

Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program

**Addressing the
Challenges of
Climate Change and
Disaster Risk
for the Poor and
Vulnerable**



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Design and editing: Nita Congress

The Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program (ASPP) addresses key constraints and vulnerabilities in the region. Its objective is to increase access to effective adaptive social protection systems for poor and vulnerable populations in the Sahel. It seeks to achieve this objective through financing activities that will help develop adaptive social protection systems and programs to support individuals, households, and societies in building resilience, equity, and opportunities. These activities are expected to contribute toward achieving long-term impact in helping poor and vulnerable people in six countries in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal) become capable of anticipating, absorbing, and recovering from climatic shocks and stresses.

The ASPP is creating evidence, experience, and learning on how social protection programs can be most effectively designed to enable poor and vulnerable households to anticipate, absorb, and recover from shocks. For example, the ASPP is building a knowledge base on productive activities that aim to move poor people out of poverty that is comparable across countries and underpinned by a rigorous multicountry impact evaluation. Technical assistance is helping governments strengthen the design and delivery of public works programs to build resilience to shocks. Grants to governments are enabling the six countries to put in place adaptive safety net systems and build experience in providing cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households. The deployment of staff in countries has enhanced this technical support.

SPOTLIGHT: **About the ASPP**

The ASPP was launched in March 2014 to support the design and implementation of adaptive social protection programs and systems in the Sahel. The program is funded by a multidonor trust fund managed by the World Bank's Social Protection and Labor team, with significant collaboration from the Bank's Disaster Risk Management, Gender, Social Development, Disaster Risk Financing, Poverty, and Climate Change Global Practices/Cross-Cutting Solution Areas. The UK Department for International Development has committed funding of £47 million over four years (2014–18) to the program. And the Wellspring Philanthropic Foundation is contributing \$1.35 million to support evaluation of a set of productive inclusion activities; it is providing another \$1.35 million through a nongovernmental organization in Burkina Faso to support delivery of productive ASPP activities. The World Bank is discussing a possible contribution to the ASPP with the Agence Française de Développement and exploring the possibility of coordinating funding to the same national programs with the United States Agency for International Development.

Taking an integrated approach to social protection in the Sahel

Why target the Sahel?

Sahelian countries are among the poorest and least developed in the world. Poverty rates in the Sahel range from 5.9 percent of the population in Mauritania to 49.3 percent in Mali, with over a third of the population in poverty in Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger, and Senegal. Sahelian countries all rank low on the Human Development Index, and their indicators for infant mortality, maternal mortality, nutritional levels, and health coverage are among the world's worst. Most Sahel countries are landlocked, rely on a narrow natural resource base, and are particularly vulnerable to climate-related shocks. These factors have resulted in rising rates of chronic poverty and food insecurity.

The Sahel is particularly vulnerable to climate-related and other shocks, which have long-lasting negative consequences. Climate change is likely to cause more frequent and severe droughts and floods in the Sahel, affecting pastoral and agro-pastoral areas in particular. With more frequent natural disasters and intensified environmental degradation, people's lives and livelihoods are increasingly at risk. Extreme events and other shocks have negative and long-lasting consequences for human development and poverty reduction in the Sahel that especially affect the poorest and most vulnerable: eroding human capital and forcing families to rely on a range of largely informal, suboptimal coping mechanisms such as high-interest borrowing, reduced consumption, sale of household and productive assets, and withdrawal of children from school.

Sahelian countries are putting in place social protection programs and systems that aim to respond to chronic poverty, promote livelihoods, and protect households from shocks. In recent years, several countries have made much progress in laying the foundation for adaptive social protection programs and systems, developing social protection strategies that emphasize the importance of investments within comprehensive systems. A recent study highlights the interest of Sahelian countries in extending social protection to the most vulnerable groups with the support of development partners—particularly to better protect populations against shocks and prevent acute food crises. Yet, social protection coverage remains low across Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal.

