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## Research Report

The potential of the socialprotection.org platform to support policymaking and innovation on social protection: Overview of the impact of the platform from September 2015 to December 2018

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# The potential of the socialprotection.org platform to support policymaking and innovation on social protection

Overview of the impact of the platform from September 2015 to December 2018

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# 1.

## Background

There has been major progress in the reduction of extreme poverty globally in the past 25 years. According to the most recent poverty data produced by the World Bank (2018), the extreme poverty rate fell from 36 per cent in 1990 to 10 per cent in 2015.

However, extreme poverty rates remain persistently high in low-income countries and in those countries most affected by conflict and political unrest. In addition, the speed of the decline has slowed, which raises concerns about the feasibility of reaching the poverty-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Social protection policies and programmes can play a key role in sustaining and continuing the progress that has been achieved so far. Recent policy discourse has centred on generating more inclusive growth. Expanding coverage of social protection is also one of the targets of SDG 1 (target 1.3.1), precisely for its potential to protect people living in poverty, prevent people from falling into poverty, support the promotion of

livelihoods and transform their lives and their communities in an inclusive manner.

Social protection can be defined as a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Thus, it serves as a vital component of a comprehensive national development strategy aimed at supporting inclusive and sustainable growth by raising household incomes, fostering productivity and human development, boosting domestic demand, facilitating structural transformation of the economy and promoting decent work (International Labour Organisation (ILO) 2017, 38).

The global online knowledge-sharing platform [socialprotection.org](https://socialprotection.org) was launched on 12 September 2015, with the support of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).<sup>1</sup> The platform is committed to generating and sharing knowledge for the promotion of innovative and effective social protection policies and programmes, thereby contributing to DFAT's Strategy for Australia's Aid Investments in Social Protection (2015) and

Australia's Foreign Policy White Paper (2017) commitment to promote Australia's national interest by contributing to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. The platform promotes capacity-building and exchange of experiences between low- and middle-income countries, with over 40 online communities sharing social protection knowledge products and policy advice on a range of topics, including poverty alleviation, gender empowerment, children's welfare, and shock-responsive social protection in humanitarian contexts.

Social protection prioritises the United Nations SDG mission of 'ensuring no one is left behind' in the pursuit of development. It recognises the essential role of human capital development in the pursuit of growth, thereby catering to factors beyond gross domestic product (GDP), such as the informal labour market, disability and gender empowerment. As a human-centred approach, successful social protection adapts to the context-specific challenges and demands of a country or community, in recognition of the fact that achieving prosperous livelihoods for all people is the foundation of a prosperous country.

Prioritisation of human capital development and increasing the resilience of vulnerable people to shocks and crisis, even in contexts where poverty has been largely overcome, are emerging areas of policy interest. Shock-responsive social protection, catering to contexts of conflict and displacement, has gained prominence due to climate change and refugee crises. Accordingly, the multidimensional social, economic, environmental and humanitarian variables that social protection addresses simultaneously has it firmly rooted in contemporary development policy discourse.

Today, we see the international community come together in support of social protection. This is reflected in its endorsement in numerous international agreements and its incorporation into defining international agendas:

- Social protection systems feature prominently in SDG 1 ("End poverty in all its forms everywhere") and target 1.3 ("Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including social protection floors, and achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable by 2030").

- In 2016, the World Bank and the ILO, with the support of members of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B), committed to the Universal Social Protection by 2030 Initiative (USP2030).<sup>2</sup>
- In 2012, 185 states adopted the ILO's Social Protection Floors Recommendation, No. 202, to support countries in designing and implementing universal and sustainable social protection systems, to meet their 2030 SDG-related targets.
- Social protection has been endorsed in international statements by the African Union, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Commission, the G20 and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018).
- With this global push for the expansion of social protection, the number of recipients of social assistance has increased worldwide, especially in Asia, the Pacific and Latin America.

The efforts of the international community have culminated in 2019 being the year of social protection. The topic is being addressed at leading international events in 2019, including: [Together to achieve Universal Social Protection by 2030](#),<sup>3</sup> the 57th Session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development,<sup>4</sup> the 63rd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women<sup>5</sup> and the ILO's 100th anniversary celebrations.<sup>6</sup>

The mission of socialprotection.org is to support practitioners in the design and implementation of effective social protection systems through knowledge-sharing and capacity-building. In this pursuit, we believe we are contributing to the promotion and protection of the world's most vulnerable people, decreasing inequality and alleviating poverty, for the realisation of inclusive economic growth. We are thankful for the support of DFAT and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), which has been crucial to this mission.

# 2.

## The three years of socialprotection.org

### HISTORY OF THE PLATFORM AND ITS MAIN CHARACTERISTICS

The socialprotection.org platform emerged in response to demand from global policymakers. In 2012 the Development Working Group of the G20 recommended setting up a knowledge-sharing platform on social protection, entrusting it to SPIAC-B. In response to the request, the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), as one of the observing members of the SPIAC-B, engaged in implementing the 'Social Protection Knowledge-Sharing Gateway Project'.

In 2012 the IPC-IG took the lead in developing a prototype of the socialprotection.org platform in consultation with the World Bank Group, ILO and leading agencies gathered under SPIAC-B. Following the development of the prototype, DFAT greenlighted the project at the end of 2013. As a result, an official agreement between the IPC-IG and DFAT was signed in January 2014, to further

develop and launch the prototype. In December 2015, GIZ also started funding the platform.

The objective of socialprotection.org is to foster knowledge-sharing and capacity-strengthening on efficient social protection policies and programmes, drawing on the experiences of low- and middle-income countries. On 12 September 2015, on the United Nations International Day for South-South Cooperation, socialprotection.org was launched, commencing the mission of ensuring no one is left behind in the pursuit of development.

Over the three years of the project, great progress has been achieved in sharing knowledge and bringing together a global community of practitioners:

- Between 2015 and 2018, socialprotection.org has brought together almost 3,800 members and over 1,160 stakeholders, and has provided access to over 3,900 publications, of which 38 per cent were uploaded by members.

- It has organised 77 webinars, many of which formed part of its 16 webinar series, attracting more than 4,900 attendees.
- It has hosted five online courses and is home to 42 online communities.
- The sp.org blog feature was launched in January 2017 and had published over 150 posts by the end of 2018.
- The Programme Profile section showcased over 240 social protection programmes from around the world (including pioneering inventories of countries in the Middle East and North Africa), while the team commenced production of profiles from countries in Asia and the Pacific (launched in early 2019).
- In 2018, the platform became available in English, French and, more recently, Spanish, to cater to our ever-expanding user base.

