



Joint Partnership on Adaptive Social Protection in the Sahel
(UNICEF, WFP, WB-SASPP)

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF ADAPTIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE SAHEL

Key instruments and standards
to guide the development of effective national adaptive social protection systems in the region.

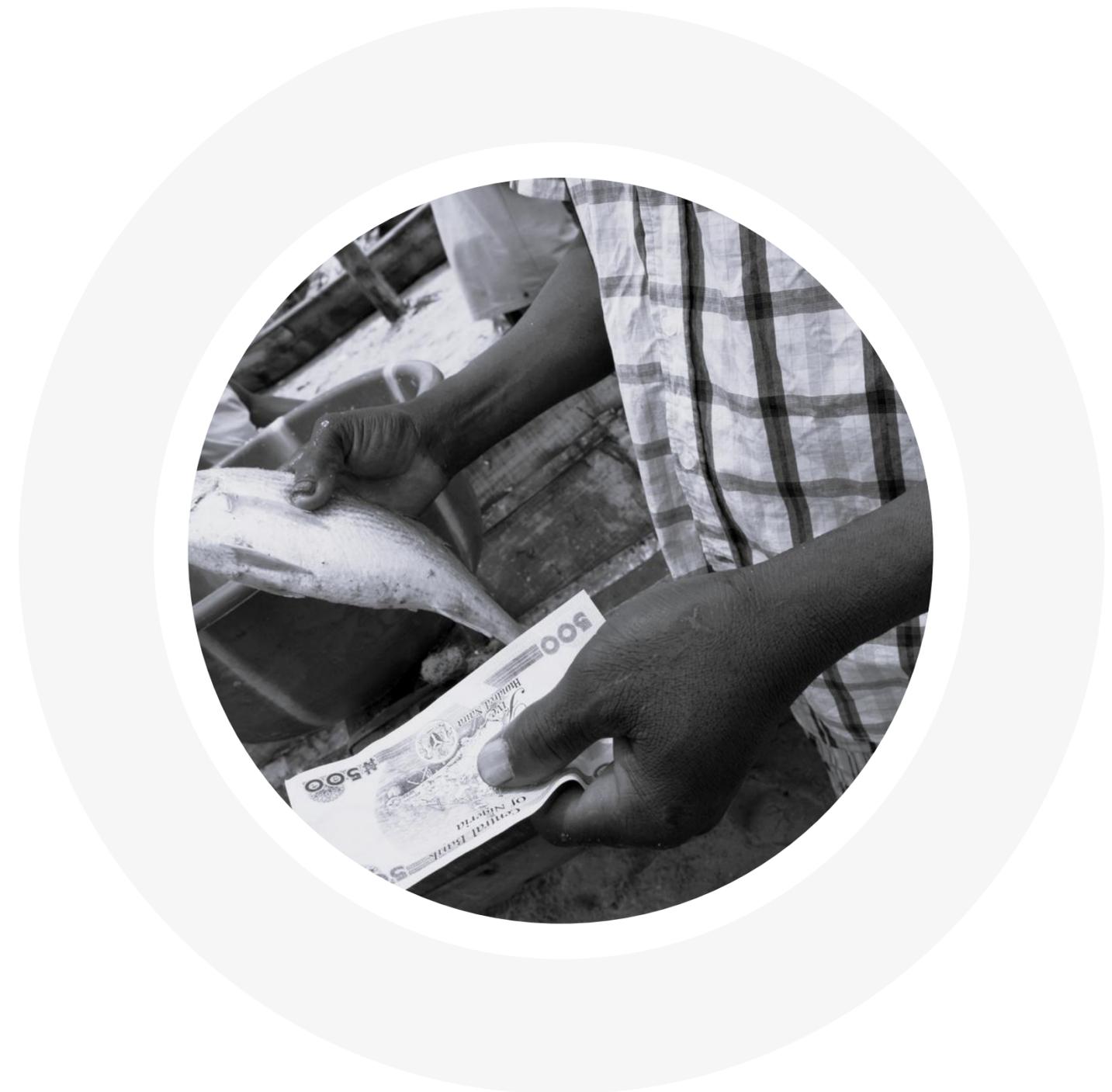


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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide presents standards for Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) instruments to help establish a common understanding among teams of what ASP systems can include in the context of Sahel countries. It also serves as a foundation for dialogue with governments and partners to set objectives for the development of these instruments. **The standards are not intended to be exhaustive, prescriptive, or final;** rather, they provide a starting point that should be adapted to each country's context and the priorities of its government.

For each instrument, the guide outlines minimum standards—core functions and parameters needed for it to be operational—as well as additional standards to enhance performance. Each instrument also offers additional explanations on the linkages with other mechanisms, as part of a broader systems approach.



