Bridging the DIVIDES
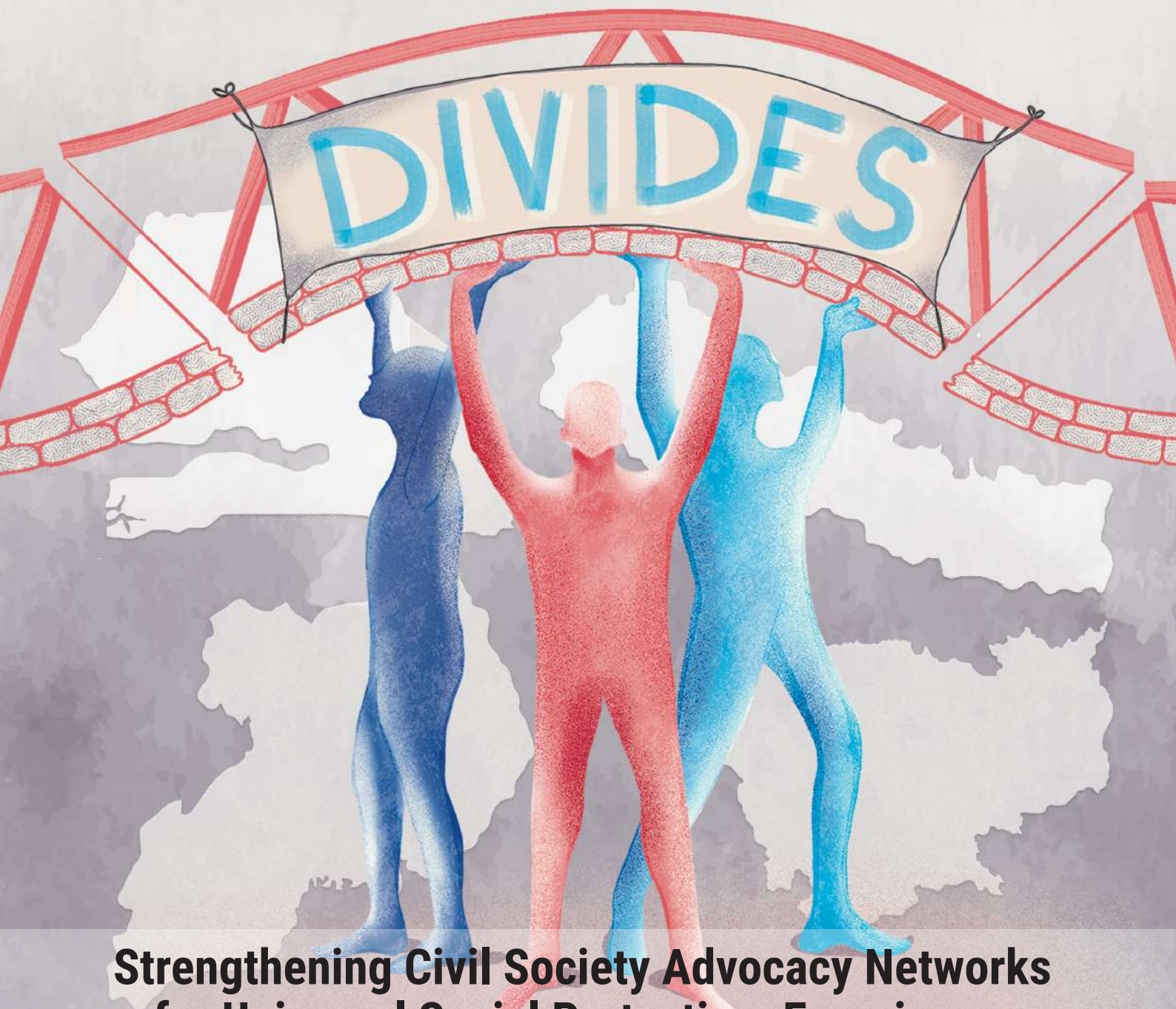
Strengthening Civil Society Advocacy Networks for Universal Social Protection: Experiences from Cambodia, Nepal, Senegal, and Uganda

Acknowledgements

Audience

This report is intended for all social protection practitioners, policy makers, institutional development actors and advocates interested in the promotion and implementation of a human rights-based approach to universal social protection through strengthened cooperation of all civil society actors, including trade unions and various types of CSOs.

This report is relevant to civil society actors who are actively engaged in countries that are in the early stages of overall social protection policy development and are interested in forming or strengthening national social protection advocacy networks. The learnings shared in this report can provide valuable guidance and support to these actors in their efforts.

Women members of community health organisations at the awareness-raising event in Senegal | WSM

BRIDGING THE DIVIDES. STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCACY NETWORKS FOR UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION: EXPERIENCES FROM CAMBODIA, NEPAL, SENEGAL, AND UGANDA.