The socialprotection.org team is proud to present the culmination of three years of dedicated efforts to bring together the leading content and practitioners in the field of social protection, under the DFAT ‘South-South Learning Formats on Social Protection Project’ (2016).

## OBJECTIVES AND MAIN RESULTS

### **To provide high-quality analysis and practical policy options that help broker South-South cooperation activities, particularly across low- and middle-income countries**

The socialprotection.org platform is an unbranded, interactive online platform, directing access to content from individuals, bilateral and multilateral cooperation agencies, non-governmental organisations, research centres, government bodies and academia, allowing members and organisations to share information and network with each other. This serves as the foundation of our South-South knowledge-sharing and capacity-strengthening activities.

Thanks to the contributions of our members, stakeholders and the socialprotection.org

team, the platform provides access to the most comprehensive and up-to-date content on social protection. This includes publications, webinars and blogs. It supports interactive user engagement, while promoting key social protection themes via online communities, discussion forums and various communications channels, thereby fostering a global community of practitioners, the majority of whom are based in low- or middle-income countries.

### **Knowledge production on social protection. This will involve the platform’s members. Outcomes of knowledge exchange and learning forums will lead to new knowledge products, including technical papers<sup>7</sup> and blog entries.**

The socialprotection.org platform supports the production of multiple formats of knowledge products. The blog was launched on 11 January 2017 and has seen the publication of over 150 blog posts, covering our webinar series (summaries of each webinar), the Ambassadors Programme (online volunteer programme), posts written by experts in the social protection field, and members’ op-ed blog post submissions. Our most read blogs from the project period have all been written by socialprotection.org Ambassadors.

The socialprotection.org Ambassadors Programme is a key component of member engagement and knowledge production. It is an online volunteer programme, operated via the United Nations Volunteer website. Since 2015, the platform has welcomed 160 Ambassadors from over 40 countries, who have actively participated in mapping and uploading content, writing blog posts, creating infographics and sourcing photos. They are also encouraged to engage with socialprotection.org social media platforms.

Another knowledge product is the programme profiles. In 2018 the IPC-IG and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) produced the report ‘Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific: Inventory of Non-Contributory Programmes’, launched in February 2019, which maps 215 programmes from 30 countries.<sup>8</sup> Over half (141) of the programmes were converted into individual programme profiles<sup>9</sup> on socialprotection.org. The report is supported by DFAT.



Since its launch, the platform has also elaborated and hosted webinars, online courses and online communities, which represent central learning formats and results of knowledge production on the platform.

**To organise and support webinars, webinar series, online communities and online courses. These forums will be both demand-driven and developed by the project's staff, with a focus on the involvement of country representatives from low- and middle-income countries.**

**Webinars:** Webinars are one of the platform's leading knowledge-sharing outputs: 77 webinars were organised by the socialprotection.org team over the project period, attracting over 4,900 attendees. The team supported a range of institutions in this endeavour, conducting a 90-minute webinar every Thursday and providing technical and logistical support using the GoToWebinar platform. Generally, they gave inputs into the content of the webinar: main theme, panellists and format. They also promoted each webinar on social media, in the socialprotection.org monthly newsletter and through targeted email campaigns using MailChimp.

Webinars can be watched live for free, and audience members are able to engage with the panellists in Q&A sessions. Following the live event, the recording and presentations are made available to all users on the platform. A summary of the discussion is published on the blog, produced by the socialprotection.org team, with contributions from the webinar's panellists. A compilation of the Q&As is also published. All this content is included in the corresponding online community if the event was conducted as a community output. More details of webinars and other platform activities can be found in the DFAT Final Report.<sup>10</sup>

**Online learning:** Increasing demand for online learning content in the social protection arena prompted new developments and the hosting of various initiatives on the socialprotection.org virtual campus in 2018. In the first semester of 2018, the platform provided access to two e-courses: *TRANSFORM* and the *Poverty analysis for multisectoral policymaking* (in French and Spanish). These e-courses attracted substantial online traffic and engagement with the platform,

with interest from practitioners from low- and middle-income countries.

**Online communities:** A further leading feature of socialprotection.org is its online communities, which are each dedicated to topics that are relevant to specific communities of practitioners, to support knowledge-sharing. Over the project period, socialprotection.org has hosted a total of 61 communities, of which 42 have been published and 19 have since been discontinued; 14 communities are considered active (with any kind of activity in the last three months). The most commonly addressed online community topics included crisis contexts, nutrition, the African context, children, fiscal space and gender.

**To develop interactive communication channels that involve partners and members, including social media and monthly newsletters. This will be to inform relevant content on the platform.**

The socialprotection.org platform's communications strategy has evolved as the platform's reach and engagement has expanded. After three years of active engagement, considerable progress has been achieved in establishing a community of consistently engaged practitioners on multiple communications platforms. The overall objective of the communications strategy is to increase interactive user engagement and encourage knowledge exchange, while consolidating a community of practitioners.

The comprehensive communications strategy includes a monthly newsletter (3,036 subscribers) and webinar/livestream announcements (5,032 subscribers) via MailChimp, accompanied by active social media engagement. The number of socialprotection.org followers has progressively expanded over the years, and on 31 December 2018 there were 3,546 on Facebook, 2,342 on Twitter, 854 on LinkedIn and 318 on YouTube.

The socialprotection.org social media channels play a key role in the dissemination of the platform's content and features. The strategy aims to engage experts in the social protection field, as well as non-specialist audiences, by using non-specialist language and featuring a range of cross-cutting topics.

Since December 2015, a thematic monthly newsletter has been disseminated, showcasing the latest and most relevant content accessible on the platform, including the latest news, events, upcoming webinars and online courses. The newsletter has over 3,000 subscribers and managed to weather the introduction of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679.

### **To maintain and update relevant searchable social protection databases, prioritising content relevant to developing countries**

The socialprotection.org platform features multiple up-to-date searchable databases on social protection, including content from developing countries. At the end of 2018, the publications provided access to 3,929 documents, audio files, infographics and other content on a range of social protection topics. The geographical coverage of these publications was well distributed among developing countries. It is important to mention that 38 per cent of this content was uploaded by members.

**Programme profiles:** The platform's programme profile search showcases individual social protection programme profiles from around the world. Following its development and relaunch in 2018, it now serves as a key feature of the platform, presenting a simple yet comprehensive overview of individual social protection programmes. Each profile includes key information such as the objectives, targeting method and programme expenditure, displayed in a user-friendly table format.

In 2018, the socialprotection.org team, with the involvement of the IPC-IG's researchers, added 124 new programme profiles pertaining to the Middle East and North Africa region to the programme search. They then focused their efforts on compiling social protection programme profiles from Asia and the Pacific, which were launched in early 2019.

