



**SCOPING STUDY ON SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SAFETY NETS FOR
ENHANCED FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE CENTRAL ASIA REGION**

REGIONAL SYNTHESIS REPORT

2018




ARMENIA

KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

TAJIKISTAN

The designations employed and the presentation of material in the map(s) do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of WFP concerning the legal or constitutional status of any country, territory or sea area, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers.

All rights reserved. Reproduction and dissemination of material in this information product for educational or other non-commercial uses are authorized without any prior written permission from the copyright holders provided the source is fully acknowledged. Reproduction of material in this information product for resale or other commercial purposes is prohibited without written permission. Applications for such permission should be addressed to the Director, Communications Division, e-mail: wfp.publications@wfp.org. © WFP 2018



This report is part of a larger series of scoping studies on **Social Protection and Safety Nets for Enhanced Food Security and Nutrition in the Central Asia Region** that was commissioned by the World Food Programme in partnership with the University of Maastricht in 2017. Specific country focused studies have been conducted on Armenia, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan with a view to contributing fresh evidence and sound policy analysis around social protection issues in relation to food and nutrition security, resulting in a set of country-specific policy recommendations on nutrition-sensitive social protection and safety nets that consider the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders. The Regional Synthesis Report summarizes the findings of the three studies and provides a more general overview of social protection and safety nets issues in relation to food security and nutrition across the three countries, with a summary of the main trends and a set of consolidated findings and recommendations.

This research initiative has been conducted under the overall coordination of Carlo Scaramella, Deputy Regional Director, Regional Bureau for North Africa, Middle East, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, World Food Programme (WFP), Cairo with the support of Dipayan Bhattacharyya, Muriel Calo, and Verena Damerau, WFP. The report authors are Franziska Gassmann and Eszter Timar from the University of Maastricht.

The Social Protection and Safety Nets unit at the UN World Food Programme's Regional Bureau for North Africa, Middle East, Central Asia and Eastern Europe wishes to recognize and extend thanks to the many individuals who took the time to participate in this research. Special thanks are due to Dilbar Bakaeva, Irina Lukashova, Susanna Karapetyan, Heghine Manasyan, Arman Udumyan, Luca Molinas, Elmira Bakhshniyan, Sona Harutyunyan, Armen Harutyunyan, Astghik Minasyan, Robert Stepanyan, Armenuhi Hovakimyan, Mihran Hakobyan, Karen Pahlevanyan, Hayk Galstyan, Karine Saribekyan, Gayane Nasoyan, Anna Jenderedjian, Roman Mogilevskii, Gulsana Turusbekova, Nazgul Tashpaeva, Robert Brudzynski, Nurdolot Sadyrbekov, Zaripa Niyazbekova, Lunara Mamytova, Jipara Rysbekova, Nazgul Musaeva, Kanat Tilekeyev, Gulnura Kojobergenova, Alexi Slushinskii, Saule Kasymbaeva, Ana Ocampo, Jessica Owen, Kadenova Zuurakan Azhimatova, Sirdbybayev Suyunbek, Kemelova Assel, Kuykeev Eric Asanovich, Dikambayev Azamat, Jumaliev Jigitaly, Zamira Komilova, Dragan Aleksoski, Parvina Tajibaeva, Shodibeg Kodyrov, Kakhramon Bakozada, Nazokat Odinzoda, Yusuf Kurbonkhojaev, Kulov Abdevali, Vania Tomeva, Emma Khachatryan, Farida Muminova, Daring Rahman Jahan Afruz, Davlatov Umed Abdulalievich, Rajab Radjabov, Mahmadbekov Moyonsh, Khimatsho Muzafarov, Jamshed Karimov, Zoirjon Shapirov, Theo Kurbanov, Hadija Boimatova, Malika Makhkambaeva, Ibrohim Ahmadov, Alisher Rajabov and Alexi Sluchynskyy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have found their way to economic growth and improved livelihoods after a long period of transition to market economies.

Instability and conflict within and around the region, vulnerability to developments in the global economy and an increasing frequency of natural disasters are obstacles on the path to inclusive growth. The three countries, Armenia, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, which are the focus of a new regional synthesis report on nutrition-sensitive social protection and safety nets commissioned by the World Food Programme (WFP), are at different development stages. Armenia performs better in terms of GDP and real wages, thanks to comprehensive economic reforms implemented in the decade after independence. Kyrgyzstan, and even more so Tajikistan, are the poorest countries in the region, but are also progressing in terms of economic growth.

