



Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho

Lesotho National Social Protection Strategy II

2021-2031



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Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CPWA	Child Protection and Welfare Act
DMA	Disaster Management Authority
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FNCO	Food and Nutrition Coordination Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HAI	Help Age International
HIV	Human immuno-deficiency virus
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LNSSP	Lesotho National Social Security Policy
LVAC	Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee
M	Lesotho Maloti
MIS	Management Information System
MISSA	Management Information System for Social Assistance
MoAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
MoDP	Ministry of Development Planning
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFLR	Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation
MoGYSR	Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoLE	Ministry of Labour and Employment
MoLGC	Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs
MoPPS	Ministry of Police and Public Safety
MoLJ	Ministry of Law and Justice
MoSBDCM	Ministry of Small Business Development, Co-operative and Marketing
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NISSA	National Information System for Social Assistance
NRSF	National Resilience Strategic Framework
NSDP I	National Strategic Development Plan I
NSDP II	National Strategic Development Plan II
NSPCC	National Social Protection Coordination Committee
NSPS I	National Social Protection Strategy I 2015-2019
NSPS II	National Social Protection Strategy II 2021-2031
OVC	Orphans and vulnerable children
SACU	Southern Africa Customs Union
SBCC	Social and Behavioural Change Communication
TVET	Technical Vocational and Educational Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VACS	Violence Against Children and Youth Survey
VAT	Value Added Tax
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

Foreword

The decision by the Government of Lesotho to develop National Social Protection Strategy II (NSPS 2021 - 2031) is in itself a clear indication that the journey towards having in place a comprehensive and well-coordinated social protection system that has sufficient capacity to address the socioeconomic needs of vulnerable and under-privileged in Lesotho is far from over. A 2021 review of the first National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS 2014/15- 2018/19) revealed a number of significant shortfalls in the system, all of which hinder its efforts to adequately address the difficulties that confront poor and vulnerable Basotho on a day-to-day basis.

According to the findings of the review, a significant amount of social protection resources provided by the State are devoted to addressing the plight of certain vulnerable groups, while the rest receive very little attention from the social protection sector. The review made a further observation that the system is inadequately prepared to give a rapid response to shocks, especially those of a covariate nature. This, plus the fact that it offers very little in terms of improving the resilience of many vulnerable Basotho led to the conclusion that social protection services in Lesotho can only reach so many people.

These and other key findings of the review have prompted many key stakeholders in social protection delivery to propose the introduction of a number of bold measures towards turning the lives of the majority of poor and vulnerable Basotho around. If implemented with precision, these measures will go a long way in helping key social protection stakeholders achieve the sector's its vision of a 'decent and dignified quality of

life for all Basotho..." Among the proposals that the strategy makes is that the social protection system extend its focus beyond providing cash or material resources to one that encompasses:

- The provision of social security packages to workers and their dependents,
- Livelihood enhancement measures that seek to empower poor Basotho to be economically self-sufficient,
- Measures that fight against social and economic exclusion of the vulnerable, as well as promote social equity,
- Measures that will help the sector respond rapidly to shocks.

It is my great pleasure to announce, on behalf of the Government of Lesotho, that the National Social Protection Strategy 2021 - 2031 is now ready for implementation. I encourage everyone who has a mandate in social protection delivery to roll up their sleeves and get down to work. Without your hard work, Lesotho will never be the Lesotho that its founding fathers envisioned. I wish you all a successful journey towards building a social protection system that will make every Mosotho proud of being a Mosotho.

**Molimo A boloke Lesotho le Basotho
Khotso, Pula, Nala**

**Honourable 'Matebatso Doti
Minister of Social Development**

Preface

The journey towards building a comprehensive social protection system that adequately caters for all vulnerable groups has, since the launch of the first National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS 2014/15- 2018/19) in 2015, been a mixed bag. Some government ministries have experienced a decline in their capacity to support the poor and vulnerable through social protection programmes due to dwindling resources. Others have recorded a mixture of successes and hurdles. On the one hand, they have been able to expand their reach by a significant margin. On the other hand, challenges such as inadequate internal and external coordination, lack of monitoring and evaluation systems and tools, as well as disharmony among the operational systems of their programmes, have made their progress towards transforming the lives of their target groups extremely slow.

The introduction of the second National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS 2021- 2031) constitutes a major effort by Government to prioritise the elimination of these and the rest of the key challenges that have been weakening the effectiveness social protection system since the NSPS 2014/15- 2018/19 era. However, NSPS II does not limit itself to addressing system-related challenges only. It is a dynamic and forward-looking strategic document that not only proposes actions to take in improving the performance of various social protection programmes, but also gives guidance on how expand their reach. It also provides direction on how help beneficiaries of social assistance interventions become economically self-sufficient and less dependent on government support and the goodwill of neighbours.

NSPS II is also pro-poor in its approach and proposes several poverty-alleviation strategies, including: (a) Expansion of the Child Grants Programme to poor/ultra-poor pregnant moth-

ers/mothers of under-2s, (b) Strengthening of community ECCD centres for increased school enrolment and progression of poor children, (c) Payment of child grants on a per-child basis, (d) Provision of Child Grants Programme beneficiaries in secondary school with top-ups, (e) Prioritisation of financial need or poverty status over merit when awarding NMDS tertiary bursaries, (f) Recognition of livelihood promotion as a key strategy for empowering the poor to be economically self-sufficient, (g) Introduction of a pro-poor, gender-sensitive Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme prioritising rural youth/young women and (g) Introduction of a Disability Grant Programme for persons with disabilities from poor backgrounds.

Given that various government and non-government stakeholders have a stake in social protection delivery, it is critical that support one another in carrying out their assigned duties and responsibilities. They should use the existing social protection coordination structures as valuable platforms for discussing issues that are of great importance to the improvement of the well-being of the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society. Meeting from time to time to exchange information and ideas about what is being done and what needs to be done, as well as to agree on possible areas of cooperation will surely contribute greatly towards transforming of our social protection system into one that is well-coordinated and highly effective.

The comprehensiveness of the NSPS II document gives me the confidence that it will benefit a large cross-section of our vulnerable population, if implemented properly and monitored well. I therefore urge all stakeholders to work hard to turn its recommendations into many success stories.

Thank you

Acknowledgements

The National Social Protection Strategy II (NSPS 2021- 2031) is a product of a generous investment of resources by two of our most trusted Development Partners, and of time and effort by a representative array of stakeholders, including, technical experts and specialists, government ministries and agencies, as well as local international and local NGOs.

On behalf of the Ministry of Social Development, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the EU/UNICEF partnership for its financial and technical support for the development of this strategy. I am immensely thankful for the strong leadership provided by the former and current country heads of these two important friends of Lesotho, namely, His Excellency Ambassador Christian Manahal, who completed his term of office as Head of Delegation of the European Union the Kingdom of Lesotho in August; Her Excellency Ambassador Paola Amadei, who took over the headship of the Delegation in September 2021, as well as the former and current UNICEF Country Representatives, namely, Ms. Anurita Bains and Mr. Deepak Bhaskaran.

I would like to also acknowledge the insightful contributions made by the WFP and the FAO through the strong leadership of their country representatives, namely, the WFP Country Director, Ms. Rusiga Aurore, and the FAO Regional Representative to Lesotho, Dr. Patrice Talla Takoukam. I should also like to extend my sincere thanks to all members of the UNICEF Social Policy Team in Lesotho, namely, Ms. Marisa Foraci, Ms. Sophie Shawa and Ms. Mookho Thaane Ramasike, all of whom played a pivotal role in initiating, planning and in managing the strategy development process, as well as in supporting the consultancy firm that guided it. I am also grateful to the World Bank Social Assistance Project Team for its relentless support to the process.

Indeed, the critical role played by the consultancy firm that led the development of this strategy, namely, Economic Policy Research Institute, deserves recognition. Our special thanks go Nard Huijbregts and his team for the hard work and effort that they put into the assignment to ensure that the product that they would delivery

would benefit the poorest and most vulnerable members of our society. The ministry and all of its partners benefited immensely from their technical expertise and profound insight into social protection matters. We also appreciate their patience and flexibility throughout the process.

Our non-state partners were also instrumental in the development of this important document. My sincere gratitude also goes to the heads of all the international, regional and local NGOs that provided value inputs during the stakeholder engagement and consultation process: Lesotho Red Cross, Help Lesotho, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision Lesotho, Women and Law in Southern Africa- Lesotho (WLSA), National AIDS Commission (NAC), Lesotho National Federation of Organisations of the Disabled (LNFOD), Christian Health Association of Lesotho, Lesotho Age Network and Maseru Women Senior Citizens Association.

My special thanks also go to all the government ministries and agencies, as well as all the national committees that participated in the shaping of this strategy, namely, Agriculture and Food Security, Development Planning, Education and Training, Finance, Forestry and Land Reclamation, Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation, Health, Labour and Employment, Law and Justice, Police and Public Safety, Disaster Management Authority (DMA), Food and Nutrition Coordination Office (FNCO), Basotho Enterprises Development Cooperation (BEDCO) and the National OVC Coordination Committee (NOCC). Their contributions to the discussions triggered by the successive drafts of the strategy were indeed insightful and informative.

I am also deeply grateful to all who contributed to the development of this strategy and I urge everyone to work hard and selflessly to convert all the ideas and aspirations that it articulates into reality.

‘Mants’enki Mphalane (Mrs.)
Principal Secretary Social Development

1.0 Executive Summary

The political and financial commitment to social protection in Lesotho is high. Social protection as a tool holds the potential to reduce poverty and inequality among its direct beneficiaries but can also promote economic growth within local communities and improve social cohesion and the endorsement of human rights. To achieve such wide-ranging impact, the social protection system needs to extend beyond providing direct relief from deprivation (protect). It needs to include measures that avert deprivation (prevent); that promote real capabilities and income (promote); that address concerns of social equity and exclusion (transform), and; that can easily respond to shocks (shock-response).

1.1 Background

1.1.1. Poverty and vulnerability

Lesotho remains one of the most unequal countries in the world. Almost half of the population of Lesotho is poor (49.7 percent) and almost one quarter (24.1 percent) is extremely poor, living below the food poverty line. A strong rural and urban divide marks poverty with more than 80 percent of the poor living in rural areas. Children are most at risk to poverty with 65 percent being multidimensionally poor and over one quarter being orphan. Health and education are less accessible for poor households living in rural areas. Unemployment, especially among rural youth, is high, and almost a quarter of the population has HIV/AIDS. Lesotho is highly vulnerable to shocks, such as droughts, food price increases and the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The ability of households to cope with shocks varies by their level of poverty and the vulnerabilities that they face.

1.1.2. Review of social protection landscape

This costed ten-year National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) 2021-2031 builds on the achievements and lessons learned of the NSPS I. When reviewing the life cycle approach adopted by the NSPS I, the core social assistance programmes focused on reducing adult poverty through the universal Old Age Pension and much less on reducing child poverty, while children in Lesotho are most at risk to poverty. Moreover, social protection has not been inclusive or gender-sensitive and has created insufficient opportunities for the working age population, in particular unemployed rural youth. The main complementary social protection programme, the Tertiary Bursary, does not target the poor and benefits more affluent youth. The COVID-19 pandemic, which added to the already persistent climatic shocks and hazards in Lesotho, has shown that the social protection system is insufficiently able to promote resilience and respond rapidly to shocks.

The NSPS I focused predominantly on protective measures through core social assistance programmes that provide relief for poor and vulnerable households, and only limitedly created synergy with programmes in other sectors to enhance resilience (prevention), promote capabilities and livelihoods (promotion), promote social equity and inclusion of all Basotho (transformation) and use social protection tools to prevent and respond to shocks (shock-response). A comprehensive social protection plus approach, that encompasses all these elements, requires strong synergy. However, due to poor coordination between ministries involved in social protection programming, limited synergy has been created.

Under the NSPS I, operational systems have improved due to enhanced integration and harmonisation between social assistance programmes and expansion of the National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA) as a poverty-targeting tool. However, integration and harmonisation is still marked by significant gaps, the NISSA remains under-capacitated, social assistance programmes are over reliant on cash in transit, not all implementation mechanisms are fully automated and digitised, and poor case management and grievance response mechanisms are in place.

The government has made significant investments in social protection under the NSPS I, spending 8.4 percent of GDP on social protection in 2020/21, of which 3.2 percent is spent on core social assistance programmes. However, the government has not been able to meet the NSPS I target of spending 3.9 percent of GDP on core social assistance programmes, casting doubt on its financial feasibility.

1.2. Strategic framework

The NSPS II defines social protection as the set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation. It envisions a decent and dignified life for all Basotho, free from poverty and hunger, that allows them to share in the benefits of national economic growth, with the objectives to **(1) expand core protective social protection programmes that provide relief from deprivation for poor and vulnerable households across all life cycles; (2) strengthen the preventive, promotive, transformative and shock-responsive capabilities of social protection by creating synergies between programmes through strong cross-sector coordination, and; (3) innovate and harmonise implementation systems for efficient, effective and accountable delivery of social protection programmes.**

1.3. Implementation plan

To achieve this, the NSPS II presents an implementation plan structured around the life cycle approach, subdivided into five life cycle stages (pregnancy and early childhood, school age children, youth, working age population, old age population) and two risk and vulnerability factors that can impact citizens at any life cycle stage (disability and shock). For each of the seven stages in the life cycle, the implementation plan presents the planned social protection programmes categorised into protective, preventive, promotive, transformative and shock-responsive measures to realise the comprehensive social protection plus approach. The implementation plan:

- Promotes **child sensitive social protection**, by expanding the Child Grant and increasing its benefit amount, enhancing complementary protective and promotive measures focused on improving access to health, nutrition and education for pregnant women, infants and children, and highlighting improved child protection services. .
- Strengthens the **preventive capacity of social protection**, by introducing social security benefits for private sector workers, in line with the draft Lesotho National Social Security Policy (LNSSP), in the formal and informal sectors, strengthening informal social security mechanisms across the life

cycle and conducting a feasibility study in a national health insurance scheme.

- Improves the **promotive capabilities of social protection**, by creating capabilities and livelihoods for ultra-poor and poor households, including those who receive and do not receive social assistance, with a focus on youth. Key interventions include pro-poor and nutrition-sensitive education and bursary programmes, an expanded and strengthened inter-ministerial Community Development model that promotes livelihoods, market access and market development and piloting a pro-poor and gender-sensitive Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme linked to skill-building.
- Strengthens the **transformative power of social protection**, by making social protection more inclusive and gender-sensitive: inclusive by launching the pro-poor Disability Grant and improving access to healthcare, education, skill-building and employment opportunities for people with disabilities who are able to work; gender-sensitive by proposing programmes that prevent and respond to domestic and gender-based violence, as well as by introducing more gender-sensitive work sectors and a minimum quota for women to participate in the Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme pilot.
- Improves **shock-responsive social protection**, by reforming Public Assistance into a pro-poor shock-responsive programme to vertically or horizontally scale up social assistance programmes in response to shock, complemented by enhanced focus on linking disaster risk reduction and social protection.

