability analysis, climate risk-related indicators, and climate information into their design which can affect policy and program outcomes. For instance, a lack of climate analysis can affect decisions on who is covered by social protection benefits, including in response to shocks, and can lead to inadequate benefit design in social protection programmes. These can range from concerns such as the type and size of the transfer during a particular shock to significant externalities, such as inadvertently creating incentives for long term maladaptation. Social protection information systems often do not integrate climate risk information, such as linkages with early warning systems and forecast-based triggers to enable faster shock-response. Limited tracking and evidence of climate-specific indicators in social protection programs results in little evidence of positive climate-related outcomes. This lack of metrics and indicators might also prevent social protection programmes to be more clearly linked to climate financing, while limited climate risk analysis can lead to policies and programme interventions that are not cost-effective.
- **Gender and intersectional inequalities linked to climate risks are still not sufficiently addressed.** Limited disaggregation and understanding of intersectional inequalities and how they relate to climate risks limit the effectiveness of social protection interventions. However, social protection programmes do not routinely conduct context analyses or assessments that adequately disaggregate experiences and drivers of poverty and climate change by sex, age, and disability, nor do they carry out the gender or inclusion-specific analysis which would highlight these differential experiences to inform social protection design.

Scaling up ambition: key recommendations and priorities

There is an urgent need to more explicitly link the social protection and climate change agendas, and the coming years offer a critical opportunity to do so. Here we present five key priority areas where efforts and investments should be prioritised to support the strategic integration of social protection and climate change agendas.

1. **Advance a bold policy vision for social protection to address the growing risks arising from climate change.** Concrete, ambitious policies are needed to operationalise significant reductions in climate vulnerability in a changed risks landscape through social protection. Historically, social policies such as social protection have served as key national instruments to achieve socioeconomic outcomes, particularly at times of shocks or of a changing risk landscape. Now, a coordinated effort across global and national policy fora is needed to increase ambition and integration at the policy level both in the climate and social protection front. On the climate policy agenda, this includes making climate change adaptation policies less project-based and further mainstreamed across 'traditional' policy sectors, including social policy, social protection, and human development. On the social protection front, it requires strategically embedding climate change considerations across policies, systems, and programs.
2. **Expand core social protection provision, together with shock-responsive systems, to manage the impacts of climate change.** Investing in social protection as a poverty reduction effort is crucial to deal with the impacts of climate change. Investments need to be focused on (i) expanding coverage of regular social protection benefits in LMICs to reduce climate vulnerability, at the same time recognising and addressing gender and intersecting inequalities; (ii) expanding the use of social protection to prepare for and respond to shocks; (iii) investing in digital infrastructure and capacity that improves delivery of core and shock-responsive social protection.
3. **Increase financing for social protection to achieve climate change objectives.** In a resource-constrained environment, investments in social protection offer a cost-effective way to achieve climate objectives and outcomes. Closer alignment of climate and social protection financing is needed, for example by utilising the financial mechanisms established under the UNFCCC, as well as multilateral and bilateral climate and development funds. This may require a reframing of how climate funds track the contributions of social programmes to climate resilience, and to align it with a holistic understanding of risk, where efforts towards poverty reduction can also indirectly contribute to climate risk management. Making explicit linkages between disaster risk financing instruments and shock-responsive social protection is also key to ensure funding is available in a timely manner when shocks

happen. Expanding domestic financing to extend the coverage of core and shock-responsive social protection will require increasing tax revenue and expanding contributory social protection, as well as innovative instruments such as carbon market revenues, debt restructuring, and green bonds (see more on this within this paper on [Financing Shock Responsive Social Protection](#)).

4. **Integrate climate risk information and metrics into social protection to achieve comprehensive risk management and smarter investments.** Social protection per se can contribute to managing the impacts of climate change by reducing poverty and protecting people against shocks. However, climate risk analysis and metrics are necessary to ensure, at a minimum, that programmes and interventions are not contributing to maladaptation and aggravating risk, but also that they are linked to strategic outcomes and financing. Quantifying and understanding specific climate risks could lead to different decisions about social protection programme and system design. Understanding the differential impacts of climate shocks and climate change on population groups and individuals is needed to better inform social protection design to address climate risks. Importantly, linkages with early warning systems and forecast-based triggers can help mitigate the impacts of shocks by building adaptive capacities before they happen, as well as enable faster shock-response through social protection. Finally, tracking climate objectives, indicators, and outcomes of social protection according to their ability to contribute to managing climate risks will be important to understand the overall portfolio of climate-related investments but also measure results.
5. **Adopt innovative and strategic coordination across sectors to deal with complex climate risks.** Coordination across sectors and disciplines is key, but coordination strategies, incentives and processes need to be overhauled. Three issues are important to underpin better coordination. First, a strategic global and national vision for climate change needs to integrate social protection and drive global and national alliances across these sectors, underpinned by institutional arrangements at all levels, including sub-national levels. Coordination needs to be underpinned by indicators and metrics that create incentives to coordinate, both through financial incentives, but also through integrated policy and programme objectives. Finally, several sectors are relevant to the integration of climate and social protection; while much work is already ongoing, joint learning is key.

