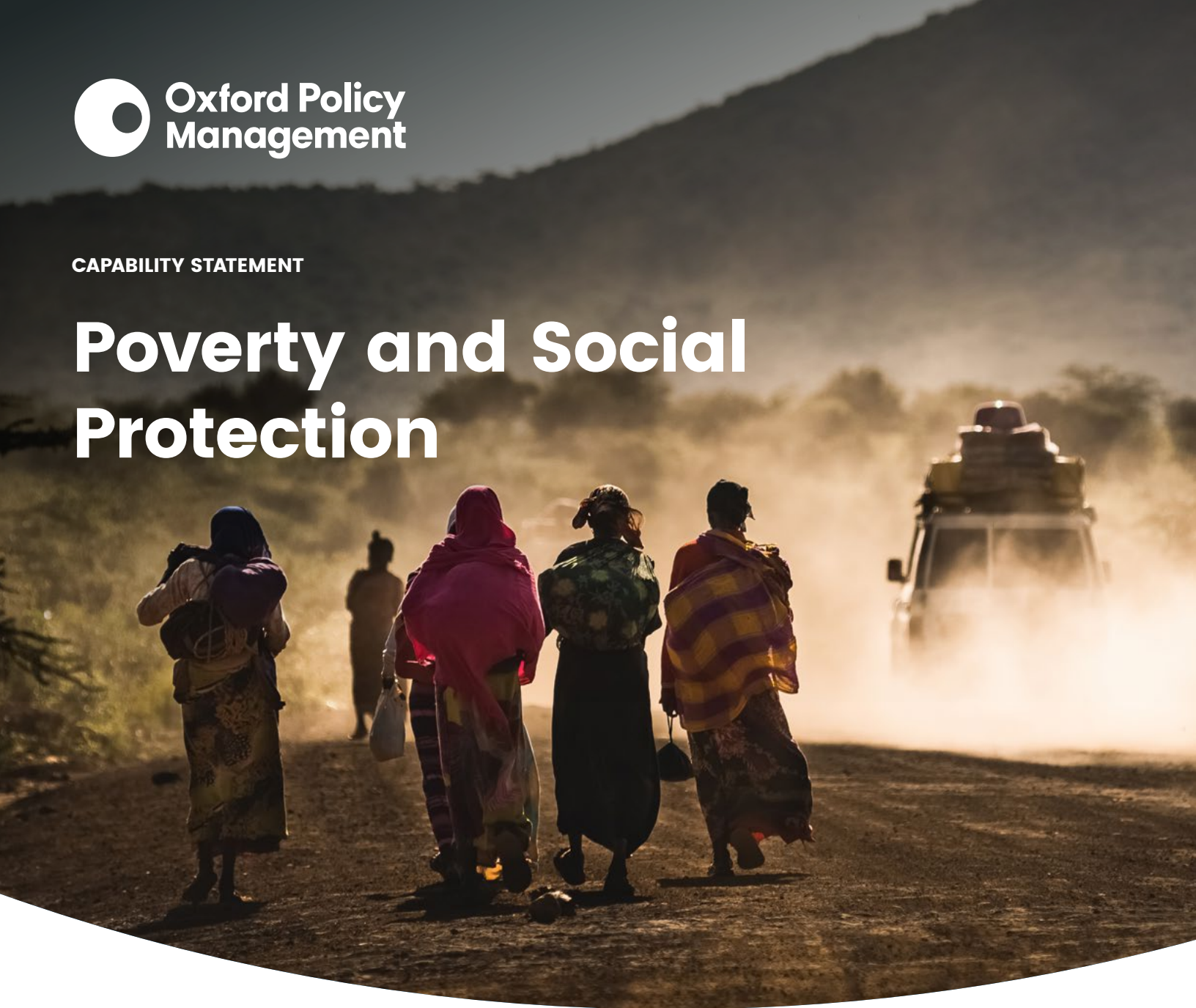


Poverty and Social Protection



We work in partnership with national decision makers to improve lives through sustainable policy change in low- and middle-income countries. Through our global network of offices, we deliver projects with expert knowledge and experience, and can be relied upon for excellence in all aspects of project delivery. Our approach to bringing about positive and sustainable change depends upon our considered understanding of the political economy of public policy and effective engagement with policy stakeholders, underpinned by rigorous analysis and robust evidence.

Our Poverty and Social Protection Practice

The rate of global poverty reduction is slowing, and countries throughout the world are facing a broader range of interconnected risks to economic and social progress.