1.4. Implementation framework

Proper and well-defined implementation arrangements are critical for ensuring the effectiveness of any social protection system. The NSPS II proposes a National Social Protection Act to strengthen the rights-based approach to social protection. To improve cross-sector coordination, the strategy proposes a reformed inter-ministerial coordination mechanism, consisting of National Social Protection Coordination Committees at Cabinet, Principal Secretary and Director level and three working groups around social assistance,

social security and livelihoods at national level, complemented by social protection committees at district and community council level. National and subnational coordination is logistically and technically supported by a Social Protection Coordination Secretariat led by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) and the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE). The strategy furthermore underlines the importance of allocating resources to coordination, appointing designated focal points to attend meetings, and enhancing capacities of staff at all levels. At subnational level, coordination and harmonisation is further facilitated by the decentralisation agenda of the government.

The NISSA further supports the implementation of social protection programmes. Key steps to strengthen the NISSA include its expansion to urban households, improving routine updating and more regular updating through robust data sharing protocols, feedback loops and linkages with programme case management, which is of particular importance for disaster response, and conducting advocacy and training to potential users. As NISSA will always remain subject to errors as all such systems are, it needs to be complemented by strong grievance response mechanisms for programme beneficiaries to report inclusion and exclusion errors.

To strengthen programme automation, all social assistance programmes need to be included under the Management Information System for Social Assistance (MISSA) and digital applications need to be developed for all operational processes, from targeting to enrolment, payment, case management and grievance response. The strategy underlines the importance of further promoting the integration and harmonisation of social assistance programmes, shifting to digital payment to improve accountability, transparency and financial inclusion and facilitate monthly instead of quarterly payments, as well as setting up strong case management and grievance response mechanisms with various grievance channels.

1.5. Financing

Social protection spending under the NSPS II is **(1) more cost efficient based on the implementation framework defined in this strategy; (2) more child-sensitive, as children in Lesotho are most at risk to poverty, and; (3) increasingly directed towards programmes with a proven impact on reduction of poverty and inequality.** The total budget for core social assistance programmes covering each life cycle stage is M1,110 million in 2021/22, which is very similar to the 2020/21 budget, and increases to M1,443 million in 2024/2025. The strategy proposes to explore the feasibility of a National Social Assistance Fund to allow for more flexibility in the budget allocation between social assistance programmes to better and more rapidly respond to the changing needs and vulnerabilities of Basotho citizens. To enhance the ability of social protection to respond to shocks, a diversified shock-responsive funding model needs to be installed.

This strategy has the following complementary documents:

- Detailed action plan that provides a more detailed costed implementation plan, describing programmes and activities by life cycle stage, with a clear timeline, division of roles, resources, risks and mitigation measures, and costing.
- Monitoring and evaluation framework, system and tools.

2.0 Introduction

2.1. Context

Social protection can be defined as the set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation. Lesotho has long recognised the importance of social protection in ensuring the well-being of its citizens, especially the most poor and vulnerable. The political and financial commitment to social protection in Lesotho has been unprecedented by any African country.

Lesotho developed its first strategic framework for social protection in 2014. This second costed National Social Protection Strategy 2021-2031 (NSPS II) builds on this strategic framework and provides strategic direction for the coming five years to considerably expand and strengthen the social protection system within the current financial and political landscape of Lesotho. The strategy describes the rationale for social protection, the background against which the new strategy is developed, including a detailed assessment of the current poverty, vulnerability, and social protection landscape in Lesotho, followed by an implementation plan and framework for the coming five years. A costed five-year action plan and monitoring and evaluation framework and tools accompany the strategy.

2.2. Rationale

Social protection is a key tool for the government to reduce poverty, promote more equal opportunities and make Basotho citizens more resilient to shock. Sound socioeconomic analyses conducted by the World Bank indicate that social protection has contributed to lowering Lesotho's poverty and inequality indicators. Between 2002 and 2017, the poverty rate declined with 7 percentage points from 56.6 percent to

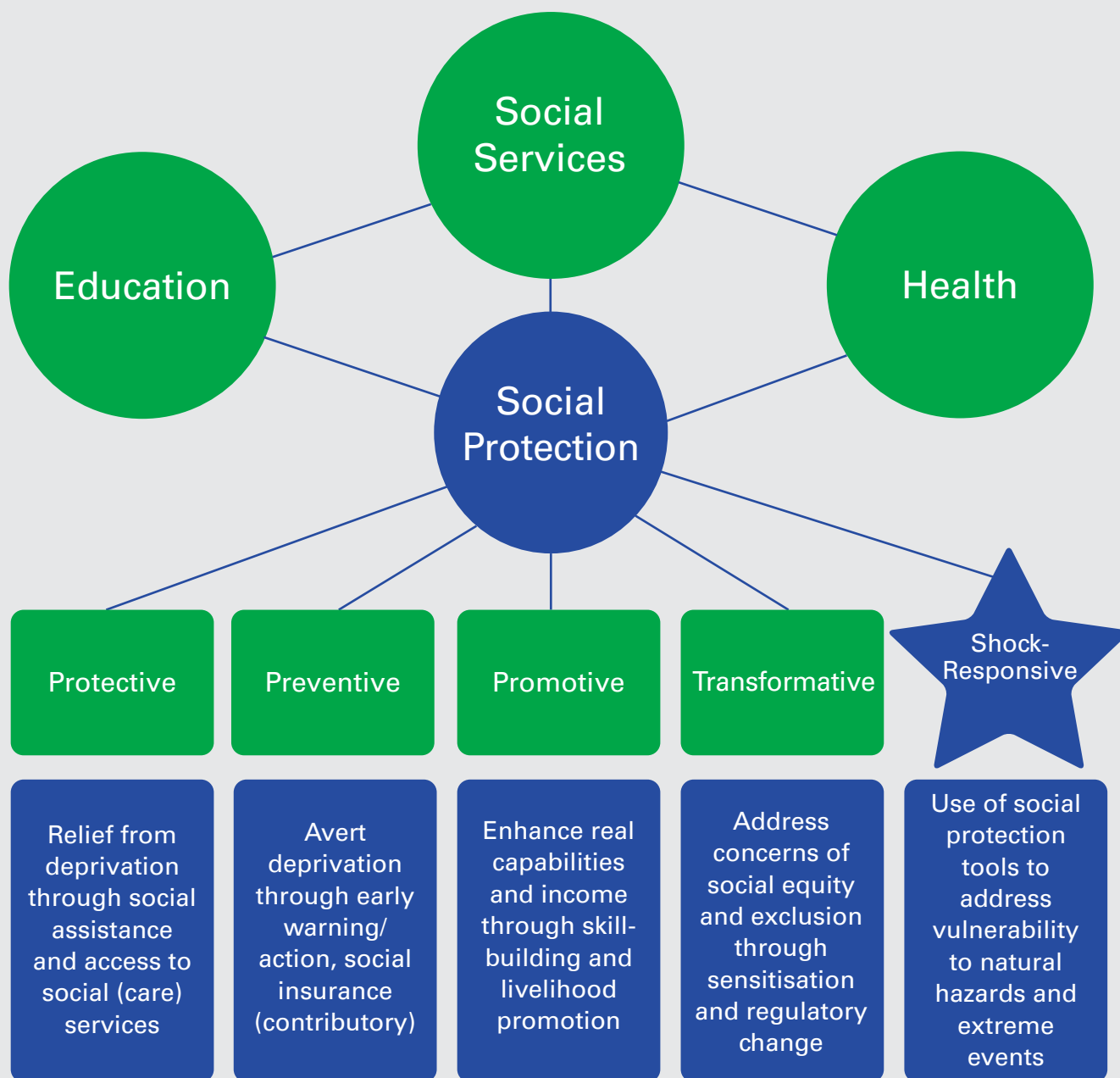
49.7 percent, and the extreme poverty rate with 10 percentage points from 34.1 to 24.1. In the same time period, the equality in Lesotho also improved, with a Gini coefficient¹ that decreased from 51.6 to 44.9 points. The analysis of the World Bank shows that social protection, and in particular social assistance, significantly contributed to these positive trends (World Bank, 2019).

Social protection as a tool not only holds the potential to reduce poverty and inequality among its direct beneficiaries but can also promote economic growth within local communities and improve social cohesion and the realisation of human rights. Thus, while the primary objective of social protection is to promote the living standards of poor and vulnerable households, a comprehensive and well-designed social protection system can be seen as a sound economic investment that can promote social and political stability. To achieve such wide-ranging impacts, a social protection system needs to extend beyond providing direct relief from deprivation (protect) and move to a comprehensive social protection plus approach. Such an approach also includes measures that avert deprivation (prevent); that promote real capabilities and income (promote); that address concerns of social equity and exclusion (transform), and; that can easily respond to shocks (shock-response). Figure 1 describes this comprehensive social protection plus approach in more detail.

¹ A country where all residents earn the same income would have a Gini coefficient of 0 percent. A country where one resident earns all wealth, would have a Gini coefficient of %100.

Conceptual framework for a comprehensive social protection plus approach

Social protection interventions, as part of the social services delivered by a government, can be protective, preventive, promotive, transformative, shock-responsive or a combination thereof. A comprehensive social protection plus approach combines these different elements, which requires a strong cross-sectoral approach, where a wide variety of ministries play a role in connecting core and complementary social protection programmes across the life cycle.



Source: adapted from Devereux and Wheeler, 2004

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for a comprehensive social protection approach.

At the household level, a comprehensive social protection plus approach can promote the well-being, the health, nutrition and education outcomes, and the livelihoods and productivity of poor and vulnerable households, breaking the inter-generational transmission of poverty. At the community level, social protection plus can encourage demand for local goods, create

local employment, stimulate local markets, build community assets and strengthen social cohesion. At the national level, a comprehensive social protection system can reduce poverty and inequality, encourage domestic consumption and economic growth, strengthen social and political stability and improve the investment climate of Lesotho.

3.0 Background

This chapter describes the current poverty, vulnerability and social protection landscape of Lesotho and assesses how social protection has been able to address poverty and vulnerability. It provides a background against which the new strategic framework has been developed, which is presented in the next chapter.

3.1. Poverty, vulnerabilities and shock

3.1.1. Poverty

To better grasp how social protection is able to respond to the challenges that poor and vulnerable households face throughout their lifecycle, it is important to understand the poverty and vulnerability context of Lesotho. Lesotho remains one of the most unequal countries in the world and almost half of the population of Lesotho is poor (49.7 percent), living below the national poverty line set at Lesotho Maloti (M) 648.88 per adult per month. Almost one quarter (24.1 percent) is extremely poor, living below the food poverty line.

A strong rural and urban divide marks poverty. Overall, 80 percent of Lesotho's poor and 84 percent of its extreme poor live in rural areas, while government services in rural areas are less readily available. The Rural Foothills region has the highest absolute number of poor, accounting for one third of Lesotho's poor. Across regions, the lower poverty constituencies are located closer to the South African border, due to trade opportunities with South Africa (World Bank, 2019).

Poverty is defined based on demographic and household characteristics. Larger households, households with a higher dependency ratio², households where the household head has a lower educational attainment, female-headed households, households that experience the death of a household head, and households reliant on agriculture or without employment have a greater likelihood to live in poverty (GoL, 2016). Children are most at risk to poverty: 65 percent of all children aged 0 to 17 years are multidimensionally poor, deprived in three or more dimensions of well-being (UNICEF, 2018).

3.1.2. Vulnerabilities across the life cycle

Households face different social and economic vulnerabilities depending on their life cycle stage:

1- Pregnancy and early childhood: Pregnant women and infants face high mortality rates, with a maternal mortality rate of 1,024 per 100,000 births, an infant mortality rate of 62.4 per 1000 live births and an under-five mortality rate of 76.2 per 1000 children (UNICEF, 2020). In addition, 77 percent of children aged 0 to 23 months receive inadequate nutrition intakes and 34.2 percent of children are stunted, showing impaired growth and development (UNICEF, 2018). At the same time, delivery and uptake of antenatal and postnatal healthcare, nutrition support programmes and early childhood care and development (ECCD) are inadequate, especially in poor and rural areas (Lesotho BoS, 2019).

2- School age and children: Children from poor and rural households struggle to complete primary school and transition to secondary, with 30 percent of poor children attending lower secondary education and 3 percent attending upper secondary education, and lowest rates for herding boys (Lesotho BoS, 2019). The quality of the education system in rural areas is also much lower than in urban areas, further contributing to the rural and urban divide. Furthermore, over one quarter of children under 18 years is orphan, a legacy of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Orphans, homeless children, children living in rural areas, and children who are victim of child labour, early marriage or early and unintended pregnancy are most vulnerable to poverty and various forms of violence (UNICEF, 2018).

3- Youth: Progression to tertiary education for poor youth is extremely low, with less than 1 percent attending tertiary education, and lowest rates for herding youth (Lesotho BoS, 2019). Unemployment among youth is high, especially within poor and rural households, for young women and for youth with low educational attainment, while youth skill-building, entrepreneurship and employment programmes benefit high-skilled youth residing in urban areas (World Bank, 2020).

² Number of children and elderly compared to the working age household members.

4- Working age and population: Vulnerabilities for the working age population include unemployment and dependency on low-productivity and seasonal jobs in agriculture. As the lean season coincides with scarcity of casual labour opportunities, there is a distinct seasonality to the cycle of extreme rural poverty. Another vulnerability is falling opportunities for migration and remittances, further compounded by the recent COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020). In addition, 83 percent of women have experienced gender-based or domestic violence (GIZ, 2018), almost a quarter of the population has HIV/AIDS (World Bank, 2020), and 3 percent struggle with mental health (WHO, 2014).

5- Old age population: The elderly population is faced with increased fragility and susceptibility to illness, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, with limited access to health and skilled care facilities for the poor elderly. In addition, the elderly are often responsible for care for orphaned grandchildren without a reliable source of income until the age of 70, when they receive the Old Age Pension. Elderly are faced with discrimination and violence, and those who are able to work with exclusion from the labour market (MoSD & HAI, 2014).

6- Disability: People with disabilities or chronic illness, including mental health issues, lack access to good quality education, healthcare and social services. There are no systems in place to monitor and ensure inclusive education. For health and social services, available resources, personnel, equipment and referral mechanisms are insufficient, with minimal provision of assistive devices and no standard of care provisions in place for emerging care institutions. Moreover, people with disabilities or chronic illness are often excluded at the work floor, have only limited access to government vocational and employment programmes, are not supported by a social grant and are thus more likely to fall into poverty. Political participation for people with disabilities remains challenging (MoSD, 2019).

3.1.3 Shock

Lesotho is increasingly affected by shocks and emergency situations. Shocks can be environmental, economic or health-based, and can be idiosyncratic (affecting one household) or covariate (affecting a community). The most significant environmental shocks in Lesotho are severe drought and floods. More than 70 percent of households experienced the effects of droughts or floods in

the last five years and close to 30 percent experienced these shocks in the last year. Other environmental shocks include hailstorms, loss, theft or death of livestock, and crop diseases and pests. The most important economic shocks are food price increases, resulting from environmental shocks, and falling trade and labour movements with SACU countries. Significant health shocks include the death or illness of a household head, with HIV/AIDS playing a major role, and the current COVID-19 health crisis (World Bank, 2019).