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Abbreviations

CSOs   : Civil Society Organisations

EU   : European Union

GCSPF   : Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors

GDP   : Gross Domestic Product

ILO   : International Labour Organisation

IMF   : International Monetary Fund

INSPIR   : International Network on Social Protection Rights

ITUC   : International Trade Union Confederation

LIC   : Low Income Country

MoF   : Ministry of Finance

NGOs   : Non-Governmental Organisations

PFM   : Public Finance Management

PWD   : People With Disabilities

SDG   : Sustainable Development Goals

SP&PFM : Building Synergies between Public Finance Management and Social Protection

UNICEF   : United Nations Children & Fund

USP   : Universal Social Protection

TUs   : Trade Unions

WCO   : Working Group of Coordinating Organisations (HelpAge, Oxfam, WSM)

Executive Summary

The urgent need for appropriate, adequate and sustainable financing of social protection programmes and systems gained importance in the face of multiple crises. Investment in robust social protection systems to progress towards universal coverage, is recognised as an important instrument to build prosperous and inclusive societies and enhance resilience in the face of adversity. While there are many ways to do so, governments are often not well equipped to identify and design the most effective financing strategies tailored to their unique contexts. To overcome these hurdles, it is crucial to foster consensus building processes on ways forward to support low and middle-income countries willing to invest in social protection in an efficient and effective manner. Collaboration between development actors is an important next step to forge a path forward that ensures universal social protection leaving no one behind.

Investing public resources in social protection systems is equally an important matter for all who contribute to these resources, through taxes or through social contributions, as they form the rightsholders of social protection. As duty bearers, governments bear the responsibility of delivering social protection and are accountable to their citizens. A human rights-based approach must be the foundation of social protection policy development and aligns with the principles outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is against this background that the global programme "Building Synergies between Public Finance Management and Social Protection" (SP&PFM) demonstrates all its relevance. Funded by the European Union, and implemented by the ILO, UNICEF and the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCPSF) in 24 countries, it promotes the cooperation between national governments, civil society actors and international development partners to improve Public Finance Management (PFM) in view of more efficient and increased social protection coverage. Within this context, the GCSPF, a global network of civil society organisations (CSOs), has assumed the responsibility to facilitate the participation of civil society in Cambodia, Nepal, Senegal and Uganda in the development of national financing strategies based on PFM. This involvement has generated rich experience, knowledge and learnings, worthwhile to be shared with others, as documented in this report.

From the onset, the GCSPF recognised the power of collective action and opted for the strengthening of national civil society networks to engage jointly towards the national government institutions in charge of social protection.

This report highlights the valuable lessons and insights garnered with regards to the network building strategies used by the GCSPF to effectively influence decision makers. With a focus on inclusiveness, effectiveness, and sustainability, these network-building strategies hold significance in the pursuit of lasting impact on the path to social protection floors and universal social protection. The GCSPF seeks to empower these networks to exert influence and maintain their strength beyond the programme's conclusion.

The GCSPF noticed the siloed approach within civil society, stemming from the nature of these CSOs themselves, but equally so by the fragmented social protection systems, often split between contributory and tax-based systems. Similar fragmentation was witnessed among development partners. Notably, the spaces for dialogue between authorities and civil society remain scattered. Aside from the tripartite approach for the governance of contributory social insurance funds, the dialogue on overall policy development and financing strategies, as well as on the delivery of specific programmes, remains largely informal, unregulated and ad-hoc. This lack of structure contributes to a fragmented approach by civil society, resulting in each CSO to advocate for their own constituents in a competitive way, rather than joining forces for a universal approach, starting with social protection floors.

The GCSPF successfully addressed these challenges and bridged divides to establish inclusive, effective and sustainable networks in

› The role and attitude of the coordinating organisations charged with convening the networks in their initial stages, was important to make the networks more inclusive.
› Knowledge on international standards, human rights principles in social protection, and the link between taxes and social contributions proved equally important. This knowledge provided the common ground for collaboration between CSOs and trade unions.
› Knowledge building and research strengthened credibility for engaging with development partners and decision makers on an equal basis.

> Strong connections at the local level were instrumental in amplifying the voices of rights-bearers and improving social accountability mechanisms. As a result, all the networks gained recognition and were invited to participate in dialogues which led to changes in policies and implementation practices, in favour of the rights-holders.

However, the sustainability of these achievements relies not only on funding, but also on the political will of the decision makers and improved practices of all stakeholders. The report showcases the GCSPF's key recommendations:

> Trade unions and other CSOs advocating for improved social protection need to initiate conversations and explore possibilities for better cooperation. They must try to integrate their advocacy strategies on improved financing of social protection policy, bridging social contributions and tax-based solutions.