Evidence increasingly shows that social protection systems and programs are effective tools to protect individuals and communities from shocks and equip them to improve their livelihoods. More specifically:

- Social protection is a central part of basic service delivery for vulnerable people in the Sahel, with a **track record of delivering significant benefits for health, education and nutrition**. Across the Sahel, government-led social protection programs are an entry point of access to basic services such as education and primary health care—and sometimes the only reliable government contact for beneficiaries.
- Reaching the poor with adaptive social protection programs can enhance productivity and promote resilience, thereby enabling these people to move out of poverty. The provision of regular safety net support to poor households **enables them to stabilize their consumption and invest in higher-risk and higher-return activities**, which leads to improvements in human capital and asset holdings among families. These investments are enhanced when accompanied by productive measures such as entrepreneurship training, skills training, and links to markets, thereby also addressing youth employment in the Sahel.
- Adaptive social protection programs have proven effective in protecting poor and vulnerable households from shocks. These **programs are designed to be flexible and scalable**, with the ability to extend support to people who are negatively affected by shocks such as those generated by climate change, conflict, and forced displacement. Evidence shows that the receipt of safety net support during droughts can strengthen households' resilience, with households drawing down less on their assets and recovering faster from the shocks.

How does the ASPP integrated approach work?

ADAPTIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS ARE FLEXIBLE: THEY CAN PROTECT POOR HOUSEHOLDS FROM CLIMATIC AND OTHER SHOCKS BEFORE THEY OCCUR AND CAN SCALE UP SUPPORT TO RESPOND TO EXTREME EVENTS WHEN THEY HIT.

The ASPP aims to increase access to effective adaptive social protection systems for poor and vulnerable populations in the Sahel. The program seeks to achieve this objective by providing support to national governments to

- Design, implement, monitor, and evaluate adaptive social protection programs and systems;
- Build evidence and promote learning from pilots and feasibility studies to inform adaptive social protection programs; and
- Strengthen multilateral and regional approaches to building resilience in the Sahel.

Together, these activities are expected to contribute toward achieving long-term impact in helping poor and vulnerable people in six countries become capable of anticipating, absorbing, and recovering from climatic shocks and stresses.

The ASPP has made significant progress toward enabling access for poor and vulnerable people in the Sahel to adaptive and shock-responsive social protection. Across the six Sahelian countries, governments have put in place national safety net systems that are providing support to poor and vulnerable households (except for Chad, which is currently establishing this system). Funds from the ASPP are flowing to activities managed by governments to strengthen or expand these national systems. In Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal, these programs have been used to scale-up in response to shocks. A robust evidence base has been created to inform the design of national safety net programs and is evolving to provide information and learning to inform the evolution of these programs. For example, initiatives are under way to generate rigorous evidence on activities governments are providing to complement cash transfers, particularly those that aim to promote the productive activities of households. Significant efforts have been made to promote learning across the region, and the deployment of staff has further contributed to strengthening broad-based partnership for the ASPP in the region.

Strengthening the delivery of adaptive social protection programs through national systems is central to the ASPP; to this end, grants are provided directly to governments. These recipient-executed activities fund the piloting and scale-up of promising and innovative programs with the potential to institutionalize adaptive social protection systems in the countries. These programs have been designed based on careful assessment and analysis, supported through the country-level and regional work programs, as described below. The recipient-executed activities contribute to building institutions and procedures for setting up adaptive social protection systems, as well as generate evidence and lessons from innovative programs that can help address the challenges of adaptation and climate risk management for the poor.

The ASPP regional component supports a regional vision for knowledge generation and coordination covering analysis of poverty, climate change risk assessments, gender, scalability and disaster risk management, sources of vulnerability, prices and markets, nutrition, and institutional capacity and coordination. Support is also provided to advise, coordinate, and summarize impact evaluations, process evaluations, and targeting analysis, generating country-level as well as regionally applicable knowledge products.

Innovation Window activities with a strategic focus on testing new and innovative approaches to adaptive social protection have been identified and selected through a careful competitive process. These activities—covering productive inclusion, forecast-based financing, and the support of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) innovations in Niger—will inform the overall regional knowledge agenda, as well as provide important support to in-country activities.

