



Advancing Adaptive Social Protection in Central Asia

The frequency and intensity of disasters, which are caused by natural hazards and are worsening with climate change, pose significant dangers to global economic prosperity, human security, and overall well-being. Extensive evidence has further shown that when disaster strikes, it is impoverished populations that are disproportionately affected. Central Asian countries are emerging economies in a region wracked by earthquakes and flooding, and their populations require scalable and adaptable social protection measures to protect lives and livelihoods.

Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) combines social protection, disaster risk management (DRM), and climate adaptation to enhance societal resilience, diminish vulnerability, and alleviate the adverse effects of shocks. It ensures that social protection systems are well-prepared and flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances and the specific needs of those affected.

Under the Strengthening Financial Resilience and Accelerating Risk Reduction in Central Asia Program (SFRARR), funded by the European Union (EU) and managed by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction

and Recovery (GFDRR), the World Bank assessed the ASP capabilities of the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The resulting report presented a regional comparative view, using three levels of analysis: policy, programs, and finance. The study also provided a series of general and country-specific recommendations.

Policy

A proper national framework for ASP, where robust laws and policies make up an enabling environment, is critical to establishing clear roles and responsibilities. This step supports overall policy coherence, ensuring that institutions in charge of disaster risk management, climate adaptation and social protection can function effectively when confronted by a disaster. As a result, governments do not revert to ad hoc disaster relief schemes and can better help the most vulnerable.

To establish an enabling environment for ASP, the report recommended that the three countries should:

- Develop National ASP Policy Frameworks that define the role of the social protection sector in building re-

silience among impoverished and vulnerable populations, emphasizing preparedness, coping, and adaptation to shocks.

- Enhance institutional arrangements to facilitate regular coordination between the social protection and DRM sectors, local governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), and development partners.
- Establish regulatory instruments and information systems to formalize and standardize coordination mechanisms for ASP, including the development of standard protocols for responsibilities, coordination processes, information flows, and emergency social protection assistance.

Programs

To reach poor and vulnerable households with assistance before and after shocks requires sophisticated social protection programs. These programs, and their delivery systems, are the foundation of a truly comprehensive ASP system and must be flexible enough to adjust, respond, and adapt to a variety of hazards with differing intensities. Effective implementation also avoids households reverting to “negative-coping mechanisms,” allowing for a faster recovery and stronger societal resilience.

To build a robust and effective system, the study promotes:

- Incorporating “emergency modality” operating procedures into the design, rules, and operations manual of social protection programs to enable program expansion as needed.
- Enhancing data collection, management processes, and information systems to increase transactional capacity, generate robust social registries with high-quality data, and ensure broad coverage of populations in disaster-prone areas.
- Improving payment systems by increasing digital delivery methods, such as debit cards, and expanding coverage to rural and disaster-prone areas, ensuring timely delivery of benefits after a disaster.

Finance

For a reliable and sustainable ASP system, financial provision must be proactive, establishing the necessary instruments and pre-emptively allocating the resources

that enable a country to respond to the impacts of a disaster before it takes place. By developing adaptive risk financing strategies, governments can enable fast and effective response to disasters.

To solidify a proactive approach to disaster risk financing, countries in Central Asia should:

- Develop a disaster risk financing framework or strategy that incorporates layers of different financial instruments tailored to different risks, ensuring timely responses to shocks and their respective financial requirements.
- Establish various ex-ante and ex-post risk financial instruments, linking them to the social protection sector through fund allocation based on relevant regulations.
- Regulate and refine the operation of payment platforms in post-shock situations to facilitate efficient and timely disbursement of available funds to beneficiaries, playing a crucial role in enabling responsive expansion of SP programs.

The assessment reveals that the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan demonstrate an emerging level of ASP capacity. Specific areas require attention, such as clarifying the role of the social protection sector, improving coordination mechanisms, enhancing data interoperability, and developing risk financing policies. Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic already have effective, established systems related to their social registry and payment systems which should provide a strong foundation for strengthening these systems moving forward.

This report provides clear guidance for policymakers and partners in the region as they work to strengthen ASP and effectively address the challenges posed by natural hazards and climate change. It is a crucial step in GFDRR, the World Bank and the EU’s shared mission to strengthen financial resilience and mainstream disaster risk reduction in Central Asia.