> Institutional development actors need to enhance coordination amongst themselves regarding the provision of funds to CSOs with the aim to strengthen the human rights-based approach and stimulating civil society cooperation.

> Governments need to establish an institutional mechanism of dialogue on overall social protection policy development, implementation as well its sustainable financing, between policy makers and civil society, ensuring democratic representation of all social layers and interest groups across the life cycle. Such dialogue should complement tripartite social dialogue, ensuring the voices of all civil society actors are structurally, effectively and periodically taken into account.

Through the presentation of our findings, our hope is to inspire CSOs worldwide. We also wish to emphasise the critical message that collaboration is needed not only across borders and between international development partners, but also across different types of CSOs, to overcome divides in strategies, approaches, and ideologies.

1. Introduction

"Leaving no one behind" is an urgent necessity in this time of multiple crises. It is widely recognised worldwide that national social protection systems can play a crucial role in fighting poverty, addressing specific needs along the life cycle of an individual, reducing the income gaps and providing a buffer against impact from crises. Moreover, the international community, gathered in the global coalition USP2030, calls for Universal Social Protection (USP) to realise SDG 1.3., as universal approaches have proven to be more effective and support higher efficiencies. Importantly, they also strengthen national solidarity and build more trust in the government. Such national social protection systems form the cornerstone for an inclusive and more prosperous society.

Yet, it is alarming that more than 4 billion people in this world, residing primarily in developing countries, lack any form of social protection. They belong to what is referred to as the "missing middle"; encompassing individuals who are not covered by either contributory social insurance, or by social assistance schemes usually aimed at very poor households. This forgotten group typically consists of the poor and the emerging middle class, mainly active in the informal economy.

Other factors of exclusion are age, ability, ethnicity, gender, legal status, ... Not surprisingly, women are over-represented in this non-protected portion of the population, despite international standards affirming their entitlement to social protection rights, necessitating national systems and policies to be based on principles of equality, dignity, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability, all ingredients for a human rights-based approach.

A growing body of evidence[1] shows that universal approaches are financially viable for most countries overtime with appropriate financing mechanisms, drawn from various domestic resources, including taxes and social contributions from workers. In addition to financial resources, countries also require expertise and insights into the needs and vulnerabilities of the inhabitants. Encouragingly, significant progress is being made, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic that exacerbated the urgent need for improved social protection systems. Importantly, stakeholders are increasingly collaborating towards expediting social protection policy development, in synergy with increased political will of many governments.

Civil society together for universal social protection

Civil society has become increasingly vocal in their claims for improved coverage of forgotten groups, driven by the conviction that social protection is a universal right. At the global level, over 120 civil society organisations formed the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF). The Social Protection Floor guarantees universal health protection and income security throughout the life cycle of all people. It serves as an important steppingstone towards achieving universal social protection, which not only ensures universality, but also encompasses comprehensiveness and adequacy in nature.

The GCSPF upholds the principles of inclusiveness, solidarity, non-discrimination, gender-equality and transparency in social protection systems. Through their work with civil society, governments and international institutions, coalition members actively support the development of universal social protection systems through advocacy and programme initiatives at the country level and through research and capacity strengthening at the global level. (See more in Box 1)

An older person interacting during a social accountability initiative in Uganda | HelpAge and Grandmothers Consortium

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1 Financing gaps in social protection_Global estimates and strategies for developing countries in light of the COVID-19 crisis and beyond. Valverde, Pacheco-Jiménez, Muzaffar, Elizondo-Barboza, ILO 2020, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_758705.pdf

Box 1. A Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors (GCSPF)

The GCSPF is a global coalition of more than 120 civil society organisations from all continents including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Trade Unions (TUs), faith-based organisations, global and regional networks and movements, think tanks and academics. Established in 2012, its primary objective is to advance a human rights-based approach to social protection for all, with a special focus on safeguarding the most vulnerable populations worldwide, as outlined in the ILO Recommendation 202. The Social Protection Floor is accepted to be a key tool in achieving universal provision of economic and social security, through basic guarantees on income and essential social services throughout the life course. It contributes to the achievement of the global sustainable development agenda (particularly SDG 1.3) and other international commitments and is a foundation for fostering inclusive, equitable and sustainable development.

The GCSPF is convinced that social protection has the potential to address poverty, inequality, vulnerability and deprivation. Therefore, the coalition seeks to promote the implementation and financing of social protection floors and the extension of social protection to all, across the globe.

To achieve these objectives, the GCSPF employs several key strategies. It focuses on strengthening collaboration between national, regional and global Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) across continents, strategic influence over United Nations' agencies and member states, and on coordinating initiatives aimed at increasing the involvement of CSOs in all social protection policy elaboration, monitoring and evaluation.