The program also supports strategic staff deployments to coordinate, assist, and work closely with national, multilateral, and regional institutions with the aim of building adaptive components into programs and systems. Improved coordination, support, and enhanced knowledge

The ASPP integrated approach in action

SPOTLIGHT: Public works

The construction of community-based and -driven public works has a significant potential to improve both the natural environment and the livelihoods of households and communities, contributing to resilience. In many countries, land degradation, food insecurity, and poverty form a significant constraint to economic and environmental productivity. Carefully planned and implemented public works that take a holistic view of the environment and the livelihoods of those dependent on it can address this constraint. Specifically, such initiatives can promote the conservation of soil, rainwater, and vegetation for productive use; harvest surplus water to create water sources beyond groundwater recharge; rehabilitate and reclaim land for cultivation; improve the provision of health and education to households; and enhance physical access to social services and markets by augmenting the road network. By promoting sustainable farming and improved crop yields, public works can enhance income-generation providing both increased and diversified agricultural production and improved employment opportunities.

on what works for different partners will strengthen multilateral and regional approaches in building social resilience in the Sahel.

By design, adaptive social protection requires strong collaboration across sectors and institutions.

Due to the cross-sectoral nature of the adaptive social protection agenda, the ASPP relies on strong collaboration across the Global Practices of the World Bank. To effectively deliver the ASPP, the Social Protection Global Practice is working collaboratively with colleagues from other sectors, including disaster risk management, disaster risk finance, gender, health, climate change, and water. Such collaborations extend beyond the World Bank, to include partnership with the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO), among other developmental and humanitarian organizations. To support such collaboration and disseminate information, the ASPP-funded activities have been presented at a range of international, regional, and national forums and conferences.

Activities supported by the ASPP include the following:

- Design of **safety net programs** that integrate disaster-risk reduction and climate change adaptation into their basic program design, going beyond a purely ex post, responsive role to include activities that build the resilience and adaptive capacity of beneficiaries—through, for example, public works to build community assets that address disaster risks and livelihood support that builds long-term household assets
- **Identification, selection and registration of beneficiaries** to help identify those most vulnerable to natural hazards and climate change-related risks; these let climate/hazard information be used to target those most at risk of being hit by these types of shocks and to quickly scale up a program when needed

- Development of and linking to **early warning and climate information systems** that can be used for geographic targeting and planning for risk reduction; also, design effective emergency response and adaptation programs
- Design of **risk financing mechanisms** that complement and support social protection systems to build long-term resilience and provide ex ante and rapidly accessible financing when disasters hit
- Implementation of and linking with interventions that promote **more productive employment** of poor people in income-generating activities in order to help raise living standards, diversify livelihoods, and help households manage risks
- Promoting learning from **innovative approaches** through support to impact evaluation, targeting assessments, and process evaluations
- Complementary activities such as **training** on basic skills and livelihood diversification, as well as accompanying measures aimed at promoting health sanitation practices, nutrition, and early childhood development, etc., to advance the goal of strengthening human capital and the resilience of the poor

Country Program Activities

ASPP support at the country level is delivered through direct investments and grants to complement programs supported by the International Development Association (IDA). This approach lets governments expand their range of social protection programs and test innovative interventions. Such country testing in turn generates evidence and learning on effective ASPP initiatives. The experience and learning thus gained will allow national governments to better design, implement, monitor, and evaluate ASPP programs and systems.

SPOTLIGHT: **Disaster risk management and scalable financing**

Adaptive social protection can play an important role in disaster risk management. The integration of financial protection principles in social protection schemes can enable the development of rapidly scalable safety nets; these in turn can provide a crucial financial buffer to enable rapid response to the poorest affected households with regard to natural hazards. Some risk transfer mechanisms are already available in the Sahel, such as the Africa Risk Capacity. These mechanisms support the use of safety nets to distribute additional social protection when drought parameters reach an identified threshold.