By 2015, all countries in the Europe and Central Asia region had achieved Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1c, with the exception of Tajikistan.

Yet, food insecurity and malnutrition remain pertinent issues in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, whereas the prevalence of undernourishment is particularly alarming in Tajikistan. The populations of all three countries are affected by the double burden of malnutrition: undernutrition (including micronutrient deficiencies) and overnutrition. The underlying reasons are poverty, lack of nutritional awareness and food import dependency. Poverty affects approximately one third of the population in all three countries and contributes to malnutrition primarily through undermining households' economic access to food. Certain population groups, such as rural populations and women and girls have a higher risk of being poor and food insecure.

Social protection is recognized by the respective governments as an effective

tool to improve human welfare and well-being.

This is reflected in the comprehensive social protection systems in place. Armenia, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan all have social insurance systems and at least one kind of social assistance programme targeted at poor and vulnerable groups. School feeding programmes have become integral parts of national social protection strategies and yield positive returns in poverty reduction, nutrition and human capital accumulation. Remittances from migrant family members provide an important informal safety net.

The performance of social protection programmes is mixed.

Social insurance, in particular old-age pensions, contributes substantially to poverty reduction in all three countries. Social assistance, on the other hand, is characterized by low coverage and adequacy, particularly in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. Although all governments direct considerable shares of their budgets towards social protection, social assistance programmes are relatively underfunded. Despite social protection systems being fairly comprehensive, gaps in shock-responsive safety nets, promotive measures or programmes that take into account the specific needs of vulnerable populations, remain. Nutrition objectives are strongly embedded in programmes such as school feeding run with WFP's assistance, but not yet in government-run safety nets.

Although challenges undoubtedly exist, there are also a number of notable projects and good practices that can serve as examples to follow across the region and beyond.

The Optimizing School Meals Programme in the Kyrgyz Republic, the comprehensive reform of targeted social assistance in Tajikistan and the integration of social protection services in Armenia are examples of sound policy design, implementation and excellent cooperation among both domestic and international stakeholders.

Policy Recommendations

- **Comprehensive safety nets are required to break the cycle of hunger and poverty and achieve the SDGs and Agenda 2030.** Regarding existing programmes, especially social assistance in the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, the most pressing challenge is to increase coverage and transfer adequacy. International partners can assist with building the case for scaling up or discontinuing certain programmes, for instance by conducting ex-ante policy analyses. Moreover, United Nations agencies and international donors have global expertise and a pool of evidence that can underpin strategic and technical decisions.
- **Further improvement to the design of existing policies is possible and advisable,** for instance with the incorporation of appropriate graduation objectives as a mid-term goal. Programmes with graduation objectives, such as productive safety net programmes, need to be carefully designed based on international best practice. Governments should be assisted to develop normative frameworks based on agreed-upon standards for promotive social protection programmes.
- **Governments will be required to make considerable financial efforts to address gaps in social protection.** The financing of social protection is a key obstacle in scaling up programmes and addressing gaps. Fiscal space may be sustainably created by reallocating spending from other government sectors, increasing tax revenues or expanding social insurance coverage and contributions. International partners can also assist in this process. If the minimum standards for social protection are set and agreed upon, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank or the World Bank can assist governments in

costing schemes and finding fiscal space.

- **Adoption of electronic registries and M&E systems contributing to programme efficiency and effectiveness can be used to improve the design and implementation of social protection programmes.**

For instance, the absence of longitudinal (panel) data is a significant gap in all three countries and the region in general, and use of electronic registries can help provide the administrative data needed to evaluate social protection programmes. The new electronic registries and M&E systems also provide an opportunity to adopt a nutrition-sensitive approach to social protection.

- **A common understanding of minimum standards must underpin the establishment of social protection systems that are respectful of human rights and address the specific vulnerabilities of populations in the region.**

Policy dialogue should be fostered around the development of a set of minimum standards for social protection, food security and nutrition. Minimum standards for social protection should refer to ILO's Social Protection Floor Recommendation (R202) covering basic livelihood needs throughout the lifecycle. Policy dialogue should also address the need for shock-responsive social protection in the region. Establishing or – where applicable – strengthening emergency preparedness capacities should also be a priority.

The rationale behind social protection for all is multifaceted, but first and foremost, decent living standards and the right to a healthy, adequate diet are basic human rights.

Social protection is a key pathway to securing these rights. If SDG 2 on Zero Hunger is to be achieved by 2030, governments, the international development community and civil society have to work together to further develop social protection systems in the CIS countries.