**Stakeholder profiles:** A further key searchable database on the platform is the stakeholder search. The platform hosted the profiles of 1,167 stakeholders related to social protection at the end of 2018. Most stakeholders

have a regional focus on sub-Saharan Africa, which reflects socialprotection.org's previous member engagement strategy, as well as the regional demand for social protection and poverty alleviation.

**Member profiles:** Finally, registered users of the platform can be found in the members search. Here, members can connect with fellow practitioners, thereby fostering a community of social protection practitioners from around the world. The number of new socialprotection.org members has grown consistently throughout the years. At the end of 2018, 3,799 members were registered on the platform.

### **To establish a virtual campus for capacity-building of low- and middle-income countries. This may be done in collaboration with other agencies, research centres and non-governmental organisations.**

The key outputs of the virtual campus are the webinars and e-courses, outlined above. These saw extensive collaboration with agencies, research centres and non-governmental organisations from low- and middle-income countries.

**Livestreams:** In September 2017, the virtual campus hosted its first livestream, a new service developed following requests from members, featuring the International Conference on Social Protection in contexts of Fragility & Forced Displacement.<sup>11</sup> The event was streamed in English, French and Arabic, and attracted record traffic to the platform, with over 1,000 live online views over the two-day event and almost 1,200 views on YouTube by December 2018. This was soon followed by the livestream of the Regional Seminar on Shock-responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean, in October 2017, in Spanish.<sup>12</sup> In 2018 another two events were livestreamed: the Academy on Social Security, by ILO,<sup>13</sup> and the International Week of Social Protection—Leaving no One Behind, promoted by GIZ and the Mexican Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL).<sup>14</sup> Together, these four major events attracted a live audience of over 3,400 people, and the recordings had been viewed more than 5,000 times on YouTube by the end of 2018.

# 3.

## Social protection trends and key topics

Recent trends that have emerged in the social protection arena are reflected in the discussions fostered by socialprotection.org's features and shared content, such as webinars, online communities, publications, blog articles, news and events. The platform is dedicated to supporting the exchange of knowledge and capacity-building on key social protection trends and providing visibility to important topics that are in demand among its audience and stakeholders.

Several social protection topics have consistently sparked debate among the international community, such as cash transfers, children, health, programme design and implementation, and the international development agenda. However, over recent years, three key topics have become particularly prominent on the platform, being at the centre of many discussions among members:

shock-responsive social protection, women's empowerment and inclusive growth.

### SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

In the context of increasing numbers of humanitarian emergencies triggered by climate change or conflict, shock-responsive social protection has emerged as a policy tool that can provide longer-term assistance through integrated humanitarian response systems. Emergencies often occur in contexts of chronic poverty and vulnerability; therefore, better integration of short-term humanitarian assistance, disaster risk management and longer-term development interventions is needed to provide more efficient and effective responses to crises. Over the past three years, socialprotection.org has seen a significant increase in interest around this topic.

The Social protection in crisis contexts Online Community,<sup>15</sup> organised by Oxford Policy Management, UNICEF and the European Commission, is one of the most active online communities on socialprotection.org. It serves as a common portal for practitioners and researchers working on social protection across the humanitarian-development nexus to exchange information, collaborate and learn from each other's experiences. Today it has 164 members from governments, international development agencies, humanitarian organisations, civil society groups and academia, hosts 62 documents and has organised a series of webinars on the topic.

As a space for individuals to share views, emerging evidence and experiences in both English and French, the online community makes use of all the tools available to promote interactions among its members. Many of the members have used the discussions tool to share news and recent publications, ask for help with their research or release an open call for contributions.

Such discussions have resulted in the sharing of knowledge among members around various topics, such as adaptive social protection, shock-responsiveness, social protection in contexts of fragility and forced displacement, and cash-based safety nets in humanitarian contexts.

The Shock Responsiveness webinar series, organised by Oxford Policy Management, showcased six webinars on the topic from 2016 to 2018 and has been one of the most popular webinar series on socialprotection.org. It was realised in collaboration with many partner institutions, including the World Food Programme (WFP), the Cash Learning Initiative, the Hunger Safety Net Programme, UNICEF and the European Commission. This series approached theoretical concepts and case studies from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The outputs of the webinar series, such as recordings, slide presentations, related webinar summaries and Q&As, can also be found in its online community.

### **Featured webinar: Linking Humanitarian Cash with Long-Term Social Safety Nets**

The popularity and importance of this series was demonstrated by its first webinar: 'A Framework and Practical Guidance on Linking Humanitarian Cash Transfers with Long-Term Social Safety Nets'.<sup>16</sup> This webinar had one of the highest attendances (180) of all webinars on the platform and has since received 967 YouTube views.

Webinar panellists emphasised that the main purpose of humanitarian actors' engagement with social protection should be to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain dignity during and in the aftermath of the crisis. Bottom-up collaboration and the power of a network were also highlighted as important strategies. With the increasing frequency of shocks and stresses, and the cost of humanitarian action, this webinar series approached different ways in which social protection systems could be used to respond to shocks.

Positive examples of linking humanitarian cash transfers with social safety nets were showcased: UNICEF's response to the earthquake in Nepal in 2015; the Urban Food Subsidy programme in Kenya in 2009; the use of a Social Welfare Fund system by Oxfam to respond to the food crisis in Yemen in 2012; and the expansion of the Hunger Safety Net Programme in Kenya in 2015—all of which attracted a lot of interest from participants.

Experiences from Lesotho, Mali, Mozambique, Pakistan, the Philippines and the Sahel were also explored, along with global evidence on shock-responsive social protection. They highlighted several enabling factors and constraints in linking social protection systems to shock-responsive humanitarian actions. The case studies from Pakistan and the Philippines were discussed in more than one webinar in the series, since these two countries have been experimenting with building on their social protection systems to provide effective disaster response, facing different challenges and opportunities that provide important lessons for countries in similar contexts,

especially in the Asia-Pacific region. The effectiveness and efficiency of social protection programmes in responding to shocks, especially in low-income and conflict-affected countries, were considered an important topic of discussion. Considering the number of phases involved in disaster risk management and context-specific factors, there is a constant need for critical analysis and flexibility. Participants raised pertinent questions about the challenges of using existing databases, and the access and exclusion difficulties they pose. Funding and collaboration with external actors were also mentioned as topics of concern.

The major challenges involved in a shock-responsive social protection approach were identified as the lack of political will or buy-in from government, the incompatibility of programme design, coordination with multiple stakeholders, the lack of government capacity, and the mismatch of principles, among others.