The Covid-19 pandemic and geopolitical pressures on supply chains have resulted in slower and more volatile economic growth and rising debt burdens. Countries also face increasing challenges from the effects of accelerating climate change and environmental degradation. Social protection is an essential part of the policy toolkit for governments facing these challenges.

Well-designed social protection programmes can help governments to reduce poverty, build human capital, and safeguard families and individuals against risk.

Evidence demonstrates that effective programmes can stimulate aggregate demand and support a just transition to more inclusive, sustainable economic growth.

OPM's Poverty and Social Protection team supports development partners and governments to develop fair, inclusive, effective, and efficient social protection systems that are nationally owned, sustainable and tailored to local contexts. We work with international organisations and regional cooperation structures to share the evolving evidence on what does and doesn't work and help build consensus on the case for social protection.



The Poverty and Social Protection practice operates globally supporting our clients with support in the following fields:

- **Poverty, inequality, and vulnerability:** Supporting policymakers to understand who is poor and vulnerable and why.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning:** Making the investment case for Social Protection (demonstrating impact and feasibility).
- **Climate, and economic inclusion:** Adapting social protection systems to protect and build livelihoods in a changing climate.
- **Shock Responsive Social Protection:** Designing and delivering social protection for shock affected contexts.
- **Digital innovation, and finance:** Supporting the sustainable financing of social protection, through harnessing digitisation and technological innovation.
- **Inclusive service delivery:** Ensuring particular groups are included in social care services and social assistance and it meets their needs.

Our Value Proposition

We have delivered over 2,000 projects relating to social protection and poverty reduction over the past two decades.

We are a leading provider of research and advice supporting social protection programmes and systems. We work in partnership with international organisations such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations (UN) World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and bilateral donors including the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) and the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) to deliver customised, impact-driven projects.

We employ over 400 staff, of which 60% are technical specialists, supported by 21,000 international and national consultants from our roster of trusted experts.

We offer a strong combination of in-house technical expertise and a broad network of trusted external consultants to meet our clients' needs. This combination gives us the breadth and depth of expertise to mobilise the right combination of thematic and geographic skills needed.

We have a broad geographic footprint of 13 country offices across Europe, Asia, Africa and north America. This provides us with a grounded knowledge of the national and regional context of any project we design and deliver.

We build long-term, trusted relationships, often working with our clients for decades. Our experience supports countries to develop their social protection strategy through long-term partnerships. In Kenya and Pakistan, we have worked with governments and development partners for more than a decade to achieve sustained, iterative gains.

We innovate and bring the latest thinking to solve our clients' issues today, and tomorrow. Our services have supported analysis of poverty and vulnerability needs (such as [Data & Evidence to End Extreme Poverty \(DEEP\)](#), a £10m FCDO programme that provides policy-relevant insights into the changing drivers of extreme poverty); assessment of coverage gaps in existing social protection; the design, implementation, evaluation and modification of individual programmes; and sector-level assessments of institutional capacities, targeting systems and social registries, and national social protection policy and financing.



Shock Responsive and Adaptive Social Protection

Climate change increases the risks faced by the poor and vulnerable near-poor. Social protection is a key tool for policy makers to respond to this challenge. The last decade has seen considerable innovation in shock-responsive or adaptive social protection (SRSP and ASP, respectively). In projects funded by FCDO, WFP and others, We have made an influential contribution to this agenda, broadening the conceptual boundaries of the debate and providing policymakers with practical, evidence-based guidance.

Our research has helped to build the global evidence base on how social protection systems can be better equipped to prepare for, mitigate against and cope with covariate shocks to support those most vulnerable to climate change. Through technical assistance, evaluations and multi-country synthesis studies, we are actively involved in helping governments to strengthen systems for shock-responsive social protection, including through innovations in Forecast-based Financing (FbF) and Anticipatory Action strategies.