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1 NATIONAL SOCIAL SAFETY NET PROGRAM



1.1 Minimum standards:

- Aims to cover the entire territory and support X% poorest and most vulnerable of households in the country.
- Follows an approach of support based on full cycles and includes a formal strategy for households' exit or re-certification at the end of each cycle.
- Integrates accompanying measures for human capital development.
- Supports households on a regular and predictable schedule.
- Is supported by a beneficiary management and information system.
- Considers the gender dimension in its conceptualization and implementation mechanisms.
- Includes a robust monitoring and evaluation system, along with a grievance redress mechanism. Also includes an interface with the payment system to resolve payment-related disputes.
- Has a communication and feedback plan on the program's objectives, eligibility criteria, and implementation parameters.
- Is institutionalized/has a legal existence.



1.2 Additional Standards:

- Adjusts transfer amounts based on needs and objectives (and may be indexed to inflation).
- Serves as a foundation to include or link complementary services or programs.
- Has the ability to continue operating in a context of fragility or shocks.
- Has continuous enrollment based on the needs of the population.
- Has developed its own identity (*branding*).
- Has a sufficient human resource structure at the central and decentralized levels to ensure the quality of implementation.

1.3 Links with other ASP mechanisms:

- Relies on the social registry to identify its beneficiaries in a dynamic way.
- Has multi-annual funding based on an appropriate mix of domestic and external resources.
- Relies on a payment system to make transfers without delay anywhere in the national territory.



2.1 Minimum standards:

- Consists of a package of interventions based on best practices, sequenced over a period that allows for adequate support to beneficiaries.
- Is adapted to local economic opportunities and constraints (value chains, market access, etc.).
- Considers the gender dimension in its conceptualization and implementation mechanisms.
- Is supported by beneficiary management information system.
- Includes a robust monitoring and evaluation system, along with a grievance redress mechanism.
- Establishes synergies with other complementary programmes, in conjunction with relevant ministries and departments.
- Is institutionalized/has a legal existence.



2.2 Additional Standards:

- Includes clear linkages and synergies with interventions on employment, capacity and skills building, access to the labor market and the private sector.

2.3 Links with other ASP mechanisms:

- Must be clearly articulated or integrated with the national social safety net program to strengthen its productive dimension.
- Relies on the social registry to identify its beneficiaries in a dynamic way.

3 SHOCK RESPONSE PROGRAM/ COMPONENT



3.1 Minimum standards:

- Enables a timely response to the country's main shock(s)
- Aims to provide coverage across the entire territory.
- Relies on one (or more) predefined action protocol(s) (or operational manuals).
- Aligns with the modalities defined in existing government response plans and coordination mechanisms with humanitarian actors.
- Is supported by a beneficiary management information system.
- Considers the gender dimension in its conceptualization and implementation mechanisms.
- Includes a robust monitoring and evaluation system, along with a grievance redress mechanism.
- Is institutionalized/has a legal existence.



3.2 Additional Standards:

- Must be flexible enough to respond to any type of covariate shocks (beyond the main and foreseeable shocks).

3.3 Links with other ASP mechanisms:

- Can be included in the national social safety net program through a vertical and horizontal extension of its interventions or can be implemented through a separate program.
- Relies on the social registry to identify its beneficiaries dynamically (if the registry allows it).
- Uses the national payment platform to respond anywhere in the territory.
- Is financed through one or more predefined risk financing mechanisms.
- Where relevant, is triggered based on objective data as defined by the early warning system.

4 PAYMENT SYSTEM



4.1 Minimum standards:

- Enables the initiation of payment orders to multiple payment service providers, with the aim of ensuring payments can be made anywhere in the country within 15 days from the issuance of the payment order.
- Allows sending and managing analog cash and/or digital payments.
- Includes a notification system to alert beneficiaries when a transfer is received, prompting them to go to the designated withdrawal point.
- Relies on framework contracts with multiple payment service providers.
- Enables payment traceability and simplifies payment reporting and reconciliation through the provision of reports.
- Is scalable both horizontally (adding more beneficiaries or programs) and vertically (increasing payment amounts or adjusting payment frequency).
- Guarantees the protection of personal data.
- Has a mechanism in place for grievance management and resolution.

4 PAYMENT SYSTEM



4.2 Additional Standards:

- Can be used by any government or non-government cash transfer program.
- Is part of a national/regional interoperability framework (interoperable with national payment systems, identification systems, social registries, tax authorities).
- Can deliver payments instantly through 100% digital means of payment (no time lag between the payment order and the availability of funds for the beneficiaries).
- Allows real-time payment tracking for the principal/customer entity and extraction of distribution reports if necessary.
- Offers multiple payment method options to provide beneficiaries with freedom of choice.
- Allows the client/order issuer to directly upload the beneficiary lists and relevant information if necessary (amounts, numbers, etc.).
- Includes a support component on the use of the service for users.