### **Follow-up Q&A: ‘A Framework and Practical Guidance on Linking Humanitarian Cash Transfers with Long-Term Social Safety Nets’**

This follow-up Q&A<sup>17</sup> topic received the most comments from members of the Social protection in crisis contexts online community. In the Q&A, the speakers responded to questions submitted by the audience concerning coordination in fragile contexts, tools available for governments, and cases of expansion to include refugees and migrants.

The main reflections of the Q&A focused on not only ‘what’ is the best option for linking social protection programmes to humanitarian interventions, but also ‘when’ and ‘how’ to link humanitarian assistance with social protection, as humanitarian crises happen in a range of contexts, while government systems are strong in some contexts and might be weak or absent in others. The nature and extent of engagement with the government on social protection will depend on the context of the crisis.

These examples demonstrate the potential of interlinkages between socialprotection.org’s features in promoting discussion, interaction, exchange of information and capacity-building.

### **Social protection in crisis contexts online community: Key insights**

The webinar series and discussions in the online community<sup>18</sup> offered many insights into the role of social protection systems in responding to humanitarian shocks. The main lessons learned from these discussions were identified as follows:

- Policymakers should consider how social protection programmes and delivery systems can withstand shocks themselves and continue to function in a crisis.
- Critical and systematic analysis on whether and how social protection programmes can contribute to a response is crucial.
- Strengthening routine social protection for reducing the negative consequences of shocks is a valuable strategy.
- Strategic collaboration and cooperation across sectors is key.
- There is a need to increase planning and consider adverse impacts.
- Capacity and financial constraints should be considered, to avoid the potential negative impacts of the underlying social protection programme or system.
- Simple design tweaks can be implemented to make social protection programmes more shock-responsive.
- A monitoring and evaluation system must be put in place to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of shock-responsive social protection.

The popularity of this topic is also reflected in the increasing number of publications on the

platform addressing the relationship between social protection systems and humanitarian response to shocks in low-income, fragile and conflict-affected contexts, as well as several blog posts discussing the links between shock-responsiveness, climate change, gender barriers, migration and refugee crises, and social insurance.

### **Social protection in crisis contexts: Livestream of events**

In 2017, socialprotection.org implemented a new feature to help promote knowledge e-sharing and capacity-building by making offline event discussions available online to a worldwide audience through the [livestreaming of events](#).<sup>19</sup> The first two livestreams focused on the topic of shock-responsive social protection.

The International Conference on Social Protection in Contexts of Fragility and Forced Displacement<sup>20</sup> on 28-29 September 2017 brought together governments, international and bilateral organisations, civil society and researchers from 40 countries. The discussions focused on the role of social protection in mitigating the impacts of shocks, to learn from existing evidence, share experiences and consider new ways to use social protection systems in crises.

This first livestream was offered in English, French and Arabic and attracted record traffic to the platform: 1,069 live online viewers over the two-day event, and almost 1,200 total views on socialprotection.org's YouTube channel. The event was organised by UNICEF, in partnership with the European Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the governments of Finland and Germany, SIDA, UK aid, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), WFP and the World Bank. The outputs of the event are showcased in a corresponding [Online Community](#),<sup>21</sup> organised by UNICEF.

The second livestream was organised by WFP, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development and

Inclusion of the Government of Peru. The Regional Seminar on Shock-responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>22</sup> on 30-31 October 2017 aimed to foster an exchange between countries and promote regional dialogue on the role of national social protection systems in response to emergencies. The event also attracted a substantial audience of 612 live online viewers and 469 views on YouTube, despite only being streamed in Spanish. The popularity of these events reinforced the recognition of shock-responsive social protection as a major trend over recent years.

While promising, such efforts to make use of social protection systems to address the impacts of shocks and disasters are relatively new, and documentation of good practices is limited. Therefore, socialprotection.org represents a key platform for policymakers, researchers, development and humanitarian partners and civil society organisations to share current research, best practices and lessons emerging from ongoing experience from all around the world and in various languages.

### **WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION**

There is growing consensus among practitioners that gender-sensitive mechanisms must be incorporated into social protection programmes, particularly in the realm of monitoring and evaluation. Well-designed social protection systems can narrow gender gaps in poverty rates, enhance women's income security and access to personal income, and provide a lifeline for poor women, especially single mothers.

Understanding gender issues and incorporating them in social protection programmes can tackle gender discrimination while ensuring inclusive, pro-poor growth. Despite the great potential to impact key developmental outcomes, the connections between women's empowerment and social protection systems are often overlooked in the design of social protection programmes.

Since its early days, the socialprotection.org platform has promoted discussions on how social protection can empower women, and it has seen an increase in the number of publications, news articles and blog posts addressing this issue each year.

The Gender-sensitive social protection Online Community<sup>23</sup> was created in 2016 and is one of the platform's most popular communities, with 102 members. Community discussions have centred on empowering women in rural settlements, the effective implementation of gender-sensitive social protection programmes, and financial inclusion for women involved in agriculture. An important output of this Online Community is the nine-part Gender-Sensitive Social Protection webinar series,<sup>24</sup> conducted by FAO and the IPC-IG, which are the organisers of the community. The series was held from 2016 to 2018, and it featured case studies from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, with webinars in English and Spanish. Before its commencement, an online survey was made available to members of the platform to choose topics they were most interested in for the series. The following topics were addressed in the webinars: current issues and policy trends; social protection design and implementation; social protection insurance and finance; the empowerment of rural women; smallholder agriculture; and integrating a gender perspective into shock-responsive social protection.

### **Gender-sensitive social protection online community: Key insights**

Some of the main lessons learned from the discussions and topics raised in the Gender-sensitive social protection Online Community and during the webinar series include the following:

- By analysing existing evidence on how social protection affects girls' and women's lives, cash transfers seem to be particularly powerful when careful consideration is taken about their design and implementation, and gender-related outcomes are monitored closely.
- It is important for social protection to be complemented by other social policies, such as childcare, which facilitates women's participation in the labour market.
- Social protection programmes need to ensure that they are not limiting women's roles to caregiving, but also promoting their economic roles in the household and in the community, expanding women's rights to economic development.
- Different 'packages' of interventions need to be adapted to different contexts; not only at the country level, but also at the community level.
- Innovative approaches such as 'cash plus' or 'training plus' measures present an opportunity to promote resilient livelihoods and gender equality outcomes more sustainably.
- In Asia, women are relatively well represented in terms of inclusion in social assistance programmes, but not in formal social insurance programmes. When examining programmes from a gender equality perspective beyond targeting women, it becomes more problematic.
- Programme design features play an important role in supporting gender equality goals—for example, targeting women, supporting their practical needs but not overburdening their time, and recognising and supporting women's role in productive activities.
- Transformative change to address the drivers of gender inequality requires explicit objectives, an integrated approach and dedicated investment in gender-sensitive programme design and implementation.
- Actors need to recognise that the formal and informal politics influencing design and implementation are just as important as technical design features.