Examples of our work include:

- **Regional Social Protection Implementation Plan for Asia and the Pacific (WFP; 2023-2024).** We are supporting WFP's Regional Bangkok Bureau contextualise and operationalise WFP's 2021 Global Strategy for Social Protection for the Asia Pacific. This includes a five-year roadmap for the progression of social protection across all 17 country offices. We have conducted three detailed Social Protection Scoping Studies evaluating the wider social protection architecture assessing the potential for enhanced shock-responsive and nutrition sensitive social protection.
- **The Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme (World Bank; 2021-2022).** We were commissioned to support stakeholders in the dialogue and programming in the humanitarian-development arena, focusing on protracted displacement. Six studies across the Sahel region (Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania, Senegal, Chad, and Mali) explored the feasibility of linking humanitarian assistance and national social protection systems, particularly ASP. This resulted in an increased focus on strengthening targeting practices throughout the region.
- **Social Protection Approaches to Covid-19 (SPACE II) (FCDO, GIZ and DFAT; 2020-2021).** Through SPACE, we advised over 30 countries on how to adapt their social protection systems to the Covid-19 crisis. SPACE has also developed comprehensive technical documents – on ASP, SRSP, post-Covid-19 economic recovery, employment, climate resilience and disaster risk financing (DRF) – widely used by both development and humanitarian actors.



Assessment of Shock Responsiveness of the Social Protection system in Zimbabwe (UNICEF; 2022)

We conducted an assessment on behalf of WFP on the shock responsiveness of the social protection system in Zimbabwe. The project analysed the resilience and robustness of existing systems, policies and institutional arrangements. Our analysis centred on the cost effectiveness of leveraging Zimbabwe's social protection framework when responding to shocks, developing a range of strategies to enable better alignment or integration of humanitarian support through the government's system.

Our approach was developed using the conceptual framework we designed as part of a two-year [global research project for FCDO](#) on shock responsive social protection systems. We also used a social protection '[solar systems](#)' approach developed through SPACE to frame our response options. A subsequent phase included the development of a SRSP roadmap in conjunction with WFP, UNICEF and WB, and the Government of Zimbabwe.

Leveraging Digitalisation

Digitising the processes involved in administering social protection reduces costs (to the programme and to beneficiaries) and expands the scope for programmes to learn and adapt. By harnessing digital tools, governments and organisations can improve make targeting more accurate and consistent, streamline registration, and improve the ways that transfers are paid and services delivered. We support governments in leveraging digitisation in social protection and utilising digital technologies and platforms to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and reach of social protection programmes. We have implemented several essential components for leveraging digitisation in social protection.

Examples of our work include:

- **Global Alliances for Social Protection (GIZ; 2022-present).** We are proving technical advisory services to enable GIZ to effectively operationalise the concept of 'Adaptive Social Protection' through the development of diagnostic studies, guidance notes and capacity-building activities. In Rwanda and Uzbekistan, our experts deliver technical assistance to enhance the data-based steering capabilities of government ministries, strengthen the digital architecture of social protection systems and support the rollout of digital social registries.

On behalf of GIZ, we are also delivering capacity building activities and the creation of knowledge products across various workstreams. These include:



Developing a guidance checklist for practitioners to assess the potential and feasibility of alternative data sources in designing and expanding social protection programmes;



Assessing interoperability for farmer registries and social protection information systems to improve outcomes for rural populations; and



Researching digital data sources for social protection.

Many of our projects feature elements which seek to harness innovative technology to help policy-makers better understand and respond to poverty and vulnerability, from national strategies through to programme design. OPM has developed ways to harness big data for high frequency, high resolution poverty analysis; supported the use of mobile money for transfer payments; and advised on better harmonisation and interoperability of fragmented social protection systems. Examples include:

- We supported GIZ to deliver the **Digital Convergence Initiative (2021)**, which seeks to develop common standards, processes and principles for the delivery of digital social protection to facilitate the introduction of interoperable digital information systems and to improve service delivery and coordination.
- Under ADB's **Building Inclusive Social Assistance (BISA) (2019-2021)** programme, we provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) in building implementation capacity in two national social assistance programmes in Indonesia. This included strengthening the utilisation of digital platforms for data analysis of beneficiaries.
- Funded by the World Bank, we provided **TA and capacity building to the Government of The Gambia (2018-2021)** on how to enhance the technological aspects of the Social Registry in addition to advising on relevant policy aspects of the project.
- Through **DEEP (2020-2028)**, a £10m, FCDO-funded research programme consortium, OPM is supporting the development of high-frequency, high-resolution, low-cost ways of measuring poverty using big data and innovative machine learning techniques. This includes [workstreams using satellite imagery to predict concentrations of urban poverty](#), and [exploring how climate change is driving the changing distribution of poverty in low- and middle-income countries](#).
- We provide an influential contribution to policy debates around integrated information systems. This has included two commonly-referenced publications on social protection information systems, funded by Australian DFAT; and the MIS module of TRANSFORM, the training platform for strengthening institutional capacity for social protection agencies in Africa.