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing closure of borders and paralysis of economic activity, has posed serious health risks, worsened urban and rural unemployment – especially among youth -, reduced migration and remittances, affected purchasing power, food availability and prices, limited school feeding and learning due to closure of schools, and further increased food insecurity, compounded by the recent drought. The pandemic has worsened overall poverty statistics, in particular for children, pushing already poor and vulnerable households further into poverty and increasingly forcing them to resort to negative coping mechanisms, including early marriage and ensuing early pregnancy. It has also adversely affected new groups of Basotho, who were not living in poverty before, such as informal sector workers, urban populations and migrants (UNICEF, 2020e).

The ability of households to cope with shocks varies by their level of poverty and the vulnerabilities that they face. Based on poverty analyses, households with low levels of education, with a lot of children, with orphaned children, who are reliant on rain-fed agriculture, on seasonal or temporary jobs or who are unemployed, will suffer more potentially devastating impacts from a shock than households without those characteristics. Moreover, poor households are often hit by multiple shocks, further depleting assets and reinforcing their poverty status. Shocks may result in negative coping mechanisms among already poor and vulnerable households. For instance, households may be forced to reduce their nutritious food intake, take their children out of school, put their children to work or marry their children off, further aggravating intergenerational poverty. Thus, understanding the level of poverty, the life cycle vulnerabilities and the shocks that different households in Lesotho face is important to design an effective social protection system that can enhance household resilience to shock and

support households once a shock has occurred (World Bank, 2019).

3.2. Review of existing social protection landscape

This review of the existing social protection landscape in Lesotho is a summary of the analytical report, which was prepared using recent analyses, including recent reviews of the World Bank and UNICEF, and additional consultations with the Government of Lesotho.

3.2.1. Legislative framework

Section 26 (2) of the Constitution of Lesotho stipulates, "The state shall take appropriate measures in order to promote equality of opportunity for the disadvantaged groups in the society and enable them to participate fully in all spheres of public life." To fulfil this stipulation, Lesotho has signed various international conventions and has developed a number of laws and bills that provide some protection to vulnerable groups across some life cycle stages. However, there is no overarching legal framework in place to protect vulnerable groups across all life cycle stages through social protection.

3.2.2. Macro-policies

In 2012, the government already underlined its commitment to promote social protection as a key priority in the fight against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion in the four-year National Strategic Development Plan I (NSDP I). The NSDP II for the period 2019-2023 reiterates this importance of social protection, while stressing the need to move beyond the provision of protection and improve the preventive, promotive and transformative capabilities of social protection that can strengthen resilience, enhance capabilities and livelihoods, and address concerns of social equity and exclusion. The NSDP II also underlines the importance of improving the efficiency of the social protection system, especially in terms of strengthening its links to emergency response (GoL, 2019). The National Resilience Strategic Framework (NRSF) for the period 2017-2030 seeks to bring social protection and disaster risk management under one umbrella. It underlines the importance of targeting households for social protection based on resilience assessments, including areas experiencing high food insecurity, and using social protection targeting tools for humanitarian and development response (GoL, 2017). The Lesotho Food and Nutrition Security

Strategy 2019-2023 stresses the potential of social protection in further enhancing malnutrition and stunting. Key interventions identified in the strategy include providing social assistance to pregnant mothers and mothers of infants, linking social assistance to social and behavioural change education/communication, homestead gardening and nutrition interventions, enhancing nutrition through universal school feeding, community development, agriculture-based livelihood interventions and public work programmes targeted at poor households (FNCO, 2019).

3.2.3. National Social Protection Strategy 2015-2019

One of the first steps in developing a social protection strategic framework was the formulation of the NSPS I for the period 2015-2019 (GoL, 2014). The NSPS I envisioned "a decent and dignified quality of life for all Basotho, free from poverty and hunger, that allows them to share in the benefits of national economic growth." The NSPS I proposed a life cycle approach as the key strategy for coordinating social protection programmes across the life cycle. According to the life cycle approach, all Basotho citizens are exposed to different risks and vulnerabilities throughout the course of their life, demanding different social protection interventions. The NSPS I lifecycle approach was structured around four key life-cycle stages (pregnancy and early childhood, school age and youth, working age, and old age) and two risk and vulnerability factors that may impact citizens at any life stage (disability and shock) (GoL, 2019).

Figure 2 presents the core and complementary social protection programmes currently implemented across the different life cycle stages. As youth face considerably different vulnerabilities than school age children, these two life cycle stages have been separated and each are given their own life cycle stage. Annex A summarises the specific objectives, eligibility criteria, coverage, benefit amounts and budgets of the main programmes currently implemented.

Disability, Chronic Illness and Shock



	Pregnancy/early childhood	School age children	Youth	Working age	Old age	Disability	Shock
PROTECTIVE Social assistance	Pro-poor child grant covering infants (CGP) (MoSD)	Pro-poor child grant (CGP) (MoSD)	Unreformed public assistance (PA) (MoSD)	Unreformed public assistance (PA) (MoSD)	Universal old age pension (OAP) (MoF)	Unreformed public assistance (PA) (MoSD)	First pilots in scaling existing social assistance programmes in response to shock (DMA, MoSD)
Complementary protective measures	Unreformed public assistance (PA) (MoSD) Free primary healthcare** (MoH) Nutrition support* Social care services (MoSD)	Free primary healthcare** (MoH) Social care services (MoSD)	Public works* (MoFLR) Free primary healthcare** (MoH)	Public works* (MoFLR) Free primary healthcare** (MoH)	Free primary healthcare** (MoH) Social care services (MoSD)	Free primary healthcare** (MoH) Social care services (MoSD)	Disaster management (DMA) Free primary healthcare** (MoH) Emergency food support (FNCO, development partners)
PREVENTIVE Social security	Maternity benefit for public servants only (MoLE)			Sickness benefit for public servants only (MoLE)	Retirement benefit for public servants only (MoLE)	Employment injury benefit for public servants only (MoLE)	First steps to link disaster risk reduction and social protection (DMA, MoSD) Survivor benefit for public servants only (MoLE)
PROMOTIVE Complementary promotive measures	ECCD programme for poor and vulnerable children (MoET)	Free primary education (MoET) Universal school feeding (MoET) OVC-bursary and feeding of bursary recipients (MoSD)	Tertiary bursary* (MoDP) Youth skill building, entrepreneurship and employment programmes* (MoET, MoGYSR)	Community development (MoSD) Agricultural production and employment programmes* (MoAFS, MoSBDCCD)		Inclusive education*** (MoET) Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for people with	
TRANSFORMATIVE Complementary transformative measures		Child protection services in line with Child Protection and Welfare Act 2011 (CPWA) (MoSD)			Sensitisation for the protection of older persons (MoSD)		

Figure 2. Current social protection programmes across the life cycle. Source: data provided by Government of Lesotho.

*Not pro-poor, **Poor access in rural areas, ***Not monitored.

3.2.4. Reaching the most vulnerable across the life cycle

To what extent has the NSPS I been able to design and implement an integrated set of core social protection programmes that reduce vulnerabilities across the life cycle? Figure 3 summarises the main findings and gaps in the provision of core and complementary social protection across the different life cycle stages, which are further categorised into protective, preventive, promotive, transformative and shock-responsive measures.³

When reviewing the life cycle approach, the core social assistance programmes under the NSPS I focused on reducing adult poverty through the Old Age Pension and much less on reducing child poverty, while children in Lesotho are most at risk to poverty. Recipients of the Old Age Pension may care for their grandchildren, thereby indirectly contributing to reduction of child poverty. However, programmes that directly target poor children, such as the Child Grant and the OVC-Bursary, received limited budget. Ultra-poor households with five or more children receive a Child Grant of M250 per month, which equals

M50 per child, while an older person receives an Old Age Pension of M850 per month, which is sixteen times higher than the Child Grant benefit amount per child. This deviates from the global norm.⁴ Furthermore, social protection insufficiently focused on supporting people with disabilities (inclusive), on ensuring that women are protected and given equal prospects (gender-sensitive) and on providing sustainable opportunities for the working age population, in particular unemployed rural youth. Moreover, the main complementary social protection programme, the Tertiary Bursary, is not targeted at the poor and benefits more affluent youth.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which added to the already persistent climatic shocks and hazards in Lesotho, has shown that Lesotho's social protection system is insufficiently able to promote resilience and respond rapidly to shocks, with no shock-responsive social assistance programme in place and gaps in disbursement of funds and implementation of the integrated framework for early warning and early action and the scalability framework for social assistance in response to shocks.

Analysis of social protection across the life cycle per type of social protection				
	Protective	Preventive	Promotive	Transformative
Pregnancy and early childhood	Pregnant women and infants from poor households lack access to antenatal and postnatal healthcare and nutrition support. ^{1,7}	Poor and vulnerable pregnant women who work do not receive a maternity benefit. A maternity benefit is an employer's liability, which may lead to exclusion of women at the workforce. ⁴	Pre-school children from poor and rural households lack access to good quality and nutrition-sensitive ECCD. ⁷	No transformative measures are in place that protect the rights of pregnant women and young children. ⁷
School Age	Child Grant expanded in coverage, but over 70 percent of ultra-poor children are not yet covered. The real value of the benefit amount has decreased with more than 30 percent due to inflation since 2012, further compounded by rising food prices. ¹		OVC-Bursary expanded, but coverage remains inadequate and bursary amount does not cover all costs. ¹	Child protection systems have been strengthened in line with CPWA, but are under capacitated. Social protection insufficiently protects homeless children in rural and urban areas and victims of child labour, early marriage and early pregnancy. ^{3,7}

³ Adapted from Devereux and Wheeler (2004) – see the full theoretical framework in Figure 1.

⁴ The global norm is that an old age pension is four times higher than a child grant.

	Protective	Preventive	Promotive	Transformative
Youth	Current public work programmes insufficiently benefit the poor. No seasonal employment guarantee scheme is in place, and no government funding has been allocated to such a scheme. ^{1,2}		Tertiary Bursary spending is high, but as it is based on merit does not benefit the poor. Skill-building, employment and entrepreneurship programmes do not target poor unemployed and unskilled youth living in rural areas. ²	Limited transformative measures are in place that protect the rights of youth. ⁷
Working Age	Current public work programmes insufficiently benefit the poor. No seasonal employment guarantee scheme is in place, and no government funding has been allocated to such a scheme. ^{1,2}	No social security schemes cover poor and vulnerable workers. Plans in the draft LNSSP to expand social security for workers might not reach the most poor and vulnerable. ⁴	Current public work programmes do not promote real capabilities and livelihoods. ⁷ Agricultural production and employment programmes are not pro-poor. ²	Limited transformative measures are in place that protect the rights of informal workers and prevent domestic and gender-based violence. ⁷
Old Age	Old Age Pension enjoys strong public support, accounting for 79% of social assistance funding, but is less efficient and effective in reducing poverty than poverty-targeted social assistance. Elderly between 60 to 69 years are not covered. ⁵	Retirement schemes are unavailable for poor and vulnerable workers. Plans in the draft LNSSP to expand retirement benefits might not reach the most poor and vulnerable. ⁴	Elderly who are able to work are excluded at the work floor and no promotive measures are in place to promote their capabilities and livelihoods through government-led programmes. ⁷	Some research and sensitisation campaigns have been conducted to protect older persons from violence, discrimination and exclusion. ⁷
Disability	The launch of the Disability Grant, as proposed in the NSPS I, is planned for 2021, and first steps have been taken to mainstream protection of persons with disabilities across ministries. ⁷	Social security for disability is inadequate. There is no national health insurance in place. ⁴	Promotive measures in place, such as the Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for people with disabilities who are able to work, promote limited capabilities and livelihoods. ⁶	Research improved understanding of exclusion of persons with disabilities, which requires action to be taken. ⁶ Enactment of the Disability Equity Bill strengthens legal protection. ⁷
Shock	No social assistance programme responds to shock. Reform of Public Assistance into a shock-responsive grant received poor political support. ⁸ COVID-19 has shown gaps in disbursement of funds and effective use of the scalability framework for social assistance in response to shocks. ⁹	DMA and MoSD developed an Integrated Policy Framework for Early Warning and Early Action, complemented by training and communication materials, but implementation remains poor. ^{7,10}		

Figure 3. Key findings and gaps in provision of social protection across the life cycle.

Sources: (1) UNICEF (2) , (2020) World Bank (3) , (2020) MoSD (4) , (2020) MoLE (5) , (2020) GoL (6) , (2019) MoSD (7) , (2019) Consultations Government of Lesotho, (8) UNICEF (2020b), (9) GoL and UNICEF (10) , (2020) GoL and UNICEF (2020)

3.2.5. Complementarity through a cross-sector approach

To what extent has the NSPS I been able to create synergy between core social protection programmes and complementary programmes in other sectors through strong coordination between Ministries and key stakeholders? Overall, the NSPS I focused predominantly on protective measures through core social assistance programmes that provide relief for poor and vulnerable households. As Figure 3 shows, social protection under the NSPS I only marginally created synergy with programmes in other sectors to enhance resilience (prevention), promote capabilities and livelihoods (promotion), promote social equity and inclusion of all Basotho (transformation) and use social protection tools to prevent and respond to shocks (shock-response) – the comprehensive social protection plus approach.

One of the main reasons for this lack of synergy is that coordination around social protection between ministries has been inadequate. While the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) is the leading ministry on social assistance and the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) on social security, other ministries implement the largest social assistance and complementary social protection programmes in other sectors. Moreover, the social protection coordination committees and working groups, as proposed under the NSPS I, do not function well. Insufficient human resources have been dedicated to coordination, no dedicated focal points have been appointed within the various ministries to attend the coordination meetings, no secretariat is in place to lead the coordination processes and the proposed working groups per life cycle stage are overburdening (UNICEF, 2020b).

3.2.6. Integrating and harmonising operational systems

To what extent has the NSPS I succeeded in integrating and harmonising operational systems for efficient and effective implementation of social protection programmes? The integration strategy for social assistance programmes implemented by the MoSD has been adopted, which describes integrated processes for training, community sensitisation, targeting, enrolment, recertification, payment and case management and grievance response. Moreover, the Old Age Pension will be moved from the Ministry of Finance to the MoSD, which will further contribute to the envisioned integration and harmonisation (UNICEF, 2020b). However, several challenges persist. Social

protection programmes across ministries are managed at different levels of government. The Ministry of Local Government and Chieftainship Affairs (MoLGC) has not yet been able to decentralise and harmonise processes across ministries. Furthermore, social protection programmes use different targeting methods and systems, without clear recertification mechanisms in place. The National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA) holds the potential to become the central targeting system. However, urban households are not yet included in the system and resources need to be allocated to updating the database and training stakeholders on its use. In addition, social assistance programmes use different payment providers, are over reliant on cash in transit, and do not all use the harmonised digital management information system and digital tools for harmonised programme delivery (UNICEF, 2020b).