- To achieve gender equality, it is not enough to design a gender-sensitive programme. Gender sensitivity and staff capacity on gender-related demands and constraints is equally important to ensure gender-sensitive programme implementation. Similarly, monitoring and evaluation systems and indicators should include the gender equality agenda.
- A programme can be made more gender-sensitive by taking women's time and mobility constraints into consideration, as well as by offering specific skills training to build resilience against harassment and better resolve conflicts within the household.
- To assess the extent to which a social protection programme promotes women's empowerment, it is vital to understand local socio-cultural beliefs and traditional perceptions of gender roles and responsibilities.
- Emerging innovations in social protection programmes, such as group education and family development sessions, including both mothers and fathers, have been identified as important strategies to engage men and women equally to change social norms.
- Meaningful integration of gender into project design, implementation and evaluation is required. This involves identifying gender gaps, taking action (addressing the gaps in projects), measuring gender-disaggregated project results etc.

### Showcasing gender-sensitive social protection content

Every year, socialprotection.org dedicates at least one edition of its monthly newsletter to the role of social protection in promoting gender equality, by highlighting the most up-to-date content from the platform that addresses the issue.

In 2016, a prominent content inclusion was the publication 'Gendered risks, poverty and

vulnerability in India',<sup>25</sup> a case study developed by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), which addressed poverty in rural India and explored the gendered dimensions and impacts of the Indian public works programme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

In 2017, the newsletter highlighted, among other publications, webinars and online communities and events. The *Policy in Focus* publication 'Social Protection: Toward gender equality',<sup>26</sup> developed by the IPC-IG, covered key topics related to women's empowerment and social protection, featuring a wide range of contributions from women policy practitioners and scholars.

The increased popularity of this topic was evident in the March 2018 newsletter, 'How can social protection empower women?',<sup>27</sup> which featured a number of publications, webinars, blog posts, news and events on the role of social protection in safeguarding and promoting the rights of women in the pursuit of inclusive development. Two prominent examples emphasised the relationship between women's empowerment and cash transfers, another popular topic of the platform. Evidence continues to emerge on the positive impacts of this foundational approach to social protection. Moreover, in recent years, the international community has turned its attention to the impact of cash transfers on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The publication 'A mixed-method review of cash transfers and intimate partner violence in low- and middle-income countries',<sup>28</sup> published by UNICEF, the International Food Policy Research Institute and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in February 2018, discussed how cash transfers can impact intimate partner violence by addressing economic security and emotional well-being, intra-household conflict and women's empowerment.

The ILO working paper 'Cash transfer programmes: poverty reduction and women's economic empowerment: Experience from Mexico',<sup>29</sup> from August 2017, was based on 150 publications on cash transfer programmes in the



country since the end of the 1990s and focused on the effects of these programmes on women's and girls' lives. The results point to evidence that most of these gender-related interventions have focused on breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty but have been weaker in promoting women's economic empowerment through employment or sustainable livelihoods.

The blog post 'Gender, Insecurity and Social Protection: Evidence from Five Mekong Countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam and Thailand)',<sup>30</sup> published in July 2017, addressed the positive effects and shortfalls of existing social protection programmes in the region. It was an output of the Ambassadors series, which presents insights into social protection from the viewpoint of a group of international online United Nations Volunteers.

### **Supporting the SPIAC-B Gender Working Group online community**

More recently, in June 2018, the *SPIAC-B Gender Working Group*<sup>31</sup> was established to support the shift in practice and approach to gender-responsive social protection across the sector. This Online Community is a closed group, established under the auspices of the SPIAC-B.

Members from different institutions, such as the ODI, UN Women, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the IPC-IG, the European Union Social Protection Systems Programme (EU-SPS) and the ILO, use the online space to share meeting minutes and promote discussions and events around gender and social protection, and share relevant content in the form of studies, guidelines and toolkits on key topics that relate to gender-responsive social protection, such as lifecycle vulnerabilities, informal work and financing and delivering social protection.

The Online Community was active in elaborating a joint statement and sharing efforts in preparation for and raising awareness of the *63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women*,<sup>32</sup> whose priority theme for 2019 is social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Across the world, social protection is playing a key role in achieving progress on gender equality. Gender inclusivity is increasingly being incorporated into the design and implementation of social protection policies and programmes, and its impact is being recognised. The socialprotection.org platform plays an important role in fostering discussions around this issue, promoting awareness around the topic and connecting experts and practitioners working on the ground to make them better equipped to promote change towards gender equality.

### **SOCIAL PROTECTION, SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH**

Traditionally, social protection has been recognised as an important component in efforts to alleviate poverty and address vulnerability, especially in low- and middle-income countries. In recent years, the contribution of social protection to the achievement of long-term human development, sustainable livelihoods and inclusive growth has surfaced as a key topic of discussion in the international community. This recognition is, in part, what has prompted social protection policies and programmes to be endorsed and incorporated into leading international agendas.

Policymakers are increasingly interested in how social protection can assist poor and vulnerable people to access jobs in both the formal and informal sectors. Different strategies have been implemented, such as cash-for-work programmes, employment guarantee schemes and support for skills training, but little evidence has been shared on what works well and what should be improved.

In this context, the *Social protection for employment (online) community (SPEC)*<sup>33</sup> was created with the purpose of filling in the knowledge gap and facilitating South-South learning and exchange. With 130 members, the Online Community, hosted by DFAT and GIZ, is an output of the South-South Knowledge Exchange Forum: Linking Social Protection to Employment Opportunities, which took place in 2016 in Jakarta, Indonesia. SPEC provides a

platform for ongoing interaction by publishing research, articles and case studies, participating in small group discussions and presenting webinars. The SPEC 'resource matrix on publications on social protection and employment' has over 200 publications, linking social protection to sustainable development with studies from all over the world.

### **Webinar series: Linking Social Protection to Sustainable Employment**

An outstanding output of SPEC is the Linking Social Protection to Sustainable Employment webinar series,<sup>34</sup> which showcased eight webinars from 2016 to 2018, focusing on topics such as economic and social inclusion, sustainable livelihood development, the graduation approach and productive inclusion, with case studies from various countries, particularly from Asia-Pacific, Africa and Latin America.

The series has brought together a range of partners working on social protection for inclusive growth. BRAC, the Philippines Department of Social Welfare and Development, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the ODI, the World Bank and national governments have collaborated with DFAT and GIZ to promote enriching discussions around the topic. One of the webinars in the series is the most popular video uploaded to the socialprotection.org YouTube channel: the 'Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) of Philippines: Linking Cash Transfer to Sustainable Livelihood Development' webinar,<sup>35</sup> held in November 2016, has received over 2,080 views.