SPOTLIGHT: Gender

Men and women have different vulnerabilities to shocks because of their respective domestic and economic roles—and they resort to different coping strategies because of gender-differentiated capacities and access to resources. Moreover, poverty risk is not perfectly pooled within households, suggesting that some household individuals are more at risk than others and that the provision of safety nets does not necessarily benefit all members of the same household, or at least not with the same intensity. Several studies have also documented the gender-differentiated effects of shocks on a series of nutritional and socioeconomic outcomes such as food intake, educational attainment, early and polygamous marriage, migration, etc. These differentiated effects are largely influenced by the roles and responsibilities individuals hold within their households. Thus, in order to develop effective adaptive social protection schemes, particular attention needs to be paid to gender dimensions.

Burkina Faso (\$8 million). Recipient-executed activities involve additional financing of the existing safety nets project, with the aim of ensuring that the country's safety net system can be rapidly scaled up to respond to crises and can foster the resilience of the poorest households. Bank-executed activities include vulnerability analysis and risk mapping, assessments and technical assistance for strengthening institutions and systems for managing adaptive social protection programs, and studies on strengthening social protection programs for resilience.

Chad (\$5 million). Recipient-executed activities involve piloting cash transfers and cash-for-work interventions to poor people and laying the foundations for an adaptive safety net system which will be able to adapt and scale up to respond to changing needs. The Bank-executed program in Chad primarily entails a vulnerability assessment, a safety assessment, and support to implementation of a pilot project introducing adaptive social protection to the country.

Mali (\$11.25 million). Recipient-executed activities provide additional financing to the country's existing cash transfer program, with the aim of further strengthening its current social safety net system by making it more adaptable, as well as increasing the resilience of poor and vulnerable households. Bank-executed activities include improving the geographic information system (GIS) by consolidating local statistics on poverty, vulnerability, climate change, disaster, and human capital; and supporting the development of a national social protection strategy and the design and implementation of adaptive social protection tools.

Mauritania (\$5.25 million). Recipient-executed activities focus on supporting the establishment of key building blocks of the national social safety net system, including a national registry of poor and vulnerable households, a management information system that can be adapted and adopted by other permanent and temporary programs, and a functional coordination mechanism with the disaster response mechanism system. Elements of the Bank-executed program include



vulnerability analysis, adaptation of the early warning system to trigger social protection responses to crises, and defining mechanisms and measures to respond to shocks and promote resilience.

Niger (\$11 million). The recipient-executed program includes support for additional financing to the original safety net project with a focus on coordination and effective response of safety net interventions to crisis, and implementation of measures to strengthen impact on the resilience of the poorest households. The key elements of the Bank-executed program include improving diagnosis of vulnerability, developing new tools and instruments for resilience, as well as impact evaluations and targeting assessments.

Senegal (\$13 million). Recipient-executed activities aim to scale up the existing safety nets project and strengthen the foundations established for the social protection system through a national registry and a national conditional cash transfer program reaching all localities, while introducing adaptive elements in the social protection system to make poor households more resilient to shocks. The objective of the Bank-executed activities is to contribute to the development of mechanisms that can make Senegal's safety net system more adaptive, efficient, and responsive to strengthen the ability of poor and vulnerable households to respond to shocks and build their resilience.

Regional Programmatic Activities

ASPP regional programmatic activities support analytical work and knowledge exchange in key areas of adaptive social protection. These activities help inform strategies for the Sahel overall, as well as for individual country strategies and programs. Further, these knowledge activities will help strengthen linkages between disaster risk management and adaptive social protection, and serve to coordinate efforts by the Bank and other donors and international organizations to strengthen national capacities for disaster resilience and social protection. A number of these regional knowledge activities are described below.

SPOTLIGHT: **Climate change**

Adaptive social protection systems and programs should be suited to cope with both current climate variability and future change. Ensuring this suitability may involve supporting country systems to assess current weather risk more efficiently through insurance and contingency planning tools, and providing access to climate adaptation funds to help countries adapt and evolve to new regimes as climate shifts happen.