Highlights from country specific reviews

Armenia:

Armenia has a well-developed social protection system, even if certain components are modest in size. Remittances from migrant workers play an important role as an informal safety net,

and pension schemes have particularly strong poverty reduction effects. School feeding offers a combination of protective and promotive functions and contributes to food and nutrition security of children and their families. Inclusion and exclusion errors, gaps in shock-responsive and promotive elements, and challenges related to governance and policy implementation, among others, can be addressed through on-going policy dialogue around the following elements:

- Using a set of **minimum standards** to guide policy dialogue, such as those proposed in International Labour Organisation's Social Protection Floor recommendations.

- Supporting **nutrition-sensitive social protection** by investing in the capacity of social case managers to detect child malnutrition; introducing referral mechanisms between social and health services as well as strengthening communication about nutrition.

- Strengthening **governance and cooperation** among line ministries, to create synergies particularly in rural areas and contribute to the development of active labour market policies, public work programmes and productive safety net programmes.

Tajikistan:

Tajikistan has a relatively comprehensive social protection system, which includes elements of social insurance, social assistance and social services. Existing social protection programmes have limited impact on food security due to the low coverage and adequacy of the social assistance system, currently under reform. Addressing existing institutional and implementation challenges will require consideration of the following elements:

- **Improving policy design and implementation**, including on coverage and adequacy of transfers, promotive social protection measures, shock-responsive safety nets and nutrition-sensitive social protection, creating a monitoring and evaluation framework to guide evidence-based policy making, and ensuring sound public financial management of social protection programmes.

- **International development partners**, particularly the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, and the United Nations Children's Fund, can play a major role in addressing these issues and supporting the government.

Kyrgyz Republic:

Social protection is relatively comprehensive in the Kyrgyz Republic, but social assistance and active labour market programmes are small. Since 2010, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and its partners have demonstrated dedication to improve the well-being of the population and have made important achievements in social protection policy. The last two decades have brought about several reforms, and there have been ongoing efforts to expand and consolidate social protection. Yet, social protection in its current form does not fully address the needs and vulnerabilities of the Kyrgyz population. A comprehensive reform aimed at strengthening social protection and its impact on food security should include the following elements:

- **Strengthening the design** of social protection programmes by reviewing standards that guide access, eligibility and benefit values and targeting approaches. Ensure that the protective, preventive, promotive and transformative potential of social protection are de facto realized. Allow the poor, not only the officially unemployed, to access active labour market policies.

- **Strengthening the implementation** of social protection programmes through capacity-building, introducing a nationwide electronic registry and carrying out robust monitoring and evaluation practices, could contribute to a more efficient and effective system.

- **Reviewing the efficiency** of resource allocation within social protection. An increased financial commitment to social protection also is necessary to overcome gaps and bottlenecks.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States have found their ways to economic growth and improving livelihoods after a long period of transition to market economies. Instability and conflict within and around the region, vulnerability to developments in the global economy and an increasing frequency of natural disasters are obstacles on the path to inclusive growth. The three countries, Armenia, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, which are the focus of a new regional synthesis report on nutrition-sensitive social protection and safety nets commissioned by the World Food Programme, are at different development stages. Armenia performs better in terms of Gross Domestic Product and real wages, thanks to comprehensive economic reforms implemented in the decade after independence. Kyrgyzstan, and even more so Tajikistan, are the poorest countries in the region, but they are also progressing in terms of economic growth.

With the exception of Tajikistan, all countries in the Europe and Central Asia region had achieved the Millennium Development Goal 1c by 2015. Yet, food insecurity and malnutrition remain pertinent issues in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, whereas the prevalence of undernourishment is particularly alarming in Tajikistan. The populations of all three countries are affected by the double burden of malnutrition: undernutrition (including micronutrient deficiencies) and overnutrition. The underlying reasons are poverty, lack of nutritional awareness and the countries' partial dependence on food imports.

Poverty affects approximately one third of the population in all three countries and contributes to malnutrition primarily through undermining households' economic access to food. Certain population groups, such as rural populations and women and girls have a higher risk to be poor and food insecure.

Social protection is recognized by the respective governments as an effective tool to improve the populations' well-being. This is reflected in the comprehensive social protection systems that are in place. Armenia, the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan all have social insurance systems and at least one kind of social assistance programme targeted at poor and vulnerable groups. School feeding programmes have become inherent elements of the national social protection strategies and yield positive returns in poverty reduction, nutrition and human capital accumulation. Remittances from migrant family members provide an important informal safety net.