The table below presents a set of potential entry points for global and national actors to take forward the integration of the climate and social protection agendas.

➔ **These entry points are not meant to be prescriptive or exhaustive**, but to serve as initial inputs to further development in these areas. It is also important to recognise that several blockers and enablers exist for these considerations to be taken forward, including institutional, technical, and financial constraints, and that they will need to be addressed for these actions to be successful.

Building block	Key considerations and entry points for climate and social protection sectors
STRATEGIC	
Policy, Strategy, and Legislation	<p>National governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a national, comprehensive vision on addressing climate change that includes cross-sectoral considerations, as well as clear goals on reducing poverty and vulnerability, and the role of social protection within that goal. Align to legislation and objectives in national gender equality, disability, and inclusion policies. ● Embed social protection into climate sector plans and vice versa. This includes incorporating social protection as a tool to achieve climate objectives in national climate plans (for instance, NDCs), as well as ensuring climate policy objectives to inform the design of social protection policies. ● Improve focus on climate risks within social policies (e.g. within social protection policy and strategic documents): this requires a better understanding of the socioeconomic impacts of climate risks, as well as ensuring analysis of current and future climate risks underpins social protection policy and strategic planning.
	<p>Global actors and donors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proactively position social protection as an instrument for large scale climate risk management. ● Integrate social protection into the climate change discourse and climate change into the social protection agenda, while supporting increased donor coordination around social protection provision (aid harmonisation principles).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support the development of national visions to address climate change that include poverty reduction as a key means to manage climate risks. ● Provide policy and financial support to develop national social protection systems linked to climate plans, rather than separate and project-based programming. ● Promote the integration of humanitarian and national social protection systems, with alignment as a first step.
Financing	<p>National governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explicitly make the link: financing the expansion of social protection is a means to better address climate risks. ● Identify medium-long term domestic and international financing to support the development of national social protection systems able to respond to current and future risks, reducing the need for humanitarian responses. At the same time, increase the contributory base of social protection. ● Consider novel avenues for financing routine social protection and shock response via the social protection sector (see Longhurst et al, 2021). For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Aligning climate financing from international financing mechanisms with social protection policies and interventions. ● Exploring how innovative domestic revenue sources (carbon taxes, etc.) can be linked to policies and benefits that support the most vulnerable. ● Linking disaster risk financing tools to shock-responsive social protection. <p>Global actors and donors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support countries in devising national strategies for domestic financing, to increase the provision of core social protection, reducing poverty and vulnerability, and addressing climate risks. ● Recognise social protection as a valid use of international climate finance. ● Develop incentives and metrics within financing instruments that contribute to increasing the quality of social protection programming and integrating climate linkage considerations within social protection programming, enabling coordination linked to financing. ● Provide the evidence and knowledge base for increasing linkages between disaster risk financing strategies and social protection, where possible and relevant. This includes ensuring that the potential for instruments such as risk transfer and insurance is utilised to protect those who might be most vulnerable to climate-related poverty and vulnerability.
Governance, Coordination and Learning	<p>National governments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enhance horizontal and vertical coordination at all levels between climate, social protection, humanitarian, and gender/inclusion actors (not just government and international actors, but also civil society, women’s rights organisations, etc) linked to joint financing and targets. This may entail the creation of new coordination forums/bodies, or ensuring the inclusion of a broader diversity of actors within existing mechanisms. It will also entail explicit efforts to ‘demystify’ each sector for those who are new to it, building trust over time. Ideally, it would include the drafting of legal stipulations, Standard Operating Procedures, Memorandums of Understanding, manuals defining roles and responsibilities, etc. ● Ensure a focus on vertical coordination across layers of government and horizontally at the local level (a lot of the ‘action’ on linking different agendas will need to happen at the local level, as well as ensuring that local actors have an active seat at the table for co-design and implementation of any activities). ● Explore cross-country learning to share experiences in linking social protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation. <p>Global actors and donors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide incentives, but also flexibility and medium to long-term horizons, for coordination around outcomes and objectives that are not project- and time-bound. ● Invest in coordination directly, supporting government efforts to enhance joint planning and strategic thinking. This may involve capacity assessments and explicit addressing of capacity gaps.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build the evidence base on the role of social protection in reducing climate vulnerability, so that it can be translated into metrics and ‘policy hooks’ for financing, etc. Key areas might include: climate risks and vulnerability, and social protection targeting; resilience-building activities, etc.
PROGRAMME DESIGN	