The main objective of the Linking Social Protection to Sustainable Employment webinar series has been to share experiences from countries around the world to learn more about the interaction between social protection and sustainable livelihoods. Panellists have presented and discussed successful examples of social protection for employment programmes, such as the SLP from the Philippines, BRAC's Ultra-Poor Graduation Approach in India, the *Familia* and *Haku Wiñay* programmes from Chile, the PROSPERA social inclusion

programme from Mexico and India's MGNREGA, among others.

Panellists have emphasised that an integrated and comprehensive approach allows for the building of bridges across sectors, and thus addresses the variety of struggles faced by people living in extreme poverty. Moreover, the series has highlighted the importance of social protection programmes that evolve through iterative learning, adapting to continue empowering the poorest households and strengthening resilience.

Psychosocial support and empowerment for poor families to promote their development of resources, capacity and income generation were stressed as key factors of the success of the *Familia* programme from Chile. The programme serves as a leading example of comprehensive social assistance. It focuses on people living in extreme poverty. This was highlighted in the webinar as problematic, since a broader vision of poverty and social assistance would allow for greater and more inclusive socio-economic development.

The PROSPERA social inclusion programme from Mexico sparked much interest from the attendees who participated in the Q&A session, raising questions about the empowerment of women through PROSPERA, how to build the evaluation framework and how to successfully replicate it for other programmes. It is one of the most celebrated social protection programmes globally, particularly in the realm of evaluation, which has been a key component of its success. Shockingly, this iconic conditional cash transfer programme is being abolished after 21 years of pioneering success.

This webinar series also explored the chronic crisis of unemployment and working poverty internationally by addressing the missing links between social protection and the changing labour market. The implication for social protection is that employment is not playing its anticipated role in poverty reduction at a time when ending poverty in all its forms everywhere is the major challenge of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 1).

Therefore, there is a need to:

- realistically appraise the potential role of social protection in contexts of chronic labour market failure;
- recognise the limits of current provision in relation to the profound structural barriers to employment;
- engage critically with the achievements to date; and
- develop new thinking regarding the conceptualisation and implementation of social protection.

Panellists also emphasised that the reality is that people work hard and yet are unable to leave poverty even if they work very hard. This is why a social protection system is needed in this area: it contributes to closing gaps in service delivery in isolated areas and catering to excluded parts of the population.

The fight against poverty and malnutrition cannot rely on short-term tools that deliver temporary solutions. As countries move towards establishing a social protection floor, they need to create and implement sustainable policies, ensuring progressive and long-term social benefits.

Some key messages in relation to how social protection programmes can improve children's nutrition outcomes were also highlighted during the [Linking Social Protection to Sustainable Employment](#)<sup>36</sup> webinar series:

- Explicit targeting of pregnant women and/or mothers with young children can magnify the positive direct and spillover impacts on the community.
- A comprehensive development approach such as graduation that addresses education and nutrition can reduce vulnerability to health shocks as effectively as health-centred programmes.
- Integrating the graduation approach into government social protection programmes

is the most effective way to scale up positive child nutritional outcomes.

### **Showcasing emerging approaches: Social protection and the graduation approach for refugee responses**

Another key topic addressed by this webinar series was the refugee crisis and its connection to social protection and inclusive growth. There is growing global consensus that displacement requires a joint humanitarian and development response, underpinned by long-term planning and programming for solutions, led by a broad coalition of actors, including governments.

The webinar presenters analysed a pilot of the graduation approach, as implemented by the UNHCR in Ecuador. It aimed to strengthen the national protection system by incorporating a graduation and self-reliance perspective, while also improving refugees' access to the State's projects, programmes and services. The main conclusion is that by building economic inclusion, refugees are empowered and enabled to live more independently of external assistance, access a stable livelihood and contribute to the local economy, while preparing themselves to take advantage of whatever solution ultimately becomes available.

Panellists, presenters and discussants included practitioners from implementing governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as international organisations, donors and technical assistance providers, which demonstrated the integrative approach of the webinar series.

### **GROWING INTEREST IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH**

It is important to note that in many webinars in the series and discussions in the Online Community, the topic of women's empowerment and gender equality has been either addressed or raised by participants in relation to the topics of inclusive growth and sustainable employment. There are many studies that focus on how

gender equality contributes to sustainable economic growth. However, the converse relationship—that sustainable economic growth promotes gender equality—has been explored less. This demonstrates a growing interest in the interrelation of these two topics and the need for future research.

### **Blog series: South-South learning on social protection and sustainable employment**

In 2018, SPEC launched a blog series to complement DFAT and GIZ's efforts to contribute to South-South learning on social protection and sustainable employment. The *Social Protection for Employment series*<sup>37</sup> presents key learnings and recommendations based on analyses of social protection programmes that focus on promoting inclusive development through employment opportunities.

The most recent blog post of the series, 'South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme: Innovations and challenges',<sup>38</sup> explored how the programme has attempted to address common limitations of public works programmes related to sustainable employment by implementing innovative approaches.

Public works programmes have been a popular instrument in many developing and middle-income countries to provide social safety nets following shocks such as natural disasters or economic crisis. However, they have been subject to several criticisms, which are related, in particular, to their inability to deliver sustainable employment and the lack of evidence of significant or sustained impact on productivity and growth.

Therefore, with the ambition of equipping participants with skills so that they can enter the labour market after exiting from their short-term employment, South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme adopted different methods such as diversifying employment in various sectors, promoting short-term employment at a large scale, creating incentives and formal obligations for various ministries to share responsibility, and creating employment in social services, such as

early childhood education and caregiving. This blog post demonstrated that the programme has been successful in many ways. However, it has also faced challenges that compromise its social protection functions, and public works programmes alone cannot resolve national structural unemployment and need to be complemented by longer-term measures, such as economic development policies and educational reforms.

### **Community of Practice on South-South cooperation, with a focus on child rights**

In 2018, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) and the IPC-IG created the first online community on the platform dedicated primarily to South-South cooperation, while also focusing on advancing the rights and welfare of children. The *Community of Practice on South-South Cooperation for Children (CoP-SSC4C)*<sup>39</sup> is one of the most commonly accessed pages on the platform, with more than 120 members.

South-South cooperation offers concrete solutions to common development challenges and can work as a tool for inclusive development. Over the years, successful and innovative South-South cooperation initiatives have had a positive impact on the design and implementation of social protection programmes. However, a topic that is yet to fully leverage the power of South-South cooperation is the cause of children.