SPOTLIGHT: **Employment**

A key element of adaptive social protection is facilitating the employment of poor people in productive and income-generating activities so as to help raise living standards, diversify livelihoods, and help households manage risks. Households and individuals may face multiple constraints that prevent them from engaging in productive employment—including constraints in human capital, constraints in the business environment, and constraints related to individuals' exposure to risk. The ASPP will work to assess constraints to productive employment, designing and implementing relevant interventions to boost productivity and build resilience in the target population, and generating and sharing knowledge on program efficiency so that effective programs can be brought to scale.



Beneficiary identification, selection, and registration. The ASPP has provided analysis and technical assistance to improve targeting mechanisms for poor and vulnerable households in the region.



Gender in adaptive social protection. This activity will provide support across the ASPP to ensure that the gender-specific characteristics of beneficiaries are considered in design and implementation, including through rigorous impact evaluations.



Impact evaluations. Impact evaluations are used to fill in knowledge gaps on the effectiveness of building blocks and innovations in social protection systems in the region, with a particular focus on rigorously evaluating activities to promote the livelihood and resilience of poor households across the Sahel.



Public works. Work will focus on promoting improved approaches to using public works programs toward effective sustainable land management through technical assistance and evaluations.



Scalable safety net systems. Technical support and analysis aims to strengthen early warning systems to inform response to shocks through safety net programs and advancing the adoption of disaster risk financing strategies in the region. It will be closely coordinated with the Innovation Window-funded activity on forecast-based financing.



Vulnerability and resilience. Analysis is being undertaken to characterize the frequency and severity of shocks; identify effective household resiliency strategies; and understand likely household adaptation and adaptive social protection needs under future climate scenarios, among other analysis.

Innovation Window

The Innovation Window is financing three activities, which were selected for their potential to provide new and innovative solutions for adaptive social protection that can be scaled up across the Sahel and beyond. These activities will inform the overall regional knowledge agenda, as well as provide support to in-country activities.

Strengthening social protection through forecast-based financing.

The objective of this activity is to enhance government capacity to strengthen the resilience of poor households to climate shocks through forecast-based action and financing. This approach aims to set up systems that release humanitarian funding before disasters strike based on forecast information rather than on information on actual events or impacts on people. Analysis and technical assistance will be provided to selected countries through this innovation-funded activity, which will be coordinated closely with the regional knowledge activities.

Enhancing household resilience to climate vulnerability through integrated social protection–WASH community-led interventions. This pilot project will

SPOTLIGHT: Productive accompanying activities in the Sahel

Policy makers in the Sahel are looking for solutions on how best to complement cash transfer programs with productive accompanying measures to further maximize impacts on household earnings and resilience. Programs that complement cash transfers with productive interventions that promote livelihood diversification can raise household earnings, and facilitate income smoothing and resilience. To this end, the ASPP is also looking to facilitate investment in the income-generating activities carried out by social safety net beneficiary households. The focus is to increase the productivity and income generated by these activities, as well as support income smoothing and diversification—all to help households cope with risks and shocks, including climate shocks.

Periodic cash transfer programs targeted to poor households are one of the core interventions in social protection systems in the Sahel. Traditional cash transfer programs are scaling up fast: across the six countries, they seek to target approximately 600,000 households. While regular cash transfer programs can have a variety of productive impacts, international evidence suggests that additional interventions addressing a wider range of constraints can be combined with cash transfer programs to further improve impacts on household productivity and resilience. For instance, recent international evidence on graduation programs points to the need to unlock multiple constraints simultaneously to improve productive capacity and lift households out of poverty. Programs can only maximize impact if they tackle the constraints that bind households and prevent them from engaging in more productive activities.

feature the distribution of chlorine-based water treatment tablets and behavioral interventions, building on the existing behavioral change component of the Niger Adaptive Safety Nets Project. Behavioral nudges around water treatment and quality will be implemented to increase compliance and systematic use of water treatment as well as demand for sanitation.

Productive components, livelihoods, and resilience. ASPP-supported social safety net programs provide for productive accompanying measures (see spotlight box on previous page) that are adapted to the needs and constraints of social safety net beneficiaries.

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