Inclusive and gender-sensitive social protection

In deliberately targeting need, social protection is a powerful force for tackling exclusion and structural disadvantage.

We know certain groups among the poor (e.g. migrants, excluded castes, or people with disabilities) may face barriers - formal or informal, accidental or deliberate - which make it harder for them to access social protection. Working with our clients, we generate evidence to shape and implement comprehensive social safety nets, services, and policies for the needs of diverse societal groups. We focus on understanding risks and access disparities among vulnerable and marginalised populations. We develop and design policies and programmes tailored to the unique needs of children, addressing gender dynamics, and individuals with disabilities. In a range of countries, particularly in south Asia and the Middle East, we support efforts to ensure that social protection is more effective in contributing to gender equality and social inclusion. Based on analysis of risks and disparities in access, we have helped design new programmes or modify existing ones to better reflect the needs of women, children and individuals with disabilities.

Examples of our work include:

- **Strengthening Child Protection and Social Protection Service Integration in the Middle East and North Africa Region (UNICEF; 2023 – present).** We are supporting UNICEF country offices in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia the co-design of models for service integration. The project aims to advance development and implementation of such models across the MENA region, and in doing so contribute to the investment case for service integration and system strengthening.
- **Thailand Social Protection Diagnostic Review (ILO; 2020).** Through two phases, we conducted poverty and vulnerability analysis; identified gaps in the coverage of vulnerable groups; and produced background papers on gender, migrant workers and children. The study highlighted the need to improve social protection adequacy for persons with disabilities and supported production of a plan for moving to a more integrated and inclusive national social protection system.
- **Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) Phase 2 (World Bank; 2019-2021).** We were commissioned to support a study examining disability inclusion in the second phase of LEAP – the flagship programme of the National Social Protection Strategy in Ghana. The study reviewed the design and implementation of LEAP 1 to differences in coverage and variations in programme benefits for people with and without disability; and drew on these findings and international best practice to provide recommendations for improving disability inclusion in LEAP 2, and the Ghana Productive Safety Net Programme more broadly.



Study on the Cost of Raising Children with Disabilities in the Philippines Phase 2 (UNICEF; 2020-2022)

UNICEF, Australian Aid and the Department of Social Welfare (DSWD) in the Philippines commissioned us to undertake [a study to assess extra costs – including opportunity costs for other household members](#) – involved in raising children with disabilities; and provide recommendations to improve DSWD interventions. The study explored the reason for a commonly found mismatch between monetary poverty indicators and achieved outcomes among people with disabilities. The study determined disability related costs and assesses how they change based on welfare levels, types of disabilities, household composition, degree of urbanisation and service provision. The study further assessed the extent to which current programmes and services are benefiting children with disabilities and their families. The findings had strong policy implications and recommended an adjustment to eligibility assessments and financial support, advocating that these extra costs should be reflected in eligibility assessments.

Economic inclusion

Economic inclusion programmes have gained global traction over the past decade but are complex and require considerable institutional capacity. These approaches aim to lift households permanently out of poverty by providing a concentrated, time-bound package of support. We are supporting research to assess if successful pilots can be taken to scale and advise on how small NGO-led programmes can be adapted for larger scale government implementation.

- **Kenya's Economic Inclusion Programme** (FCDO; 2021-present). [OPM is managing the monitoring, evaluation and knowledge component](#) of the the Kenya Economic and Social Inclusion Programme (KSEIP). Within this portfolio of studies and technical assistance, we are supporting learning from the Kenyan Government's pilot Economic Inclusion Programme (EIP). Phase 1 of this pilot is implemented by a consortium of NGOs, who are required to develop and test processes which are compatible with Government systems and build the capacity for the Government to take on later phases of implementation and scale-up. We are helping the Government and development partners to understand the opportunities and challenges involved in attempting economic inclusion at scale.

This involves:



A mixed-methods impact evaluation, combining a randomised control trial and structured qualitative research to assess if the programme makes a measurable impact to participants' lives, and if so, by how much.



Several in-depth qualitative process reviews, examining how critical aspects of the programme's design (such as targeting, and the delivery of mentoring services) have been delivered in practice. These provide policy makers with timely, evidence-based insights into what has and has not worked, which can help to shape later phases of the programme and the approach to scale-up.

The findings are also contributing to the global evidence base on the potential and practical challenges of implementing these kinds of programmes in low-income settings.





About us

Oxford Policy Management enables low- and middle-income governments to bring about sustainable positive change using analytical and practical policy expertise.



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