3.2.7. Political will and financing for social protection

To what extent has the government been able to reach the financial targets set out in the NSPS I? The government has made significant investments in social protection but has not been able to meet the NSPS I target of spending 3.9 percent of GDP on core social assistance programmes, casting doubt on its financial feasibility. In 2020/21, the government spends 3.2 percent of GDP on core social assistance programmes. Moreover, social assistance spending is uneven across life cycle stages. Almost 80 percent of core social assistance is allocated to the Old Age Pension, compared to only 9 percent to the Child Grant, and more than 75 percent of complementary social assistance is allocated to the regressive Tertiary Bursary. Furthermore, shock-responsive financing has been cumbersome, and no diversified and flexible funding mechanism is in place to respond to shocks and vulnerabilities that households face across the life cycle (UNICEF, 2020e).

3.2.8. Monitoring and evaluation

To what extent has the NSPS I succeeded in strengthening monitoring and evaluation of the social protection strategy and programmes at process and impact levels? Most programmes and systems have not benefitted from rigorous evaluations and the overall strategy did not have a strong monitoring and evaluation framework, monitoring systems and tools in place to track progress (World Bank, 2020).

4.0 Strategic framework

This chapter describes the strategic framework of social protection for the period 2021-2030, including the vision, mission, objectives, approach, target population and principles that guide the implementation plan and framework, presented in the following chapters.

4.1. Vision

Social protection can be defined as the set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing, reducing and eliminating economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation. Through social protection, the Government of Lesotho envisions a decent and dignified quality of life for all Basotho, free from poverty and hunger, that allows them to share in the benefits of national economic growth.

4.2. Mission

To provide comprehensive inclusive social protection that reduces poverty, vulnerability and inequality, increases resilience to risks and shocks, promotes access to services and the labour market, and stimulates economic growth and social stability.

4.3. Objectives

The objectives of the NSPS II over the period 2021-2030 are:

1. To expand core protective social protection programmes that provide relief from deprivation for poor and vulnerable households across all life cycles. The specific objectives include:

1.1. Provide pregnant mothers and mothers of infants from poor households with the Child Grant and complementary health and nutrition support to improve malnutrition and stunting. g.

1.2. Expand the coverage and benefit amount of the Child Grant for ultra-poor and poor households with children and provide them with complementary nutrition and school feeding support to improve nutrition and school enrolment. .

1.3. Pilot a pro-poor and gender-sensitive Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme with a focus on rural unemployed youth and young women from ultra-poor households and minimum quota for youth with disabilities, building community assets, including community ECCD centres.

1.4. Maintain the Old Age Pension for elderly above 70 years and improve accessibility of health services for poor elderly.

1.5. Launch a Disability Grant for people with

disabilities from ultra-poor and poor households, while improving their accessibility to health services.

1.6. Reform Public Assistance into a shock-responsive programme for ultra-poor and poor households experiencing covariate or severe idiosyncratic shock, complemented by rehabilitation-oriented public work programmes and disaster management support.

2. To strengthen the preventive, promotive, transformative and shock-responsive capabilities of social protection by creating synergies between programmes through strong cross-sector coordination. The specific objectives include:

2.1. Launch social security benefits in line with the LNSSP, ensuring access to workers in the informal sector, strengthen informal social security mechanisms and pilot a national health insurance scheme.

2.2. Support Child Grant recipients with home-stead gardening and community lending and saving programmes to promote nutrition and livelihoods.

2.3. Strengthen school enrolment and progression for children from poor households through community ECCD centers, a Child Grant top-up to support secondary school enrolment, an expanded OVC-Bursary for secondary education and a redesigned pro-poor Tertiary Bursary for tertiary education.

2.4. Promote homegrown school feeding by sourcing food from local communities.

2.5. Promote skills development among ultra-poor rural youth, including young women, by targeting an existing youth employment programme towards this group and linking the SEGS pilot to skill-building programmes.

2.6. Strengthen and expand the inter-ministerial Community Development model aimed at graduating social assistance households into sustainable livelihoods, improving accessibility to markets and developing markets.

2.7. Strengthen child protection services and

referral systems to better support vulnerable children, introduce activities to prevent and respond to domestic and gender-based violence and strengthen research and sensitisation regarding the protection of older persons.

2.8. *Implement the Disability Mainstreaming Plan to better protect the rights of people with disabilities expand and monitor inclusive education for children, and ensure more equity at the work floor.*

2.9. *Link disaster risk reduction to social protection to improve resilience to shock and food insecurity.*

2.10. *Implement and capacitate the proposed inter-ministerial coordination mechanism at the national and subnational level, supported by a Social Protection Coordination Secretariat housed within the MoSD and MoLE, further supported by the standing decentralisation agenda.*

3. To innovate and harmonise implementation systems for efficient, effective and accountable delivery of social protection programmes. The specific objectives include:

3.1. *Strengthen NISSA as central planning and targeting tool for social protection programmes by capacitating the NISSA team, expanding NISSA to all households in Lesotho, improving routine and regular updating and training all stakeholders on its use.*

3.2. *To improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, all social assistance programmes need to fall under the Management Information System for Social Assistance (MISSA) and digital applications need to be developed for all operational processes, while exploring data sharing among the MISSA and MIS of complementary social protection programmes.*

3.3. *Implement the integration strategy and operational manual for social assistance programmes in Lesotho.*

3.4. *Accelerate the transition to digital payment delivery of social assistance programmes.*

3.5. *Strengthen grievance response mechanisms through decentral grievance response and a national grievance response hotline.*

3.6. *Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of the NSPS II and the social protection programmes proposed in the implementation plan through a monitoring and evaluation framework with clear process, output and outcome indicators, supported by various monitoring tools and complemented*

by independent impact assessments.

3.7. *Introduce more flexible and shock-responsive financing mechanisms.*

4.4. Link to Sustainable Development Goals

The NSPS II significantly contributes to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Lesotho. The different activities and programmes included in this Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan, among others, support a reduction in poverty and vulnerability, enhancement in food security and health, provision of quality education for all, as well as the creation of decent work and sustainable communities.

4.5. Approach

The NSPS II maintains the life cycle approach to social protection, recognising that all citizens are exposed to different vulnerabilities through the course of their lives, but separates the life cycle of school age children and youth into two life cycles, as these age groups face very different vulnerabilities. To effectively and efficiently address the different economic and social vulnerabilities to poverty and deprivation across the life cycle, the strategy adopts a comprehensive social protection plus approach by expanding and strengthening protective measures across the life cycle and creating synergy with programmes in other sectors to enhance resilience (prevention), promote capabilities and livelihoods (promotion), promote social equity and inclusion of all Basotho (transformation) and use social protection tools to prevent and respond to shocks (shock-response). This strategic direction is in line with the NSDP II, which already stressed the importance of this shift towards more preventive, promotive and transformative social protection (GoL, 2019).

4.6. Target Population

Protective social protection programmes target poor and vulnerable individuals or households, who are classified as ultra-poor or poor by the NISSA and are unable to work or construct a viable livelihood. These individuals or households also gain access to relevant complementary social protection programmes and services in other sectors such as nutrition and health to promote the impact of any financial assistance. Preventive social security programmes target all working citizens, including informal workers, to protect assets, livelihoods and strengthen resilience, reducing the pressure on social assis-

tance. Promotive social protection programmes in sectors such as education, employment and agriculture target individuals or households classified as ultra-poor or poor by the NISSA and who are able to work or have access to land to increase the capabilities, productive capacity and asset base, further reducing pressure on social assistance. Transformative social protection programmes target specific vulnerable groups who are discriminated or excluded from society. Overall, the strategy is child-sensitive, inclusive and gender-sensitive.

4.7. Principles

Partnership – Strong government ownership and leadership at all levels (national, district and community) should provide for the coordination and alignment of other stakeholders (development partners, NGOs, private sector, etc.) in areas where they have comparative advantage.

Needs- and evidence-based – Social protection must be based on evidence and analysis of who needs what type of assistance, when (and for how long), where and why. The programmes have to be driven by needs, not by instruments; and should include an analysis of the cost-effectiveness of alternative interventions within the political and fiscal context.

Beneficiary preferences prioritised – Beneficiaries should be consulted and closely involved in the design, planning and implementation of social protection interventions.

Protect, prevent and promote secure livelihoods – Social protection should protect the poorest and most vulnerable, prevent deprivation for all Basotho citizens, and promote real capabilities and livelihoods to help the poor who are able to work or have access to land graduate out of poverty – thus transforming their lives.

Promote child- and gender-sensitive social protection – The design and implementation of all social protection programmes should incorporate and reflect the particular vulnerabilities and needs faced by children and women and progress towards rendering social protection child- and gender-sensitive should be monitored and reported upon.

Transform social exclusion and marginalisation – Social protection should address social as well as economic vulnerabilities, by protecting disempowered individuals such as people with disabilities, and households affected by TB, HIV and AIDS against discrimination and exploitation.

Shock-responsive – Social protection should be able to respond rapidly to shocks to prevent citizens from falling (deeper) into poverty.

Timely, equitable and reliable transfers – Social protection interventions should be delivered in a timely, reliable, equitable, well-coordinated and sustainable manner.

Rights-based – Social protection should promote the progressive realisation of human rights as articulated in Lesotho's constitution and other relevant national and international legal instruments. **Accountable and transparent** – Social protection should be transparent, incorporating principles of accurate and timely dissemination of information; publicity of instances involving abuse of the system; disclosure of the contract terms and unit costs of government, NGO or private agencies; effective and accessible grievance redress systems; and transparency in eligibility and implementation. Any targeting must be fair, and seen to be fair.

Common systems – Government agencies and partners involved in social protection should commit to a common set of financial management, audit, progress, monitoring and evaluation and reporting processes, consistent with national and international guidelines and indicators.

Sustainable, long-term funding – Government should provide predictable funding to social protection, sustainable over the long term, with development partners providing support as appropriate.

5.0 Implementation Plan

This implementation plan is structured around the life cycle approach. For each stage in the life cycle, it presents the planned social protection programmes, categorised into protective, preventive, promotive, transformative and shock-responsive measures to realise the planned comprehensive social protection plus approach, where a wide variety of ministries play a role in connecting core and complementary social protection programmes across the life cycle to enhance protection, resilience, livelihoods, equity and shock-response. The action plan, to be developed once the strategy is approved, will provide the detailed costed implementation plan, describing programmes and activities by life cycle stage, with a clear timeline, division of roles, resources, risks and mitigation measures and costing.

5.1. Pregnancy and early childhood

Expected outcomes and links to SDGs: Pregnant women and infants from poor households are faced with high maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, and stunting, and oftentimes, pregnant women and mothers of infants from poor households cannot access the required health and nutrition support to improve their health and nutrition outcomes. The objectives of social protection is thus to address these challenges and to enhance the health and nutritional outcomes of pregnant and lactating women and their infants, thereby contributing to improved nutrition (SDG 2) and healthy lives and promotion of well-being for all ages (SDG 3).

Priority	Key social protection interventions for pregnancy and early childhood	
1.	Expand Child Grant to all pregnant women and mothers of infants from ultra-poor and poor households to improve malnutrition and stunting (MoSD)	Protective
2.	Launch maternity benefit and strengthen informal social security mechanisms for female workers (MoLE)	Preventive

Figure 4. Key social protection interventions for pregnancy and early childhood.

5.1.1. Expand Child Grant to all pregnant women and mothers of infants from poor and ultra-poor households

All pregnant women and mothers of children under the age of 2 years from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2) should receive the Child Grant of M150 per month indexed to inflation to improve maternal and infant health and reduce malnutrition and stunting over the first 1000 days. The Child Grant needs to go hand in hand with social and behavioural change communication (SBCC) to educate recipients on the importance of spending the grant on costs related to healthcare and nutrition in the first 1,000 days of the infant's life.

5.1.2. Launch maternity benefit and strengthen informal social security mechanisms

All women in formal employment should have the entitlement to benefit from a legally mandated, standardised maternity benefit, to be administered by the soon to be established National Social Security Organisation (NSSO) and funded

by the envisioned National Social Security Fund (NSSF), a fund where to both employers and employees contribute. This allows pregnant women and mothers to prepare for birth and take care of their new-borns, without facing discrimination at the work floor. Implementation of the maternity benefit is already planned as a priority activity in the draft LNSSP. However, the LNSSP does not describe how this benefit can be made available to female workers in the informal sector, which is important to ensure that the maternity benefit also supports these more poor and vulnerable workers. A strategy should be developed on how to ensure accessibility to informal workers with clear steps and an agreed upon timeframe. Likewise, existing informal social security mechanisms, such as community lending and saving groups, should be strengthened through capacity building or by providing households with a small financial incentive paid from the NSSF to join these community schemes.

5.2. School age children

Expected outcomes and links to SDGs: While the MoSD has been implementing the Child Grant and the bursary for orphans and vulnerable children for several years already, the coverage and scope of these programmes has been insufficient to adequately support the most vulnerable children. To address persistent child poverty and deprivations, improve their nutrition and health, and promote their school enrolment

and progression, a more comprehensive and child-sensitive approach to social protection is needed. Social protection can thereby contribute to reduce poverty of households with children (SDG 1), improve children's nutritional and health outcomes (SDG 2 & SDG 3), ensure inclusive and equitable education (SDG 4) and thereby contribute to a reduction in inequality (SDG 10), particularly between children in urban and rural areas, as well as boys and girls (SDG 5).

Priority	Key social protection interventions for pregnancy and early childhood	
1.	Expand coverage and benefit amount of Child Grant for ultra-poor and poor households with children to improve nutrition and school enrolment (MoSD)	Protective
2.	Expand coverage and amount of OVC-Bursary for Child Grant recipients to improve secondary school progression and introduce Child Grant top-up to support secondary school enrolment (MoSD)	Preventive
3.	Strengthen child protection services and referral systems to better support vulnerable children (MoSD, MoLE, MoLJ, MoPPS, MoH)	Transformative
4.	Promote homegrown school feeding by sourcing food from local communities to improve nutrition, school enrolment and livelihoods (MoET, MoDP, MoAFS)	Protective, Promotive

Figure 5. Key social protection interventions for school age children.

5.2.1 Expand Child Grant

All ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2) with children under 18 years should receive the Child Grant to reduce child malnutrition, improve child health, and increase school enrolment and completion. Priority should be given to ultra-poor households (NISSA 1). As poverty is higher in households with more children and with a higher dependency ratio, the benefit amount needs to be paid out per child, replacing the current phased benefit structure. The benefit amount, which has not been adjusted to inflation since the launch of the programme in 2012, is increased to M120 per month per child indexed to inflation. For households with one child the benefit amount remains the same, while for households with more than one child, the benefit amount considerably increases. Due to this increase in benefit amount, which already triples the budget, the Child Grant may only be able to cover ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) during the five-year strategy period, unless complementary budget is freed up. The Child Grant needs to go hand in hand with SBCC to educate recipients on the importance of spending the grant on costs related to the child's nutrition, health and schooling.