Child poverty affects not only the well-being and aspirations of individual children, but also the wider communities, societies and economies in which they live. Poor childhood conditions can negatively affect inclusive growth and sustainable development, since these conditions are associated with long-term disadvantages in health, education, social adjustment and earnings, which, therefore, have an impact on children's development, education and, eventually, employment opportunities.

Key topics of discussion in the community are related to good practices in South-South and triangular cooperation for sustainable

development, the role of South-South cooperation in achieving results for children, and lessons learned and recommendations from case studies, especially from Africa and Latin America.

Community members also share news from the field, policies, guidelines, technical reports and publications. One prominent publication is the report 'Good Practices on South-South Triangular Cooperation for Sustainable Development, Vol. 2 (2018)',<sup>40</sup> which contains 107 good practices on South-South and triangular cooperation from different areas of the SDGs, highlighting some notable solutions to challenges faced by developing countries.

Content from events is also made available to the community, enabling members to access information that is shared offline, such as documents related to the BAPA+40 event and presentations from the South-South Development Expo, which took place in New York in November 2018.

The CoP-SSC4C webinar series is one of the outputs of the Online Community. It brought together a range of practitioners and experts from all around the world in a sequence of three webinars so far. UNICEF, UNESCO, UNOSSC and government representatives from countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia have discussed topics that link South-South cooperation to global water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) solutions, early childhood development, and development tools, technology and innovations that support the achievement of the SDGs for children.

### **Showcasing social protection and inclusive growth: International Week of Social Protection—leaving no one behind**

Inclusive growth and sustainable development were also key topics addressed in the two livestream events of 2018. In the International Week of Social Protection—Leaving no one behind,<sup>41</sup> participants shared experiences and approaches in the fight to end poverty and extreme poverty, achieve gender equality, reduce economic inequality and promote quality jobs according to the SDGs. The event had 548 live

online viewers, and over 1,070 total views on YouTube by December 2018.

The event was organised by the Mexican Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL) and GIZ, with the collaboration of various international organisations, such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ILO, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, FAO, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women and UN-Habitat.

### **e-Learning: Adaptation of the TRANSFORM course**

In 2017, the TRANSFORM e-course was launched as an adaptation of a face-to-face training package. It was developed through collaboration between African social protection experts and Africa-based experts of the United Nations agencies ILO, UNICEF and UNDP, with support from EU-SPS, particularly the Government of Finland, and further co-financed by Irish Aid. The online version was delivered in partnership with socialprotection.org.

Participants have stated that the course has increased their level of knowledge in relation to social protection floors, helped them to reflect on social protection systems in their contexts, as well as other countries' contexts, and enabled them to appreciate the complexity and interdependence of each other's social protection realities, encouraging them to reflect about new solutions and possibilities for different contexts. The e-learning course proved very popular and successful over its two first runs, resulting in a third run in 2019.

With the objective of encouraging critical thinking and building the capacities of policymakers and practitioners to improve the design, governance and administration of social protection systems, the TRANSFORM e-course contributes to the dissemination and implementation of quality social protection services. These services promote inclusive development that prevents poverty, reduces inequality and promotes sustainable development and inclusive growth.

# 4.

## Stakeholder engagement

The socialprotection.org platform is first and foremost a member-based platform. Since its launch, it has established itself as the global reference for policymakers and researchers in the field of social protection, with membership growing consistently. The institutions represented by these members are the platform stakeholders: government institutions (43 per cent), research and academia (23 per cent), non-governmental organisations (14 per cent), international organisations (10 per cent) and others (10 per cent).

As socialprotection.org's funders, DFAT and GIZ play an important role by providing financial and institutional support, as well as acting as engaged users and collaborators in various activities promoted through the platform. SPIAC-B, UNDP Brazil and the IPC-IG are also recognised as important actors, with

the IPC-IG hosting the platform and contributing to the development of its activities (Silva and Almeida Filho 2019).

The priorities of the platform continue to evolve according to the needs of its members and stakeholders. Therefore, socialprotection.org seeks regular feedback regarding activities, features and technical improvements. For the purpose of this report, a questionnaire was shared with a few key stakeholders in February 2019, to assess their needs and preferences as regular users of the platform, as well as to gauge the contribution of socialprotection.org to their work.

Over the last three years, the online communities and webinars have been extensively used by stakeholders and members, with excellent feedback from users, indicating that these tools are very effective in facilitating knowledge-

sharing. Publications and the newsletter were also mentioned as important sources of up-to-date information which provide useful background material that complements the interactions on other features. Webinars and online courses, especially the TRANSFORM e-course, were highlighted as the main sources of capacity-building.

To support the exchange of knowledge, information and good practice, socialprotection.org promotes interlinkages among its features and content databases, where one feature or tool results in the generation of new content for another, increasing coverage and outreach and enhancing interactions.

### **Feedback on the IPC-IG, the socialprotection.org platform's institutional host**

"The IPC-IG has professionalised the organisation of thematic webinars with excellent preparatory and follow-up support, and we significantly benefitted from this service. The back-up from the IPC-IG contributed to increased interest and positive feedback. Blog posts prepared as a summary of the webinars add to the documentation of the shared knowledge and have the appropriate format, which facilitates the uptake of essential parts that are key in the knowledge-sharing process".— [Feedback from survey respondent, February 2019.](#)

There is consensus that the platform supports discussion on trending social protection topics through all its features. Stakeholders emphasised that the platform contributes to their work by providing access to knowledge and communities of like-minded people, offering different opportunities for practitioners to connect globally, as well as providing the possibility to observe what is being discussed by other members and communities, holding the potential for future collaboration. Questionnaire respondents also valued the support received from the socialprotection.org team: "As I am working very closely with the socialprotection.org team and constantly use their tools and services, it has helped me achieve the goals of my projects."

The growing visibility and reach of online communities, webinars and livestreams was

emphasised by stakeholders, as these features provide opportunities for partnerships, collaboration and cooperation. These partnerships also contributed to the acknowledgment of gaps in knowledge-sharing and a demand for matchmaking and collaboration between practitioners.

Overall, socialprotection.org is seen as a unique platform for the global social protection community, serving as a knowledge repository of content and a space for collaboration and exchange. The organisation of webinars and the support for livestreaming events and online communities were highlighted as key to the platform's success. Suggested options for improvement include the development of a mobile app for smartphones and tablets, as well as the provision of paid services, such as the facilitation of webinars and online communities.

# 5.

## Main contributions of a digital platform dedicated to knowledge-sharing and capacity-building

The demand from developing countries for technical cooperation, knowledge products documenting innovative experiences and knowledge exchange on social protection has become central to bilateral and multilateral talks. In today's interconnected world, technology plays a crucial role in facilitating knowledge-sharing and capacity-building.