4.3 Links with other ASP mechanisms:

- Is interoperable with the management information systems of each user program, social registries, identification systems, and tax platforms.
- Is used systematically by social safety net programs to effectively reach households.



5.1 Minimum standards:

- Has national coverage including at a minimum all poor households as well as those vulnerable to shocks, with reliable and complete data.
- Has regular update mechanisms to register new households and update data for households already registered.
- Includes variables related to vulnerability.
- Is interoperable with user programs and other relevant databases based on a unique identifier.
- Allows to identify households and individuals potentially eligible for different programs based on the eligibility criteria defined by the user program.
- Guarantees the protection of personal data.
- Can be used free of charge by any governmental or non-governmental social program within the framework of data exchange protocols.
- Includes a communication and community engagement strategy to ensure understanding and acceptance of the rules and principles of the social registry.
- Includes a mechanism for grievance management and resolution.



5.2 Additional Standards:

- Has dynamic inclusion mechanisms for continuous updating.
- Allows extensive interoperability with administrative databases in other sectors relevant to social protection (education, health, civil registration and vital statistics, etc.).
- Has an institutional anchoring that guarantees its autonomy from user programs.
- Communicates effectively with potential users, decision-makers, and the general public.

5.3 Links with other ASP mechanisms:

- Is used by adaptive social protection programs in a systematic manner.

6 EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS



6.1 Minimum standards:

- Is led by government institutions within existing structures (no creation of a parallel system).
- Based on relevant, regular, objective and publicly available indicators.
- Must enable decision-making based on predefined triggers and thresholds (if pertinent).
- Must allow for disaggregation of data at a relevant geographic level (ideally at administrative level 3).



6.2 Additional Standards:

- Integrates innovative approaches such as the inclusion of satellite data and artificial intelligence into data analysis.
- Must allow for a more anticipated response and actions than current interventions if relevant.

6.3 Links with other ASP mechanisms:

- The links between the early warning system and government response plans must be clearly defined through the institutional arrangement.

7 FINANCING MECHANISMS



7.1 Minimum standards:

- Financing mechanism for regular activities:
 - Relies in part on specific and recurring budget lines included in finance laws.
 - Must have the ability to channel multiple sources of funding.

- Financing mechanism for shock response activities:
 - Must be pre-established and subject to predefined disbursement rules.
 - Must have the ability to channel multiple sources of funding.



7.2 Additional Standards:

- Financing mechanism for regular activities:
 - Falls within the framework of a national strategy for financing social protection, which defines an appropriate and sustainable mix of domestic and external funding sources.
- Financing mechanism for shock response activities:
 - Falls within a disaster risk financing strategy that combines an appropriate mix of domestic and external financial instruments, ensuring the timely and cost-effective availability of required financial resources.

7.3 Links with other ASP mechanisms:

- Effectively finance the specific adaptive social protection activities they are intended to support.

8 COORDINATION MECHANISMS



8.1 Minimum standards:

- Formally defines the roles and responsibilities of the various actors and strengthen government leadership.
- Enables the establishment of multi-stakeholder consultation frameworks for planning, coordinating and monitoring of interventions (distinguishing between the institutional framework for regular activities and those for shock response).
- Formally defines the processes for determining common modalities of intervention, for example through the development and adoption of response plans (for shock response).
- Formally articulates the linkages between the different ASP mechanisms, for example by embedding the principles and tools of the ASP in national social protection strategies.

8 COORDINATION MECHANISMS



8.2 Additional Standards:

- Are embedded in public policy supported by appropriate legislation (in particular the National Development Plan and the National Social Protection Policy).
- Clearly articulates the various strategic plans (e.g., disaster plans, multi-risk plans, etc.) and ensure their overall coherence (for shock response).

8.3 Links with other ASP mechanisms:

- Allows for the formal alignment and coherence of the different instruments of adaptive social protection.

The World Food Program, the World Bank-SASPP and UNICEF have established a strong partnership in the Sahel, grounded in a shared vision to strengthen the adaptive dimensions of national social protection systems. This joint project on social protection in the Sahel recognizes that scaling up adaptive social protection depends on strong and coordinated actions by actors in social protection, disaster risk management, climate, and humanitarian sectors—drawing on one another’s expertise and networks. We see opportunities to strengthen and build on emerging social protection systems, not only to make them more responsive to shocks, but also to prioritize investments in resilience and human capital, which can promote economic inclusion and foster social cohesion.

For more information:

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