5.2.2. Expand OVC-Bursary and introduce Child Grant Top-up

A higher level of completed education is strongly

A higher level of completed education is strongly correlated with a lower level of poverty. To encourage the transition from primary school to secondary school for children from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2), all Child Grant beneficiary children who enrol in secondary school should receive the OVC-Bursary, which should cover all secondary school related costs, including school meals. Child Grant beneficiary children who are in their final year of primary school should be sensitised on the OVC-Bursary. As the bursary is only accessible for children who are already enrolled in secondary school and is only paid out after the start of the school year (generally in February or March), Child Grant beneficiaries should receive a Child Grant top-up of M1000 indexed to inflation to cover the costs of secondary school enrolment. This top up can be given before the start of the school year, or may be divided into two installments, including a first top-up before the start of the school year and a second top-up halfway through the first school year to discourage drop-out.

5.2.3. Strengthen child protection services and referral systems

All vulnerable children and youth should have access to comprehensive child protection systems. Special attention should be directed to orphans, victims of child labour, early marriage and early and unintended pregnancy, and homeless children in rural and urban areas.

The MoSD should further roll-out child-sensitive case management informed by the Child Protection and Welfare Act (2011), for which MoSD staff has already been trained, needs to set up strong referral and reporting mechanisms between ministries, and should continue its campaigns on ending child labour and child marriage based on the outcomes of the violence against children study. The MoLE, the MoSD, the Ministry of Police and Public Safety (MoPPS) and the Ministry of Law and Justice (MoLJ) need to strengthen the action programme for the elimination of child labour by appointing more labour inspectors and setting up strong reporting and referral mechanisms to ensure that victims of child labour can access child-sensitive case management and, if eligible, can be compensated through social assistance.

5.2.4. Source food for school feeding locally

The universal School Feeding programme is an important programme to further improve malnutrition and school enrolment. Transforming the school-feeding programme into a homegrown school-feeding programme can save importation and transportation costs and can generate livelihood opportunities for local farmers and rural communities. The National School Feeding Policy already encourages the shift from importing food

to sourcing food from local communities, where the National Management Authority would purchase food items from local farmers and caterers in the community for school feeding. A strategy should be developed on how to include small farmers and caterers from ultra-poor and poor households in this programme.

5.3. Youth

Expected outcomes and links to SDGs: The MoDP, MoGYSR and various other ministries have been implementing a range of programmes focused on education and skills building of youths and adolescents, however, most of these programmes being merit-based and/or targeted mostly at high-skilled youths in urban areas. Social protection programming can address challenges faced by youths from poor and rural households, who struggle to progress to secondary and tertiary education and face high unemployment, particularly girls with low educational attainment; and thereby directly contribute to quality education and a promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all (SDG 4) and gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5). Over the longer term, social protection can contribute to productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8), and ultimately a reduction in poverty and inequality (SDG 1 & SDG 10).

Priority	Key social protection interventions for pregnancy and early childhood	
1.	Strengthen pro-poor design features of the Tertiary Bursary (MoDP)	Promotive
2.	Pilot pro-poor and gender-sensitive Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme (SEGS) linked to skill-building for youth from ultra-poor households (MoET, MoFLR, MoSD)	Protective, promotive

Figure 6. Key social protection interventions for youth.

5.3.1. Strengthen pro-poor design of Tertiary Bursary

To encourage the transition from secondary school to tertiary education for children from ultra-poor and poor households, the Tertiary Bursary is reformed into a bursary programme that is based on the means of students to pay for tertiary education, with merit as a secondary targeting criterion. Students with fewer resources receive more bursary support than students with more resources. To this end, the MoDP is currently developing a new means-targeting system, which uses variables from the National Information System for Social Assistance (NISSA) to identify students from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1), poor households (NISSA 2), better-off households (NISSA 3) and well-off households (NISSA 4), complemented by additional variables.

5.3.2. Pilot pro-poor and gender-sensitive Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme for youth

A pro-poor and gender-sensitive Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme for youth should be piloted based on the following principles: (1) Targeting youth with labour capacity from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) using NISSA as targeting method; (2) Prioritising young women from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) based on a minimum quota; (3) Including youth with disabilities based on a minimum quota; (4) Prolonging the work period to at least three months for a minimum of M800 per month indexed to inflation during the lean season between January and June to ensure the impact of the scheme on income generation and poverty reduction. The monthly benefit amount could be supplement-

ed by funding from development partners; (5) Inclusion of public work sectors that benefit the Basotho population and better match the needs of youth, including young women and youth with disabilities. Examples of sectors include environmental conservation, soil and water conservation, rural road maintenance and community-based ECCD centers; (6) Linking the pilot to social assistance, recognising that not all public work participants need to be social assistance recipients; (7) Linking the public work element to skill-building and vocational training activities by giving youth participants access to skill-building and vocational training programmes implemented by the MoET prior to employment. This enhances the employability of young workers beyond the SEGS pilot, and can also improve the quality of the public assets created. For instance, young women participating in community-based ECCD public work programmes are first trained in ECCD, which may result in better skilled young women and higher-quality ECCD centers; (8) Ensuring that all youth workers from ultra-poor households, especially those workers who are living in remote areas or who are less mobile, can physically access the public work site by arranging or reimbursing transportation; (9) Inclusion of special design features for pregnant women

and nursing mothers; (10) Provision of meals as part of public works provided by the FNCO to ensure nutrition-sensitivity.

5.4. Working age

Expected outcomes and links to SDGs: A significant share of Lesotho’s population in working age faces unemployment and dependency on low-productivity and seasonal jobs in agriculture. These labour market challenges are complemented and oftentimes exacerbated by deprivations due to HIV/AIDS and gender-based or domestic violence. Community Development, which aims to link social assistance programmes to complementary activities to promote sustainable livelihoods, is still small, and existing programmes on public work, agricultural production and employment insufficiently benefit workers from poor households. Furthermore, transformative measures to promote socio-economic opportunities for women and prevent gender-based and domestic violence are currently lacking. Social protection can help to address some of these challenges faced by the working age population and thereby contribute to a reduction in poverty and inequality (SGD 1 & 10), a promotion of employment and decent work for all (SDG 8), to achieve gender equality (SDG 5) and to make communities more sustainable (SDG 11).

Priority	Key social protection interventions for Working age	
1.	Strengthen and expand inter-ministerial Community Development model aimed at graduating social assistance households into sustainable livelihoods, improving accessibility to markets and developing markets (various ministries)	Promotive
2.	Launch social security benefits and strengthen informal social security mechanisms (MoLE)	Protective, promotive

Figure 7. Key social protection interventions for working age.

5.4.1. Strengthen and expand inter-ministerial Community Development model

The Community Development model (MoSD, 2016) is aimed at graduating social assistance households into sustainable livelihoods. Setting social protection as the base of the model does not imply that only beneficiaries of social protection schemes will participate in and benefit from the strategies for community development. Likewise, it is important to recognise that individuals may follow different pathways to sustainable livelihoods, and while some may not require social protection support, others will need it on a temporary basis, while others,

those unable to engage in productive activities, permanently require social protection support. The model is based on the realisation that whilst some livelihood and income-generating interventions explicitly target the ultra-poor and poor (NISSA 1 and 2), as they build on existing social assistance programmes (social protection plus), other interventions linked to the removal of supply-side barriers will benefit a wider group of beneficiaries. Supply-side interventions include facilitation of access to markets and developing markets. The Community Development model is portrayed in Figure 8 below.

Community Development model	
Enabling environment and institutions (government)	Developing markets (regions)
	Facilitating access to markets (communities)
	Livelihood programmes for social assistance graduates (households)

Figure 8. Community Development model extracted from MoSD (2016).

The adoption of this holistic model to community development means that several actors from inside and outside government will be important for delivering different aspects of the model and that the model spans across different ministries' mandates and areas of expertise and also relies on NGOs and private sector actors to deliver key functions in the medium to long-term. Thus the idea of the Community Development model is not to start anew, but to better coordinate existing livelihood, agricultural production and employment programmes implemented by various ministries, such as the MoGYSR, the MoAFS, the Ministry of Small Business Development, Co-operative and Marketing (MoSBDCM) and the MoSD, NGOs and private sector actors and ensure that they are guided by the principles and adequately tailored to the local context and beneficiary needs.

Currently, around 50 community livelihood projects, serving around one thousand beneficiaries, are active across the 10 districts of Lesotho. To further strengthen and expand the Community Development model, various steps need to be taken to fully implement the roadmap identified in the Community Development model: (1) Introducing minimum quota for women, people with disabilities and elderly between 60 and 70 years; (2) Strengthening coordination across ministries, NGOs and private sector actors, as well as between the central, district, community and village levels in line with the coordination structures proposed in section 6.2; (3) Developing a multi-stakeholder operational manual, including all ministries involved in livelihood programmes and supply-side interventions; (4) Identifying one pilot location to test the comprehensive Community Development model, moving beyond income-generating and livelihood projects and including interventions aimed at the supply-side and enabling environment, where possible building on and better coordinating existing programmes implemented by different ministries, NGOs and private sector actors; (5) Conducting an impact assessment of the pilot, based on which the model can be expanded to other areas over time.

5.4.2. Launch social security benefits and

strengthen informal social security mechanisms

All workers, whether public or private sector, formal or informal, should have access to social security benefits. This may significantly reduce pressure on social assistance and enhance the resilience of ultra-poor and poor households. The draft LNSSP, developed by a multi-stakeholder task team under leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE), plans for the expansion of social security benefits for all public sector and private sector workers. These benefits will be administered by the soon to be established NSSO and funded by the envisioned NSSF, a fund where to both employers and employees contribute. Benefits include a maternity benefit, sickness benefit, employment injury benefit, survivor benefit and a retirement benefit. However, the LNSSP does not describe how the benefits can be made available to workers in the informal sector, which is important to ensure that the benefits also support these more poor and vulnerable workers (MoLE, 2020). To ensure accessibility of benefits to informal workers, which may be a challenging endeavor, a strategy should be developed with clear steps and an agreed upon timeframe. Likewise, existing informal social security mechanisms, such as community lending and saving groups, should be strengthened through capacity building and by providing households with a small financial incentive paid from the NSSF to join these community schemes.

5.5. Old Age

Expected outcomes and links to SDGs: Most older persons in Lesotho have no reliable source of income until the age of 70, when they receive the Old Age Pension. Retirement schemes are unavailable for most elderly and elderly who are able to work are faced with exclusion from the labour market. In addition, many older persons, especially the poor, often have limited access to health facilities. Social protection can enhance income security in old age and to improve access to health facilities, thereby reducing poverty in old-age (SDG 1) and ensuring that everyone can lead a healthy life (SDG 3).

Priority	Key social protection interventions for old age	
1.	Continue the Old Age Pension for elderly 70 years and older (MoSD)	Protective
2.	Launch retirement benefit and strengthen informal retirement mechanisms (MoLE)	Preventive
3.	Ensure that Community Development benefits elderly (various ministries)	Promotive

Figure 9. Key social protection interventions for the old age.

5.5.1. Continue the Old Age Pension

All elderly aged 70 years and older receive the universal Old Age Pension of M800 per month at a fixed rate to provide elderly with basic income protection. As the Old Age Pension enjoys strong public support, the benefit amount increased quickly, far beyond the M500 that was envisioned in the NSPS I. The programme is currently being moved from the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to the MoSD. Once the move is completed, the MoSD is the leading ministry.

5.5.2. Launch the retirement benefit and strengthen informal retirement mechanisms

All workers, whether public or private sector, formal or informal, should have access to a retirement benefit, as part of a variety of social security benefits. The draft LNSSP plans for the launch of these benefits, to be administered by the to be established NSSO and funded by the envisioned NSSF, a fund where to both employers and employees contribute. The retirement benefit is based on a three-tier system designed to cater for different needs of protection for different categories of people depending on their levels of incomes. The Old Age Pension represents a non-contributory first tier of minimum retirement provision from 70 years that is fully financed by government to cater for those who are not able to purchase retirement services. The second tier caters for those who can contribute and is compulsory and supervised by government. Tier 3 is voluntary and caters for those who can afford to supplement their tier 2 by purchasing commercial insurance benefits. The retirement benefit can protect workers from the moment they retire and thus already offer income protection to elderly below 70 years of age. In addition, the retirement

benefit can in due time reduce pressure on the Old Age Pension budget, as a higher portion of the final retirement benefit will increasingly be drawn from the contributory fund. As explained in section 5.4.3, a strategy needs to be developed by the MoLE to promote the access to retirement benefits for informal workers, while informal retirement schemes need to be strengthened.

5.5.3. Ensure that Community Development benefits elderly

Section 5.4.1 describes the Community Development model in detail. To ensure that the model benefits elderly between 60 and 70 years from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2) who are able to work, the following measures are included: (1) A minimum quota for elderly to participate in the model; (2) Inclusion of livelihood sectors that better match the needs of the elderly between 60 and 70 years.

5.6. Disability

Expected outcomes and links to SDGs:

Persons with disabilities or chronic illness, including mental health issues, continue to lack access to social assistance, adequate quality healthcare, inclusive education, relevant social services, employment opportunities. Social protection can help to build a more inclusive society (SDG 16) with inclusive and equitable education opportunities for all (SDG 4) and inclusive economic growth (SDG 8). Furthermore, by providing access to social protection and healthcare, the activities contribute to a reduction in poverty of persons living with disability or chronic illness (SDG 1) and enhanced health (SDG 3).

Priority	Key social protection interventions for disability	
1.	Launch the Disability Grant for people living with disabilities or chronic illness from ultra-poor and poor households (MoSD)	Protective
2.	Launch social security benefits and strengthen informal social security mechanisms (MoLE)	Preventive
3.	Protect the rights of people with disabilities	Transformative
4.	Install minimum quota for hiring people with disabilities	Transformative

Figure 10. Key social protection interventions for the disability.

5.6.1. Launch pro-poor Disability Grant

Basotho citizens from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2) with disabilities or chronic illness, should receive the Disability Grant, as stipulated in the Disability Equity Act. Initially, the Disability Grant should be targeted with the help of a social assessment and medical assessment. Over the long-term, the grant should move towards the adoption of a solely social model of disability, which relies on a disability assessment methodology that identifies the functional and social needs and ability of persons, rather than the medical model which focuses on the medical severity of disability. The implementation of the Disability Grant requires a multi-sector approach, as the obstacles and challenges which persons with disabilities face are not just health-related, but may extend across sectors (e.g., social, education). To this end, the implementation of the Disability Mainstreaming Plan should be prioritised.

5.6.2. Launch social security benefits and strengthen informal social security mechanisms

All workers, whether public or private sector, formal or informal, should have access to an employment injury benefit in the case of a work-related injury or sickness. The draft LNSSP plans for the launch of this benefit, to be administered by the to be established NSSO and funded by the envisioned NSSF, a fund where to both employers and employees contribute. As explained in section 5.4.2, the MoLE needs to develop a strategy to promote the access to these benefits for informal workers, while informal social security mechanisms need to be strengthened.

5.6.3. Protect the rights of people with disabilities

The rights of people with disabilities should be protected at all times in line with the Disability Equity Act and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. People with disabilities should be included in politics, be able to access and use all public facilities, while inclusion in wider social spheres of life should be promoted. As girls and women with disabilities are more at risk to domestic and gender-based violence, special care should be taken in protecting their rights. The MoSD is the leading ministry, while strong referrals need to be set up with the MoPPS and MoLJ.