The performance of social protection programmes is mixed. Social insurance, in particular old-age pensions, contributes substantially to poverty reduction in all three countries. Social assistance, on the other hand, is characterized by low coverage and adequacy, particularly in Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz Republic. Although all governments direct considerable shares of their budgets towards social protection, social assistance programmes are relatively underfunded. Despite social protection systems being fairly comprehensive, gaps remain, such as the lack of shock-responsive safety nets, promotive measures or programmes that take into account

the specific needs of vulnerable populations. Nutrition objectives are strongly embedded in programmes run with World Food Programme's assistance, but not yet in government-run safety nets. School feeding programmes are an excellent platform to deliver nutrition-sensitive social protection to children and families, and can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2, 3 and 4 on Zero Hunger, ensuring healthy lives and inclusive and quality education.

Although challenges undoubtedly exist, there are also a number of remarkable projects and good practices that can serve as examples to follow across the region and beyond. The Optimizing School Meals Programme in the Kyrgyz Republic, the comprehensive reform of Targeted Social Assistance in Tajikistan and the integration of social protection services in Armenia are examples of sound policy design, implementation and excellent cooperation among both domestic and international stakeholders.

To break the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030, comprehensive safety nets are required. In addition to the gaps in the social protection systems and the low coverage and adequacy of available cash transfers, monitoring and evaluation systems are underdeveloped, and emerging issues such as obesity, urbanization and return migration are further challenges. These challenges interact, and are best addressed through a comprehensive reform of social protection, achieved with the engagement of



both government and development partners. Sustainable Development Goal 17 – to *Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development* – is a prerequisite for success. Through partnership, these challenges can be better tackled.

Perhaps the most pressing challenge is to increase coverage of the poor and transfer adequacy. Governments have to find fiscal space to do so. International partners can assist with building the case for scaling up programmes, for instance by conducting ex-ante analyses. Moreover, United Nations agencies and international donors have global expertise and a pool of evidence that can underpin strategic and technical decisions. Further improvement to existing policies is possible and advisable. For instance, the incorporation of appropriate graduation mechanisms should be a mid-term goal. In that context productive safety nets play an important role.

Addressing the gaps in social protection will require considerable financial efforts from governments. Governments struggle to finance their regular social protection programmes, and have limited capacity to set aside funds for scaling up during emergencies. The financing of

social protection is a key obstacle in scaling up programmes and filling gaps. Fiscal space may be sustainably created by reallocating spending from other government sectors, increasing tax revenues or expanding social insurance coverage and contributions. International partners can also assist in this process. If the minimum standards for social protection are set and agreed upon, the International Labour Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank or the World Bank can assist the governments in costing schemes and finding fiscal space.

Development partners, including World Food Programme, should continue providing technical assistance for the development of effective Monetary and Evaluation systems and building the capacity of civil servants in using the systems. The new electronic registries and Monetary and Evaluation systems also provide an opportunity to entrench a nutrition-sensitive approach to social protection.

The work on establishing social protection systems that meet both the requirements dictated by human rights and needs, and address the specific vulnerabilities of populations in the

region, has to be underpinned by a common understanding of minimum standards. Therefore, fostering policy dialogue should start by developing a set of social protection, food security and nutrition minimum standards. Minimum standards for social protection should refer to International Labour Organisation's Social Protection Floor Recommendation (R202), since it covers the basic livelihood needs throughout the lifecycle and is already embedded in the international and national policy arena. Policy dialogue should also address the need for shock-responsive social protection in the region. Establishing or – where applicable – strengthening emergency preparedness councils should as well be priority.

The rationale behind social protection for all is multifaceted, but first and foremost, decent living standards and the right to consume a healthy, adequate diet are basic human rights. Social protection is a key component in securing these rights. If Sustainable Development Goal 2 on Zero Hunger is to be achieved by 2030, governments, the international development community and civil society have to work together to further develop social protection systems in the Commonwealth of Independent States countries.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Tables	8
Figures.....	8
Abbreviations	9
1. Introduction	11
1.1 Food security and social protection.....	12
1.2 Key social protection instruments for food security.....	12
1.3 The gender dimension of social protection and food security.....	13
2. Regional context.....	15
2.1 Demographic context.....	15
2.2 Economic context	16
3. Food security and poverty.....	21
3.1 Food security and nutrition.....	21
3.2 Poverty	24

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_1925