Climate Risk Information, Projections and Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure climate risk information/data plays a central role in informing the design of social protection programmes, alongside standard information on poverty and other forms of vulnerability. This may involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including climate and resilience objectives, metrics and KPIs into social protection programming, to reduce intersecting inequality in light of climate change (<i>more on this in rows below</i>). Ensuring risk analysis in the design of interventions to avoid possible interventions that lead to maladaptation or inequality, as well as to enhance climate risk management and adaptation objectives of social protection programmes. Linking triggers for shock-responsive social protection programmes to climate information and weather forecasts (e.g. as early Warning Systems) where appropriate and relevant. More broadly, sharing data based on jointly agreed data needs among different climate change adaptation, social protection and disaster risk reduction institutions.
Setting of Intervention Types, Objectives and Linkages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think long-term. Acknowledge the increasing risks brought about by climate change and identify shock extremes and frequencies, including potential pressures on social protection systems. This will require planning for extended coverage and increased needs, thinking across all possible social protection programmes (e.g. both social insurance and social assistance) - including filling any gaps in the current system (e.g. with new programmes). Based on a solid evidence base (climate risk information, discussed above): a) incorporate climate and resilience considerations into social protection programme objectives and theory of change, where relevant (and vice versa, adding poverty reduction objectives to climate programme)s; b) ensure linkages and complementary programming within the sector and beyond, to enhance resilience building ex-ante. This will involve learning from and linkages with other sectors and areas of expertise, including Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Anticipatory Action. A good example is the layering of climate-sensitive Behavioural Change Communications alongside a social protection intervention. Innovate and test, building the evidence base: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test and assess existing social protection approaches to meet climate objectives or challenges. For instance, ensure that approaches to disaster risk reduction through PWP are of high quality, informed by climate information and contribute to climate change objectives. Two examples include a) the construction of labour-intensive assets that boost the capacity of ecosystems to absorb the impact of rapid-onset and high-intensity climate hazards such as flooding or cyclones (e.g. planting and maintaining shelterbelts or mangrove forests); b) the creation of infrastructure that helps highly exposed households transition away from high-risk agricultural livelihoods into new activities that are less exposed and less sensitive to climate hazards Test and assess new or transformed social protection approaches that can serve to reach climate objectives (for example, payment for ecosystem services linked to social protection approaches is being extensively tested).
Setting of Eligibility Criteria and Qualifying Conditions (Targeting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider targeting routine social assistance based on climate exposure or vulnerability - or complementing routine eligibility criteria with this lens (‘climate-smart targeting’). This includes targeting of routine programmes that aim to contribute to resilience outcomes related to slow and gradual changes to the environment, as well as shock responsive social protection (scale-ups). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inform these decisions, assess the overlap between current eligibility criteria and qualifying conditions (i.e. current de facto coverage) and the characteristics of populations facing climate risks. Incorporate area-level data (e.g. climate hazard maps, agro-climatic zones and spatial planning tools for land use/landscape management/watershed approaches) and household level data (e.g. housing conditions, location, livelihood type, etc.) to identify those most vulnerable to natural hazards and climate change-related risks. Build the capacity of local networks to complement eligibility and targeting by identifying last mile beneficiaries or vulnerable groups who could be excluded, as well as providing accountability and transparency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure flexibility in targeting design and implementation processes to cater to possible expansions in response to covariate shocks. • Design social protection programmes to think of resilience at the individual level, and not just household (e.g. considering the types of constraints (and opportunities) faced by individuals in terms of time, capacity, capabilities, gender inequalities etc.). • Innovate and test, building the evidence base.
Transfer Level, Frequency and Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When setting transfer/benefit level, frequency, duration, consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased/changed needs due to climate exposure or vulnerability when determining the 'adequacy' of benefits. • Scale-effects aimed at increasing resilience to future shocks. • Seasonal needs and cyclical food deficits. • Ensuring flexibility to cater to possible expansions in response to covariate shocks.
M&E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure climate-related objectives are incorporated in monitoring and evaluation frameworks for social protection.
Integrating Gender and Social Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand differentiated climate-induced needs, risks, experiences, coping strategies, response strategies (sex-disaggregated and GESI analysis data, statistics, evidence), to feed into programming. • Ensure gender, disability and broader vulnerability inclusion at every stage of this process: For example, inclusive planning, decision-making and implementation practices – including supporting women as leaders, engaging with local actors; equitable access to climate information; strengthened institutional capacity and coordination on gender equality and social inclusion (e.g., training, sectoral coordination, partnering with GESI organisations); M&E which disaggregates by sex, age, disability but also measures changes relating to GESI outcomes – e.g., changes in gender relations, decision-making, control over resources etc.

Way forward

Climate change and poverty combined present a very substantial new challenge, with increasing poverty, vulnerability and inequality amplifying the impacts of shocks and environmental concerns. A step change is needed in the way we manage these new risks for societies. Social protection is a key tool that needs to be considered more strategically. The next five years are crucial to take action on making social protection a strategic tool for climate risk management. This note offers a framework and entry points to take advantage of the crucial moment to achieve these goals.

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