5.6.4. Install minimum quota for hiring people with disabilities

A quota should be launched for hiring people with disabilities in the public sector and private sector to promote inclusion of people with disabilities at the work floor. The MoLE is the leading ministry.

5.7. Shock

Expected outcomes and links to SDGs: Basotho are increasingly affected by shocks and emergency situations, typically as a result of droughts, heavy rains and floods; or most recently the COVID-19 pandemic. Shocks can affect individuals and households at any life cycle stage and can be idiosyncratic (at the household level) or covariate (at the community level). Social protection can build resilience to shocks (SDG 9 & SDG 13) and provide needed support during and after a shock to address increased vulnerabilities to poverty and food insecurity (SDG 1 & SDG 2).

Priority	Key social protection interventions for shock	
1.	Scale existing social assistance programmes in response to covariate shocks (MoSD, DMA)	Protective
2.	Scale up Public Assistance into a temporary shock-responsive social assistance programme for ultra-poor and poor households experience covariate or severe idiosyncratic shock (MoSD, DMA)	Protective
3.	Launch social security for survivor households (MoLE)	Preventive

Figure 11. Key social protection interventions for shock.

5.7.1. Scale existing social assistance programmes in response to shock

In response to covariate shock, the reformed Public Assistance programme, together with other types of emergency funding, can be used

to facilitate the vertical and horizontal expansion of other social assistance programmes, in line with the adopted social protection scalability framework (GoL and UNICEF, 2020). The establishment of such scalable safety nets is a measure

to protect Basotho from the negative effects of environmental, economic and health shocks, and can prevent ultra-poor and poor households from further sliding into poverty. The leadership of the implementation of the scalability framework will rest with the DMA and the key implementing partner will be the MoSD.

5.7.2. Scale Public Assistance into a shock-responsive social assistance programme

Ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2) who experience a severe idiosyncratic or covariate shock, and households who have fallen into poverty (NISSA 1 and 2) as a result of a covariate shock, should receive the temporary shock-responsive Public Assistance grant. Priority should be given to ultra-poor households (NISSA 1). The grant can be given as an automatic top-up, if the household already receives another social assistance grant. The reform of Public Assistance has already been proposed in the NSPS I and adopted by the strategy for the integration and harmonisation of social safety nets in Lesotho, which outlines the detailed reform indicators. The MoSD is the leading ministry with the DMA as key partner in identifying triggers of covariate shock. Public Assistance needs to go hand in hand with social and behavioural change communication (SBCC) to educate recipients on the importance of spending the temporary grant on costs related to rehabilitation, healthcare and nutrition.

5.7.3. Launch social security for survivor households

All workers, whether public or private sector, formal or informal, should have access to a survivor benefit, paid out to their household in the case of a fatal accident during work. The draft LNSSP plans for the launch of this benefit, to be

administered by the to be established NSSO and funded by the envisioned NSSF, a fund where to both employers and employees contribute. As explained in section 5.3.2, a strategy needs to be developed to promote the access to these benefits for informal workers, while informal social security mechanisms need to be strengthened.

5.8. Gender

Expected outcomes and links to SDGs: Social protection implementation under the NSPS I did not or only marginally take the role of gender into account. As gender plays a significant role in social protection, with specific challenges identified in this strategy for women and girls in Lesotho, the role of gender should feature in the design and implementation of social protection programmes. Hence, social protection programming should be render gender-sensitive and gender-related challenges should be mainstreamed across the design and implementation of programmes to foster gender equality (SDG 5).

5.9. Complementary programming

Expected outcomes and links to SDGs: To enhance the ability of social protection to achieve outcomes across a range of sectors and support recipients more holistically, linkages to existing, complementary programming activities are proposed. Hence, building linkages to complementary programming activities can help to further enhance the well-being and health of recipients (SDG 3), support nutrition outcomes (SDG 2), help to ensure inclusive education at an early age (SDG 4), build sustainable communities (SDG 11) and support action to combat impacts of disasters and shocks (SDG 13).

Priority	Key social protection interventions for lifecycle	
Pregnancy and early childhood		
1.	Support Child Grant recipients with complementary health and nutrition support tailored to the needs of pregnant/lactating women and infants (MoH, FNCO)	Protective
2.	Improve access to good quality and nutrition sensitive ECCD for Child Grant recipients (FNCO, MoET, SEGS)	Promotive
School age children		
3.	Support Child Grant recipients through nutrition programmes, homestead gardening and community lending and saving programmes to promote nutrition and livelihoods (FNCO, MoAFS, MoSD)	Protective, Promotive
Old Age		
4.	Improve accessibility of health services for poor elderly (MoH, MoSD)	Protective
5.	Strengthen research and sensitisation regarding protection of older persons (MoSD)	Transformative

Priority	Key social protection interventions for lifecycle	
Disability		
Improve accessibility of health services for Disability Grant recipients (MoH)		Protective
Expand and monitor inclusive education for children with disabilities (MoET)		Promotive
Conduct feasibility study for National Health Insurance Scheme (MoF, MoH)		Preventive

Figure 12. Key complementary programming options by lifecycle

5.9.1. Support Child Grant recipients through health and nutrition programmes

All pregnant women and mothers of infants receiving the Child Grant should be supported through complementary nutrition and health programmes, including antenatal and postnatal healthcare services, access to a birth facility or qualified birth attendant, regular growth monitoring, birth registration and vaccination. Creating synergies between the Child Grant implemented by the MoSD and these complementary programmes implemented by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Food and Nutrition Coordination Office (FNCO) can enhance the health and nutritional outcomes of pregnant women and infants from ultra-poor and poor households. This requires investment in the accessibility and quality of these complementary services for Child Grant recipients through NISSA targeting, expansion of healthcare outreach services to rural areas, provision of transport for recipients living in remote areas to access health facilities, and expansion of existing nutrition support programmes to Child Grant recipients in all districts.

Moreover, all children of pre-school age from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2) who receive the Child Grant should be able to access good quality and nutrition sensitive ECCD programmes. To this end, the accessibility, quality and nutrition-sensitivity of ECCD services implemented by the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) must be scaled-up. This requires setting up new ECCD centers in rural and remote areas that provide children with a stimulating environment and supplementary nutrition. The pro-poor and gender-sensitive Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme pilot, described later on this chapter, can contribute to the expansion of community ECCD centers and skilled personnel in rural areas.

Finally, all school-age recipients of the Child Grant should be supported through complementary nutrition programmes implemented by the Food and Nutrition Coordination Office (FNCO) to enhance

the health and nutritional outcomes of children from ultra-poor and poor households.

5.9.2. Support Child Grant recipients through agricultural and financial programmes

Child Grant recipients should be supported through homestead gardening programmes and community lending and saving groups implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS) and other ministries. Such complementary measures enhance the nutrition and health outcomes for pregnant women and infants, while contributing to more sustainable livelihood options that may make the households less dependent on government support. Linkages to such complementary programmes can further improve the nutrition and health outcomes for pregnant and lactating women, infants, and children, while contributing to more sustainable livelihood options that may make the households less dependent on government support.

5.9.3. Improve accessibility of health services for poor elderly

Elderly, especially older persons from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2), should have access to free primary healthcare. This requires investment in the accessibility and quality of these services through expansion of healthcare outreach services to rural areas, provision of transport for ultra-poor and poor elderly living in remote areas to access health facilities, and provision of assistive devices to ultra-poor and poor elderly. Some ultra-poor and poor elderly might need constant healthcare, especially elderly with severe disabilities. This specific group of elderly should be given free access to old age care facilities, while the MoH should invest in the quality and expansion of such facilities across Lesotho.

5.9.4. Strengthen research and sensitisation regarding protection of older persons

Elderly should be protected against discrimination, violence and exclusion by sensitising Basotho citizens on the rights and violation of rights of older persons, in line with the African Union pro-

tol on the rights of older persons. The study on priority ageing issues, conducted in 2014 by the MoSD, should be updated as a basis for designing appropriate sensitisation messages for standing campaigns against the abuse and killing of older persons and complementary interventions.

5.9.5. Improve accessibility of health services for Disability Grant recipients

All recipients of the Disability Grant should have access to adequate healthcare. This requires investment in the accessibility and quality of these services, expansion of healthcare outreach services to rural areas, and provision of assistive devices. Some Disability Grant recipients might need constant healthcare and need access to special care facilities. This specific group should be given free access to such care facilities, while the MoH should invest in the expansion of such facilities across Lesotho and the development of standards to ensure an adequate quality of care.

5.9.6. Expand and monitor inclusive education

Children with disabilities should have access to the right learning environment. The Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (MoET, 2018), based on the principle of child-friendly schools, addresses the needs of learners with disabilities including those with special educational needs. The implementation of the policy should be monitored to

understand to what extent children with disabilities are included and supported from ECCD to tertiary education. Moreover, the geographical reach of schools for children with disabilities should be expanded to all districts in Lesotho, including the rural highlands. In addition, the vocational education offered by the Ithuseng Vocational Rehabilitation Centre should be reviewed and monitored.

5.9.7. Conduct feasibility study into National Health Insurance Scheme

All Basotho citizens should become part of a National Health Insurance Scheme. A feasibility study needs to be conducted to understand how to best develop this scheme in Lesotho, thereby learning from innovative national health insurance models in other countries, such as Ghana or the Philippines. Ghana aims to offer all its citizens access to national health insurance by charging a 2.5 percent national health insurance levy on top of value-added tax (VAT) and of each formal sector worker on top of his or her wage, which is paid into the National Health Insurance Fund. Likewise, the Philippines charges a higher VAT on specific sin products, such as alcohol and tobacco that is paid into the National Health Insurance Fund. In Lesotho, the leading ministries to set up this feasibility study are the MoH and the MoF.

Disability, Chronic Illness and Shock

	Pregnancy/early childhood	School age children	Youth	Working age	Old age	Disability	Shock
Social assistance	Pro-poor Child Grant (IG) (MoSD)	Pro-poor Child Grant (CGP) (MoSD)	Pro-poor and gender-sensitive seasonal employment guarantee scheme pilot (SEGS) for youth (MoFLR, other ministries depending on public work sector)	Free and accessible primary healthcare (MoH)	Universal old age pension (OAP) (MoSD)	Pro-poor Disability Grant (DG) (MoSD)	Scaling social assistance in response to shock (DMA, MoSD)
Complementary protective measures	Free and accessible primary healthcare: ante/postnatal care, birth registration, growth monitoring (MoH)	Free and accessible primary healthcare (MoH)	Homegrown school feeding, Sourcing local food for school feeding (MoET, MoAFS)	Free and accessible primary healthcare (MoH)	Free and accessible primary healthcare (MoH)	Free and accessible primary healthcare (MoH)	Disaster management (DMA)
	Nutrition support and SBCC for all Child Grant recipients (MoH, FNCO, MoSD)	Nutrition support and SBCC for child grant recipients (FNCO, MoSD)	Free and accessible primary healthcare (MoH)		Accessibility of assistive devices and old-age care facilities for ultra-poor and poor elderly in constant need (MoSD, MoH)	Accessibility of assistive devices and special care facilities for disability grant recipients in need (MoSD and MoH)	Free and accessible primary healthcare (MoH)
PREVENTIVE Social Security	Maternity benefit for all workers, strengthen informal systems (MoLE)			Sickness benefit for all workers, strengthen informal systems (MoLE)	Retirement benefit for all workers, strengthen informal systems (MoLE)	Employment injury benefit for all workers, strengthen informal systems, feasibility study national health insurance (MoLE)	Emergency food support (FNCO)
PROMOTIVE	Accessible, good-quality and nutrition-sensitive ECCD programme for poor and vulnerable children (MoET)	Free primary education (MoET)	Pro-poor tertiary bursary (MoDP)	Expanded cross-sector community development model (MoSD, other ministries depending on activities conducted)	Access to Community Development (MoFLR, other ministries depending on public work sector)	Inclusive education (MoET)	Survivor benefit for all workers, strengthen informal systems (MoLE)
	Homestead gardening and community lending/saving for households receiving Child Grant (MoAFS)	Child grant top-up to enrol in secondary school (MoSD)	Skill-building linked to SEGS (MoET)			Access to SEGS and Community Development (MoFLR, other ministries)	
TRANSFORMATIVE	Improved child protection services and referrals (MoSD)	Improved child protection services and referrals (MoSD)		Protecting informal workers (MoLE)	Sensitisation for protection of older persons (MoSD)	Quota for hiring people with disabilities (MoLE)	Protecting rights of people with disabilities (MoSD)

Figure 13. Social protection implementation plan according to life cycle stage

6.0 Implementation Framework

Proper and well-defined implementation arrangements are critical for ensuring the effectiveness of any social protection system. Even the best-designed and adequately funded systems may fail to deliver the projected results owing to inappropriate implementation arrangements.

6.1. Legislative framework

Lesotho's social protection approach should be grounded in a national legislative framework, as already proposed by the NSPS I. This follows Recommendation 202 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on national social protection floors. A National Social Protection Act should be developed that specifies the vision and objectives of social protection and the design features of the main social protection programmes, including eligibility criteria and benefit levels, to give legislative effect to the programme guarantees. Such legal framework promotes the accountability of the government towards the Basotho population in the provision of social protection services, as well as the responsibilities of beneficiaries. Systems should be in place to ensure compliance with the national legal framework.

6.2. Institutional framework and coordination

The MoSD and the MoLE have distinct and clearly demarcated mandates for social assistance and social security respectively. It is important that the two ministries coordinate their activities on a regular basis and are capacitated to fulfill their mandates. Moreover, a strong cross-sectoral approach is required, where a wide variety of ministries play a role in connecting core and complementary social protection programmes across the life cycle identified in the implementation plan to implement the comprehensive

social protection plus approach and ensure that social protection fulfils its protective, preventive, promotive, transformative and shock-responsive functions. Overall, the social protection coordination mechanism should create strong linkages and set up clear referral mechanisms between ministries to realise the agreed upon implementation plan in this strategy. What the coordination mechanism looks like is shown in Figure 14.

6.2.1. Social protection coordination secretariat

To spearhead the social protection coordination committees and working groups at national and district level displayed in Figure 13, a joint Social Protection Coordination Secretariat should be installed within the Departments of Planning of the MoSD and MoLE that is responsible for:

- Sending out committee invitations and taking care of all logistics;
- Devising agenda items for the meetings through consultation and negotiation with the Directors of Planning of the attending ministries and the Director of Social Assistance of the MoSD;
- Drafting, sending, revising and approving meeting minutes;
- Following up on agreed upon action points with the directors from the different ministries;
- Ensuring that the action points agreed upon are included in the agendas of the working groups.



Figure 14. Committees and working groups for social protection coordination.

6.2.2. Coordination at national level

To facilitate coordination at national level, the inter-ministerial National Social Protection Coordination Committees at Cabinet, Secretary and Director level should convene, guided by the Social Protection Coordination Secretariat. The Committees include the MoSD, MoLE, MoH, DMA, MoF, MoDP, MoFLR, MoAFS, MoET, MoGYSR, MoLGC, the soon to be established NSSO, and one development partner on a rotating basis. The Cabinet and Secretary Committees con-

vene every six months, with ad hoc meetings on demand. The Director Committee convenes more regularly, at least on a quarterly basis, and includes the Directors of Planning of the identified ministries and the Director of Social Assistance of the MoSD.