In this context, socialprotection.org promotes global outreach on social protection issues by covering a diversity of regions and topics, representing different geographical, cultural and language backgrounds and identifying

relevant ongoing discussions. The biggest challenge in working both with technology and development is keeping up to date with the constant changes and new evolutions in the field. Therefore, flexibility and adaptation are the core virtues of socialprotection.org.

The socialprotection.org platform supports the knowledge-sharing activities of a range of institutions through its main features:

**Webinar series:** The webinar tool is frequently used by members: stakeholders and online community administrators organise webinars



on a variety of topics, targeting different regions and time zones. The socialprotection.org team contributes to the facilitation of webinars, provides technical and logistical services and leads the organisation and dissemination of the event.

Webinars can be organised, presented and watched by people all over the world. Attendees can engage with the panellists in real time and watch the events for free. Following the live event, the recording and presentations are made available to all users. A summary of the webinar discussion is published through the blog feature, which allows the discussion to continue through other sources.

**Online communities:** The socialprotection.org platform also allows its members to create online communities for topics that are relevant to specialised practitioners. This feature has become increasingly popular in recent years, because it offers different possibilities for dynamic exchange and engagement. Online communities can serve as an open space for discussing and updating the latest emerging content. These possibilities contribute to knowledge-sharing and capacity-building among members and stakeholders.

**E-learning:** The e-learning area of socialprotection.org has evolved substantially over the last three years. The increasing demand for e-learning content in the social protection arena has prompted new developments and the hosting of various initiatives. The e-courses facilitate the dissemination of training in key social protection areas for people in different countries who are unable to attend a face-to-face course or interact with people in other countries.

**Event livestreaming:** One of the tools most recently implemented by the platform is the livestreaming of conferences and events, which allows anyone to tune into live discussions on key topics from different parts of the world, via a laptop or mobile phone.

Together, these services position the platform as a unique gateway to knowledge-sharing, collaboration, networking and capacity-building. It helps practitioners improve their work by updating them on trends, making them aware of new and best practices from around the world and providing a channel of communication with other experts, which supports cooperation.

The platform's content classification taxonomy also facilitates the identification of best practices and new evidence, and comparisons and relations between topics. The platform has developed a distinctive and successful way to promote knowledge-sharing and capacity-building that can be used as a model to foster and support work on other topics.

**Continuous improvements to the user interface:** Maintaining such a cutting-edge online platform requires keeping up with technology by constantly improving the user interface, optimising the user-friendliness of interactive features and expanding the range of services and tools. All these considerations have guided the team's efforts, with significant progress being made regarding the platform's appearance, and various new features introduced over the years.

Recently, important technical developments have been introduced to improve member engagement and the platform's functionality. These developments include the creation of a more user-friendly and attractive layout, the development of a new social space to support networking among members, allowing them to share interests and opportunities, and translating the platform's features into French and Spanish.

The socialprotection.org team is committed to providing access to quality, relevant, accurate and up-to-date content, as well as increasing user engagement, with a special focus on policymakers from developing countries, as well as members from the Asian region.

# 6.

## Conclusion

The socialprotection.org platform was created to meet the global demand for a free, unbranded, member-based online platform, able to foster a lively and collaborative environment for knowledge exchange on social protection, with a focus on developing countries. Over the course of three years, the platform has grown, reflecting the expansion of social protection policies and programmes worldwide.

The platform has established its online presence as a productive space for practitioners and policymakers to learn, interact, collaborate and share up-to-date content on social protection. DFAT's support has proven fundamental to its development, which has seen the achievement of high growth rates in the number of members, publications and webinars and in user access.

Increased demand for new services, content and activities in different languages, and tools supporting collaboration among platform members, demonstrates how

the platform is achieving its goal of providing users with a focal point of access to knowledge being generated by agencies, learning centres and governments. The socialprotection.org team, therefore, aims to continually strengthen ties with partner institutions and to work on potential complementary activities to ensure the sustainable development of the platform.

The overall impact of the platform in terms of building partnerships, collaboration and cooperation among policymakers and practitioners has proved positive. Discussions promoted through the platform have focused on key global topics and trends, strengthened relations with leading stakeholders in prominent regions and facilitated interactions among institutions, organisations and individuals all around the world. These relationships have seen concrete results, which were explored in this report and are aligned with the needs and demands of existing and potential new members of the platform.

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# Notes

1. See <<https://bit.ly/2I6WTDO>>.
2. See <<https://bit.ly/2wLfOxB>>.
3. See <<https://bit.ly/2wzuMqd>>.
4. See <<https://bit.ly/2WqcoPR>>.
5. See <<https://bit.ly/2wxLBBZ>>.
6. See <<https://bit.ly/2WfSVfY>>.
7. This objective originally foresaw the elaboration of other technical papers, including a One Pager series on socialprotection.org knowledge-sharing activities and an issue of Policy in Focus representing the most relevant topics shared on the platform. However, the IPC-IG and DFAT have agreed to reprogramme these activities: the One Pager series was replaced by the webinar series blog posts, and the Policy in Focus has been disregarded.
8. See <<https://bit.ly/2TiY8CV>>.
9. See <<https://bit.ly/2GeO6Pp>>.
10. See <<https://bit.ly/2Xzec8X>>.
11. See <<https://bit.ly/2fjbUXG>>.
12. See <<https://bit.ly/2Z9JT5N>>.
13. See <[shorturl.at/ksAF7](https://shorturl.at/ksAF7)>.
14. See <[shorturl.at/egoSZ](https://shorturl.at/egoSZ)>.
15. See <<https://bit.ly/2zeJmDI>>.
16. See <<https://bit.ly/2Xu1OEO>>.
17. See <<https://bit.ly/2Wbccip>>.
18. See <<https://bit.ly/2KGNYe6>>.
19. See <<https://bit.ly/2X0TRF8>>.
20. See <<https://bit.ly/2fjbUXG>>.
21. See <<https://bit.ly/2wMqj3s>>.
22. See <<https://bit.ly/2gNZyr7>>.
23. See <<https://bit.ly/2gFEXR9>>.
24. To access this content, it is necessary to become a member of the referred Online Community and then click on the following link: <<https://bit.ly/2x8Sius>>.
25. See <<https://bit.ly/2KLHcn0>>.
26. See <<https://bit.ly/2vaan32>>.
27. See <<https://bit.ly/31kjYuc>>.
28. See <<https://bit.ly/2QenhjR>>.
29. See <<https://bit.ly/2wHJWKb>>.
30. See <<https://bit.ly/2WYHL3G>>.
31. See <<https://bit.ly/2xcJa82>>.
32. See <<https://bit.ly/2K5Gwtv>>.
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