Under the committees should fall three working groups that meet monthly or when required, structured around key protective, preventive and promotive social protection programmes. Each working group discusses all life cycle stages:

1. Social Assistance Working Group (protective): This technical level working group discusses all core social assistance programmes and other complementary protective programmes included in the implementation plan. The MoSD leads this inter-ministerial working group.

2. Social Security Working Group (preventive): This technical level working group discusses all social security programmes and other preventive programmes included in the implementation plan. The MoLE leads this inter-ministerial working group. The Social Security Task Team, that has been tasked with the development of the LNS-SP and meets on a weekly basis, could, once the LNSSP has been finalised, merge with this working group.

3. Livelihoods Working Group (promotive): This technical level working group discusses all livelihood programmes, including community development, SEGS pilot and other promotive programmes identified in the implementation plan around education, skill-building, agricultural production and livelihood promotion.

Shock-responsive social protection is discussed under the Social Assistance Working Group, as well as under the existing shock-response working groups overseen by the DMA. Transformative social protection programmes are dealt with by the responsible ministries independently, except for the protection of the rights of people with disabilities, for which strong referrals should be set up between ministries in line with the Disability Mainstreaming Plan.

6.2.3. Coordination at subnational level

At district level, a District Social Protection Committee per district should discuss all social protection programmes within its district, guided by the Social Protection Coordination Secretariat. The Secretariat ensures that outcomes of the national level coordination process are included in the district agenda's and vice versa. The committee, consisting of the district managers and district officers working on the social protection implementation plan, convenes on a bi-weekly basis or when required. The committee plays an important role as focal point for coordination between local government agencies, mapping and spearheading the referral and complementarity between social protection programmes within their respective district and overseeing the implementation at the community level.

At the community council level, a Community

Council Social Protection Committee per community council, consisting of the community council director, social workers, auxiliary social workers and extension workers from other ministries, should convene on a weekly basis or when required. The committee is guided by and reports to the District Social Protection Working Group. The Community Council Social Protection Committee directs the social workers and auxiliary social workers placed by the MoSD at the community council level and other government extension workers working on complementary social protection programmes. They play an important role on the frontline, if properly capacitated: sensitising beneficiaries on the various social protection programmes, verifying and enrolling beneficiaries for social protection programmes, contributing to the referral of beneficiaries between social protection programmes, identifying implementation problems, and reporting cases and grievances.

6.2.4. Resource allocation and capacity building

To ensure the success of national coordination human resources need to be allocated to coordination. Specific focal points need to be appointed from each ministry to join the working groups. The working groups should be kept small with preferably one focal point per ministry and two focal points per leading ministry, who attend all meetings to ensure continuity. The focal points need to consult relevant staff members within their ministry in their preparation for the meetings, report key outcomes of the meetings back to these staff members and should follow-up with the relevant staff members within their ministry on the action points agreed upon. Commitment of senior management to support focal points in their role is required, including timely participation as needed in different parts of the process, and recognition that it should remain an ongoing priority in the workload of the focal points.

There is a need for staff training for all ministries involved and at all levels of government. Various training, communication and advocacy documents have been developed, such as the training on the integration and harmonisation of social assistance programmes and the training, communication and advocacy on social protection and shock-responsive social protection. These training documents need to be updated based on the implementation plan in this strategy and delivery to all relevant stakeholders needs to be prioritised.

6.3. Digital social protection systems

The government has invested in the innovation and development of digital social protection systems to support the implementation of social protection programmes, including NISSA and digital management information systems. However, various weaknesses were identified in earlier reviews that need to be resolved.

6.3.1. NISSA

The NISSA is an innovative and powerful tool that has been used by the MoSD to target households for social assistance programmes based on their poverty status. Various other stakeholders, such as the DMA and a range of development partners, have also used NISSA to target poor households for shock-responsive programmes. The system can and needs to become the central planning and targeting tool for all social protection programmes, as envisioned by the NSDP II for 2019-2023 and the NRSF for 2017-2030. This will promote poverty-based targeting, significantly lower administrative costs, and facilitate linkages between social protection programmes. NISSA can facilitate automatic notifications, automatic transitions between programmes, automatic grant top-ups (vertical expansion) and automatic selection of new grant beneficiaries (horizontal expansion), which will become more interesting, as more social protection programmes use NISSA as single targeting system (UNICEF, 2020b).

However, various measures need to be put into place to ensure that the NISSA can fulfill this role. First and foremost, the NISSA team needs to be strengthened and fully capacitated in line with the integration strategy for social safety nets in Lesotho (UNICEF, 2020b). In addition, NISSA currently covers all rural households in Lesotho and needs to be expanded to all urban areas as well. This process was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the MoSD plans to complete the expansion in 2021.

As the poverty status of many households in Lesotho is transient, updating the NISSA system is of crucial importance. An updating strategy and manual has been developed, which defines the processes for updating the database every four years in line with international best practice. Ensuring that this routine updating of the NISSA can be a cost-effective, sustainable and internalised process managed by the MoSD,

the government needs to invest in financial and human resources. The current tools – forms, software and hardware – are adequate for the task ahead. What is missing is an appropriately staffed, longer-term technical unit to lead the maintenance and updating of the NISSA system (GoL and UNICEF, 2020c).

However, the situation of households might change more regularly than every four years. That is why routine updating needs to be complemented by other updating mechanisms, which is of particular importance for disaster response. To facilitate more regular updating, robust data sharing protocols need to be set up that adhere to data protection and privacy standards. First steps have been taken to set up data sharing protocols between the NISSA and the National Identity Registry, the Education Management Information System, the National Social Security Database and the National Health Registry. Technical staff from the MoSD, Ministry of Home Affairs, MoET, MoLE and the MoH needs to complete these data sharing protocols. Other ways to facilitate more regular updating is by ensuring that updates reported through programme case management are automatically updated in the NISSA and by setting up systematic feedback loops to address concerns by users on the completeness and accuracy of the NISSA data in a timely and transparent manner (GoL and UNICEF, 2020).

Finally, to ensure that all potential users – relevant ministries and non-governmental stakeholders – understand the potential of NISSA and are able to use the system as the poverty-based planning and targeting tool, resources need to be allocated to advocacy, communication and training (UNICEF, 2020b).

Once these steps have been taken, NISSA can become the central planning and targeting tool for social protection programmes. At the same time, it is essential to recognise and to honestly convey the realistic message to policymakers, that no poverty targeting system can accurately identify the poorest. Planning and targeting through NISSA will always remain an approximation, and needs to be complemented by strong grievance response mechanisms for programme beneficiaries to report inclusion and exclusion errors.

6.3.2. Management information systems

Digital management information systems (MIS) have been developed for some social assistance programmes under the management information system for social assistance (MISSA) with digital

applications for operational processes that feed into the MISSA, such as enrolment and payment. However, not all social assistance programmes are included in the MISSA and some operational processes, such as case management and grievance response, lack digital applications. To improve efficiency and effectiveness of social assistance programme delivery, facilitate programme integration and harmonisation, and improve accountability, all social assistance programmes need to fall under the MISSA and digital applications need to be developed for all operational processes. This requires allocation of financial and human resources to the development of these systems and applications, and provision of training and tools to all users at central and decentral level. To facilitate information exchange and referral between social assistance and complementary social protection programmes, technical staff from relevant ministries should explore how to link digital MIS of complementary social protection programmes to the MISSA (UNICEF, 2020b).

6.4. Operational processes

To promote effective, efficient and accountable programme delivery, the Government of Lesotho has made steps to integrate, harmonise and optimise operational processes. Various weaknesses persist that require action to be taken.

6.4.1. Integration and harmonisation of social assistance programmes

Integration and harmonisation of social assistance programmes is of key importance to improve efficiency and effectiveness of programme delivery. The choice of the Government of Lesotho in 2012 to house all social assistance programmes within one Ministry, the MoSD, was an important first step towards improved integration and harmonisation. The only social assistance programme that is yet to be formally moved to the MoSD is the Old Age Pension, although this move should be completed by the end of 2021.

However, although housed within one ministry, the operational processes of the various social assistance programmes still ran parallel to each other. To start the integration and harmonisation process, a number of successful pilots was conducted from 2014 onwards. Following these pilots, in 2020, a strategy to fully realise the integration and harmonisation of social assistance programmes within the MoSD was adopted, after which a detailed operational manual was

developed to guide the implementation process, and key stakeholders within the MoSD were trained on its use.

The integration strategy, once implemented, can save more than one third of implementation costs and significantly improve effectiveness and accountability of social assistance programmes. What is needed is the political support and leadership to realise the integrated approach laid down in the strategy and operational manual (UNICEF, 2020b).

6.4.2. Sensitisation

Sensitising households on the objectives and the eligibility of social protection and its core and complementary programmes is of key importance. In line with this NSPS II, sensitisation messages need to be developed, using a variety of sensitisation channels, to inform Basotho citizens on their rights and responsibilities in receiving social protection, building on existing sensitisation and communication strategies in place. The planned development of the National Social Protection Act that specifies the vision, objectives and design features of social protection programmes, as well as the responsibilities of Basotho citizens for receiving social protection, can strengthen the sensitisation message towards Basotho citizen. Likewise, the decentralisation agenda, wherein the community councils deliver more services to Basotho citizens directly may simplify the sensitisation process.

6.4.3. Targeting

Different targeting methodologies have been used within and across ministries to target beneficiaries for social protection programmes. To improve poverty-based targeting of core and complementary social protection programmes and promote easy referral between programmes, all programmes should adopt the same targeting approach and system. As explained in section 6.4.1, NISSA should become the integrated targeting tool for social protection programmes. The NISSA should be complemented by other targeting modalities. For instance, the LVAC annual assessments need to be used to identify chronically vulnerable and food insecure areas for area-based social protection programming, as proposed in the NRSF, while other shock-responsive targeting modalities can be explored to complement NISSA (GoL and UNICEF, 2020b).

6.4.4. Payment modalities

Social assistance programmes have relied on

cash-in-transit payment delivery. To improve cost-effectiveness, saving almost three quarters of current payment costs, enhance transparency and accountability, and promote financial inclusion of the poor, the Government of Lesotho needs to accelerate the transition to digital payment delivery for social assistance programmes in areas where digital payment is available. Digital payment can facilitate more regular, predictable and convenient payment delivery, as beneficiaries can be paid each month and can collect their payments at their own time, which is an incentive for households to transition from cash in transit to digital payments. A digital payment system can furthermore facilitate financial integration and market participation, particularly within poor and isolated communities.

As a first step, the MoSD needs to map with digital payment providers what areas are suitable for digital payment delivery of social assistance programmes. In those areas, the MoSD should develop partnerships with digital payment providers based on clear codes of conduct. To ensure that households understand the value of digital payment and transition to this new payment method, payment providers need to educate users on their digital payment services. In a next step, the MoSD needs to map potential areas for digital payment together with payment providers, who in turn will be motivated to expand their services to these areas knowing that there is a market for their digital payment offering (UNICEF, 2020b).

6.4.5. Case management and grievance response

Case management and grievance response systems, wherein programme beneficiaries can report cases and grievances on the delivery of social protection programmes, are underdeveloped. Introducing strong grievance response mechanisms, combined with comprehensive learning, monitoring and evaluation systems, can promote the transformative power of social protection programmes. It can strengthen accountability, identify implementation problems in a timely manner and improve programme outcomes.

The government should launch the decentral case management and grievance response mechanism through auxiliary social workers and social workers and the national grievance response hotline for social assistance programmes, as proposed in the strategy for the integration and harmonisation of social assistance programmes (UNICEF,

2020b). These grievance response mechanisms can be expanded or duplicated to other social protection programmes.

6.5. Monitoring and evaluation system

Monitoring and evaluation of social protection programmes have been insufficient. To understand the implementation of the NSPS II and its suggested programmes, a strong monitoring and evaluation system is required to continuously learn and improve programming.

Upon approval of this strategy, an action plan and monitoring and evaluation framework with clear process, output and outcome indicators will be developed. A monitoring system and monitoring tools to measure progress on these indicators will complement this framework. Automation of operational processes through the digital systems, the NISSA and the MISSA, can provide powerful tools for monitoring and evaluation. The MISSA can facilitate consistency checks on data, reporting and follow-up, significantly improving the process and output monitoring capacity and quality of the government. Furthermore, the NISSA database can provide a powerful platform for monitoring indicators at outcome level, especially when linking NISSA to other databases and registries.

Moreover, to understand the outcome and impact of each social protection programme, the comprehensive social protection plus approach proposed in this strategy, the proposed implementation framework, the targeting effectiveness of NISSA, and the strategy as a whole, additional independent outcome and impact evaluations need to be conducted (World Bank, 2020).

7.0 Financing

In 2020/21, the government spends 8.4 percent of the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on social protection, which equals M2,213 million in 2020/21, of which 3.2 percent of GDP on core social assistance programmes (M846 million), 3.6 percent on complementary programmes (M939 million) and 1.6 percent on social security for public servants (M428 million). Almost 80 percent of the budget for core social assistance programmes is targeted to address poverty among elderly through the Old Age Pension, while less than 9 percent is allocated to the Child Grant. More than 75 percent of the budget for complementary programmes is allocated to the Tertiary Bursary, while the bursary currently benefits better-off students and has no proven impact on reduction of poverty or inequality (UNICEF, 2020e; World Bank, 2020).

7.1. Budget allocation

In the coming five years, social protection spending needs to be: (1) more cost-efficient based on the implementation framework defined in this strategy; (2) more child-sensitive, as children in Lesotho are most at risk to poverty, and; (3) increasingly directed towards programmes with a proven impact on reduction of poverty and inequality through a solid monitoring and evaluation framework.

The following government budget allocation, presented in Table 1, covers the main social protection programmes, excluding additional costs required for expanded capacity. The budget is based on real GDP projections, most recent population and poverty statistics, inflation rate estimates of the Bureau of Statistics, and the revised monthly food basket for Lesotho, which was estimated at M831 in October 2020 (UNICEF, 2020e). Most complementary protective, preventive, promotive and transformative programmes fall under other budgetary sectors, but require enhanced coordination and more accurate poverty targeting through NISSA in line with the implementation plan and framework defined in this strategy to ensure their impact on social protection. Hence, these complementary programmes are not included in this social protection budget.

The launch of the social security schemes is not

part of this budget, as the draft LNSSP suggests that the Government would take out a loan for the establishment of the NSSO and the NSSF, which in due time can be paid back by the NSSO.

7.2. Flexible and shock-responsive financing

While this proposed budget allocation for social protection provides clear direction, changing needs and vulnerabilities of Basotho citizens demand flexibility in the allocation of budgets between programmes. The MoSD needs to explore the feasibility of launching a Social Assistance Fund, with budget allocations per programme, but the possibility to quickly and easily move funds between social assistance programmes based on changing needs and vulnerabilities. The exact criteria and procedures for moving funds should be defined by the Finance Department of the MoSD.

To better and more rapidly respond to shock, the government also needs to adopt a more diversified funding model that includes the following instruments:

- Budgetary allocation: allocation within the MoSD Social Assistance Fund to horizontally and/or vertically expand social assistance during shock, as well as a stronger and better managed DMA Disaster Management Fund
- Market-based financing: agricultural insurance by joining the African Risk Capacity.
- Contingency credit: disaster financing options offered by the World Bank.
- Donor financing: developing clear codes of conduct for donor financing during shock.

Table 1. Budget allocation NSPS II 2021-2031

Programme	Benefit amount	Budget in million Maloti based on real GDP										
		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031
Core social assistance												
Child Grant for pregnant women and infants (MoSD)	Grant of M150 p/m indexed to inflation (NISSA 1-2) coverage	-	9	12.7	16.6	34.9	36.7	77	80.9	84.9	89.2	93.6
		-	-	-	-	-	-	7840 (25%)	15,680 (50%)	31,360 (100%)	31,360 (100%)	31,360 (100%)
Child Grant (MoSD)	Per child grant of M120 p/m indexed to inflation (NISSA 1-2) Coverage	-	76	106	139	292	307	645	677	711	746	784
		-	49,230 (15%)	65,640 (20%)	82,050 (25%)	164,090 (50%)	164,090 (50%)	328,180 (100%)	328,180 (100%)	328,180 (100%)	328,180 (100%)	328,180 (100%)
Child Grant top-up (MoSD / MoET)	Top-up of Child Grant indexed to inflation M1000 Coverage (of CGP beneficiaries)	-	4	8	17	18	18	19	20	21	22	24
		-	3,790 (25%)	7,575 (50%)	15,150 (100%)	15,150 (100%)	15,150 (100%)	15,150 (100%)	15,150 (100%)	15,150 (100%)	15,150 (100%)	15,150 (100%)
Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme pilot (MoGYSR)	Cash-for-work of M700 p/m for 3 months indexed to inflation (NISSA 1) Coverage	-	-	-	26	27	57	75	157	330	347	364
		-	-	-	12,325 (1 dis-trict)	12,325 (1 dis-trict)	24,650 (2 dis-trict)	30,813	61,625	123,250	123,250	123,250
Old Age Pension (MoSD)	Universal grant of M800 p/m at fixed rate Coverage	786	786	786	786	786	786	786	786	786	786	786
		70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)	70,000 (100%)
Disability Grant (MoSD)	Grant of M400 p/m indexed to inflation (NISSA 1-2) Coverage	-	26	55	116	122	128	135	141	148	156	164
		-	5,400 (25%)	10,800 (50%)	21,600 (100%)	21,600 (100%)	21,600 (100%)	21,600 (100%)	21,600 (100%)	21,600 (100%)	21,600 (100%)	21,600 (100%)
Shock-responsive Public Assistance (MoSD)	Grant of maximum M250 p/m indexed to inflation (NISSA 1-2) coverage	-	-	109	115	121	127	133	140	147	154	162
		-	-	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000	65,000
Total core social assistance budget		768	883	1,060	1,198	1,383	1,442	1,852	1,985	2,211	2,283	2,358
Social Security												
Social security public sector	Maternity, sickness, retirement, employment injury and survivor benefits to public sector workers.	-	-	-	-	-	-	546	546	546	546	546
Total social security budget		-	-	-	-	-	-	546	546	546	546	546
Total social protection budget		768	883	1,060	1,198	1,383	1,442	2,398	2,531	2,757	2,829	2,904

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Annex A. Summary of existing social protection programmes

The following figure explains the main social protection programmes, as the Government of Lesotho currently implements them, including the programme objectives, eligibility, coverage, benefit amount and transfer amount budget for 2020/2021.

Programme + Ministry	Objectives	Eligibility	Coverage	Benefit amount	Budget 2020 (in real terms)
Core social assistance programmes M846 million					
Child Grant MoSD	Unconditional cash grant to reduce child malnutrition and improve child health, and school enrolment	Poor and vulnerable households with children aged 0-17 years (NISSA 1-2, priority to NISSA 1).	56,000 households (covering 123,760 children)	Paid quarterly per household with 1-2 children M360, 3-4 children M600, >4 children M750	M74 million
Public Work MoFLR	Cash-for-work to promote environmental conservation and income support (maximum one month per year)	Able-bodied individuals living in rural areas (not poverty targeted)	80,500 individuals	M1200 per month for maximum of one month per year	No budget
Old Age Pension MoF	Unconditional cash grant to enhance the quality of life of the elderly population	Elderly aged 70 years or older (universal)	83,700 individuals	Paid monthly, per elderly M800	M673 million
Public Assistance MoSD	Provision of economic security to persons in need through unconditional assistance in cash or in-kind	Destitute individuals (OVC, the severely disabled, severely ill and elderly) (various targeting methods)	12,700 individuals (in 2020)	M750 paid quarterly, per individual	M98 million
Main complementary social protection programmes M939 million					
OVC-Bursary MoSD	Bursary to promote access to secondary education for orphans and vulnerable children	Orphans and vulnerable children enrolled in secondary school (NISSA 1-2 and self-targeting)	No details given	Bursary varies by grade and type of school (i.e. tuition & examination fees, registration costs, stationary, books)	M78 million

Programme + Ministry	Objectives	Eligibility	Coverage	Benefit amount	Budget 2020 (in real terms)
Tertiary Bursary MoDP	Loan or scholarship for students to promote access to tertiary education	Students enrolled in tertiary education in Lesotho or abroad (not poverty targeted)	No details given	Loan/scholarship varies from M7,000 (Lesotho) to M40,000 (South Africa)	M707 million
School Feeding MoET	Daily school meals to reduce child malnutrition and promote school enrolment and attendance	All children attending primary schools and some pre-schools	400,000 children	M3.50 per day per child	M146 million
Tertiary Bursary MoDP	Non-contributory pensions to those who served in the army of Lesotho	Pensioners who served in the Lesotho Liberation Army or the African Pioneer Corps	-	-	M7 million
Community Development MoSD	Graduating social assistance households into sustainable livelihoods	Social assistance beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries	1000 beneficiaries	-	Unknown
Social security programmes M428 million					
Social security benefits MoLE	Maternity, sickness, retirement, employment injury and survivor benefits	Public servants only	-	Maternity/sickness benefits paid by government, other benefits from contributory scheme	M428 million

Annex B. Envisioned objectives and eligibility of reformed social protection programmes

The following figure explains the reformed objectives and eligibility for the main social protection programmes, as envisioned in this strategy.

Programme + Ministry	Reformed objectives	Reformed Eligibility
Core social assistance programmes		
Child Grant MoSD	Unconditional per child cash grant to reduce infant malnutrition and stunting, child malnutrition, improve child health, and increase school enrolment	Pregnant women and mothers of infants up to 2 years and children from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2) with priority for NISSA 1
Child Grant OVC top-up MoSD	Top-up to support secondary school enrolment paid before the start of the school year, possibly supplemented by a second top-up mid-year to discourage school drop-out	Child Grant recipients who wish to enrol in secondary school
Seasonal Employment Guarantee Scheme Pilot Various	Cash-for-work to promote community assets, skill development, seasonal income support and reduction of poverty (three months per year)	Youth from ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) in selected rural areas with minimum quota for gender and disability
Old Age Pension MoF	Unconditional cash grant to enhance the quality of life of the elderly population	All elderly aged 70 years or older
Disability Grant MoSD	Unconditional cash grant to improve health and well-being of people with severe disability	Severely disabled or chronically ill, including mentally ill, from ultra-poor and poor households (NISSA 1 and 2) who are unable to work
Public Assistance MoSD	Scalable, temporary shock-responsive cash grant of maximum M250 per month for maximum period of one year, exact bursary amount and duration based on type of shock and defined by DMA trigger (covariate shock). Where possible provided as automatic top-up to existing grants (Child Grant, Old Age Pension or Disability Grant).	Ultra-poor households (NISSA 1) and poor households (NISSA 2) with priority for NISSA 1, experiencing covariate or severe idiosyncratic shock (temporary disability or illness and inability to work, or death of household breadwinner)
Main complementary social protection programmes		
OVC-Bursary MoSD	Bursary to promote access to secondary education	Children from Child Grant recipient households and orphans enrolled in secondary school
Tertiary Bursary MoDP	Scholarship for students to promote access to tertiary education	Students from ultra-poor and poor households (NISSA 1 and 2) enrolled in tertiary education in Lesotho or abroad
Home-grown school Feeding MoET	Daily school meals to reduce child malnutrition, improve school enrolment and attendance, and promote local food production	Daily meals to all children attending primary schools and some pre-schools
Community Development MoSD, Various	Graduating social assistance households into sustainable livelihoods and removing supply-side barriers (market access and development) that benefit a wider group of beneficiaries, building on existing programmes implemented by various ministries	Livelihood programmes for social assistance households and programmes aimed at lifting supply-side interventions aimed at a wider group of beneficiaries
Social security programmes		
Social security benefits MoLE	Maternity, sickness, retirement, employment injury and survivor benefits	All public and private sector workers, both formal and informal

Annex C. Definition of terms

Term	Definition
Administrative costs	Any management and administrative expenditure incurred by the scheme directly responsible for the provision of Social protection benefits, such as salaries, or the costs of running an office.
Cash-for-work	Payments provided on the condition of undertaking designated work. This is generally paid according to time worked (e.g., number of days, daily rate), but may also be quantified in terms of outputs (e.g., number of items produced, cubic metres dug). Cash-for-work interventions are usually in public or community work programmes but can also include home-based and other forms of work.
Child sensitive social protection	Child-sensitive social protection strategies can address the chronic poverty, social exclusion and external shocks that can irreversibly affect children's lifetime capacities and opportunities.
Comprehensive social protection plus approach	A social protection approach that includes protective, preventive, promotive, transformative and shock-responsive measures. The approach requires a strong cross-sectoral approach, where a wide variety of ministries play a role in connecting core and complementary social protection programmes across the life cycle.
Comprehensive social protection plus approach	A social protection approach that includes protective, preventive, promotive, transformative and shock-responsive measures. The approach requires a strong cross-sectoral approach, where a wide variety of ministries play a role in connecting core and complementary social protection programmes across the life cycle.
Covariate shock	Covariate shocks impact an entire community, such as droughts, floods, cyclones or epidemics.
Dependency ratio	Number of children and elderly compared to the working age household members.
Employment injury benefit	The contingencies covered include a morbid condition, incapacity for work, invalidity or a loss of faculty due to an industrial accident or a prescribed occupational disease.
Idiosyncratic shock	Idiosyncratic shocks affect households, such as the death or sickness of the household head or loss of household income.
Invalidity benefit	The contingency covered is the inability to engage in any gainful activity where such inability is likely to be permanent or persists after the period during which the beneficiary is entitled to benefit from temporary incapacity.
Maternity benefit	The contingencies covered are the medical care required by pregnancy, confinement and their consequences and the resulting suspension of earnings.
Preventive social protection measures	Social protection interventions that avert deprivation through early warning and early action (disaster risk reduction), social security (contributory or non-contributory schemes) and social insurance (contributory schemes).
Promotive social protection measures	Social protection interventions that promote real capabilities and income through skill building and livelihood promotion programmes.
Protective social protection measures	Social protection measures that provide relief from deprivation through social assistance and access to social (care) services.
Retirement benefit	The contingency covered is survival beyond a prescribed age (normally not higher than 65 years).
Scale up of social protection	The scale-up of a social protection programme can be either vertical or horizontal. A vertical scale-up implies that more cash/services are provided to existing beneficiaries. A horizontal scale-up implies that additional individuals will be included in the existing programme at the given amount of cash/services.

Term	Definition
Shock-responsive social protection	Term used to bring focus on shocks that affect a large proportion of the population simultaneously (covariate shocks). It encompasses the adaptation of routine social protection programmes and systems to cope with changes in context and demand following large-scale shocks. This can be ex ante by building shock-responsive systems, plans and partnerships in advance of a shock to better prepare for emergency response; or ex post, to support households once the shock has occurred. In this way, social protection can complement and support other emergency response interventions.
Sickness benefit	The contingency covered includes incapacity for work resulting from a morbid condition and involving suspension of earnings.
Social and behavioural change communication	Social and behavioural change communication (SBCC), often also only “BCC” or “Communication for Development (C4D)” is an interactive process of any intervention with individuals, group or community (as integrated with an overall program) to develop communication strategies to promote positive behaviours which are appropriate to their settings and thereby solving the world’s most pressing health problems. This in turn provides a supportive environment which will enable people to initiate, sustain and maintain positive and desirable behaviour outcomes.
Social assistance	Direct, regular, and predictable transfer of cash or in-kind resources transfers poor and vulnerable individuals or households. It is usually provided by the state and financed by national taxes. Support from donors is also important in lower-income contexts.
Social insurance	Social security schemes that are of a contributory nature, where employers, employees and sometimes the government contribute to the scheme.
Social protection system	A policy and legislative framework for social protection, including the budget framework, together with the set of specific social protection programmes and their corresponding implementation mechanisms. ‘Systematisation’ represents the idea that social protection instruments can be integrated into a more comprehensive system of policies and programmes that not only tackle poverty and vulnerability over the life cycle, but also strengthen pro-poor and inclusive economic growth and social development.
Social safety net	Target the poor or vulnerable and consist of non-contributory transfers, such as in-kind food, cash, or vouchers; they can be provided conditionally or unconditionally. They are a sub-set of broader social protection systems. The term was introduced to refer to a temporary measure to catch those who were transiently made vulnerable through structural adjustment and liberalisation (e.g., transfers to households or subsidy programmes). The term ‘(social) safety net’ is now widely used, sometimes with different meanings. There is no commonly agreed definition of this terminology, and actors may use it to refer to protective social transfer projects ensuring a minimum level of income (as per the original definition), or (humanitarian) cash transfer projects, or social transfer schemes developed within a broader social protection system (guaranteeing a long-term institutionalised social protection).
Social security	Publicly mandated measures providing benefits, whether in cash or in kind, to secure protection, inter alia, from the lack of work-related income (or insufficient income) caused by sickness, disability, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, old age, or death of a family member, lack of access or unaffordable access to healthcare or insufficient family support, particularly for children and adult dependents, and general poverty and social exclusion. Social security schemes can be of a contributory nature (social insurance, paid by earmarked contributions) or non-contributory nature (financed by general taxes).

Term	Definition
Survivors benefit	The contingency covered is the loss of support suffered by the widow or children as a result of the death of the breadwinner.
Targeting	Means of determining who will receive a cash or voucher transfer.
Three-tier system	According to the ILO is an arrangement designed to cater for different needs of protection for different categories of people depending on their levels of incomes. Tier 1 is fully financed by government to cater for those who are not able to purchase social security services e.g. the sick, disabled and the elderly. Tier 2 caters for those who can contribute and is compulsory and supervised by government. Tier 3 caters for those who can afford to supplement their tier 2 security by purchasing commercial insurance benefits. Tier 3 is voluntary.
Transformative social protection measures	Social protection interventions that address concerns of social equity and exclusion through sensitisation and regulatory change.
Unemployment benefit	The contingency covered includes suspension or loss of earnings due to inability to obtain suitable employment.