In pursuit of its mission to advance universal social protection (including the social protection floors), policy coherence and coordination, knowledge building and sharing, the GCSPF and some of its key members are also members or observers of other strategic networks such as the Global Partnership for Universal Social protection (USP 2030) or the Social Protection Inter-Agency Board (UN SPIAC-B). The GCSPF participates regularly in UN meetings and conferences and events on sustainabledevelopment. For more information: https://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/

Development actors' cooperation on social protection and public finance management (PFM)

The European Union (EU) has been instrumental in promoting greater cooperation between development institutions, to harmonise their strategies and to work in synergy to achieve universality. This is particularly crucial when supporting governments to develop financing strategies for social protection. Public Finance Management (PFM) is indeed a key instrument for more efficient, even increased financing of social protection programmes and for monitoring their delivery.Hence, PFM is also of key interest to civil society: good governance of public resources is crucial in terms of social accountability.

The European Union, therefore, funded a global programme **"Improving synergies between Public Finance Management and Social Protection"** (SP&PFM) from October 2019 to September 2023. (https://socialprotection-pfm.org/)

A mother and child | UNICEF

The programme was a collaborative effort and jointly implemented by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The GCSPF, represented by 3 of its members (WSM, HelpAge International and Oxfam) was equally an implementing partner in 4 countries: Cambodia, Nepal, Senegal and Uganda. Its role was to facilitate the participation of civil society organisations, including trade unions, in such policy development, including financing through improved PFM.

The programme supported 24 countries to improve the design and financing of social protection systems and programmes, implement and monitor more effective and inclusive programmes and apply shock-sensitive social protection programmes and systems. Importantly, it called for improved cooperation between all stakeholders including all the line-ministries involved in social protection planning and delivery, the local level implementing agencies, the Ministry of Finance (MoF), workers' and employers' organisations and other civil society organisations (CSOs), as well as all international development partners, including the EU delegations, active in countries that are developing social protection systems. Such cooperation supported consensus-building on policy development and PFM improvement towards universal social protection.

At the global level, cross-country activities were organised to support the national strategies, such as research to provide economic rationale for investing in social protection, development of an Inter-agency Social Protection Assessment (ISPA) tool to analyse fiscal space and assess financing options, capacity strengthening on PFM for social protection, briefs to strengthen the responsiveness of social protection in case of crises, among others.

Indeed, dialogue with civil society, and social dialogue in particular, is of utmost importance in the development of social protection policies. This inclusive approach ensures that social protection policies are adapted to the needs of people, ensure easy and equal access, and are inclusive and fair. Such dialogue also plays a pivotal role in building trust in the government, garner a higher buy-in in social protection systems through social contributions and paying taxes, and also contribute to a higher sustainability of these systems.

In these 4 partner countries, the GCSPF applied similar strategies: the creation and consolidation of inclusive national civil society networks on social protection, strengthening their capacities and knowledge, particularly on PFM, supporting effective engagement with public authorities and relevant stakeholders, undertaking, and participating in research to bolster advocacy efforts, and share learnings with the GCSPF.

A national network as a vehicle to facilitate civil society participation

The GCSPF firmly believes that effective cooperation between civil society actors holds the key to exerting greater influence over policy development. This includes capacity strengthening on social protection standards and principles, consensus-building on a shared vision for social protection in their country, enhancing visibility, working in synergy and joint advocacy efforts. Representative and inclusive national social protection advocacy networks are believed to provide an effective platform to put these strategies in place.

The programme was unique as it not only provided resources for this effort, but also created new and innovative spaces for civil society to engage with all the diverse stakeholders, particularly on matters that are usually hard to influence, such as better and increased financing of social protection policies.

However, this endeavour presented significant challenges. For instance, network members often found themselves vying for the government's attention to their constituents. Trade unions and NGOs, with different visions and advocacy strategies, tended to work in isolation, while using different spaces for dialogue. National networks also encountered challenges such as lack of consensus, democratic practices and effective leadership. Additionally, they often lacked a common vocabulary or the necessary knowledge to navigate technical issues, such as PFM. Working to overcome these obstacles has generated valuable experiences and knowledge in the last three years from which interesting lessons have been drawn. Such lessons can be useful to civil society elsewhere in the world with similar experiences and ambitions. See Box 2 for an explanation of our understanding of CSOs and networks.

Box 2. What we mean by CSOs and networks

In what follows we often use the terms "Civil Society Organisation'' (CSO) and "Trade Unions" (TUs) in a general sense. A CSO is a local organisation outside the state, the family or the market associating voluntarily to intervene in questions of common or public interest. (See also Vaes et al, 2016). The concept covers community-based organisations, cooperatives, member-based associations, and a high variety of NGO's specialised in services or advocacy characterised by a diversity of issues, roles and skills. They can be small or big, work at very local level or at national level. They can be informal or formally registered, donor funded and/or based on membership contributions, political or non-political, independent or controlled by third parties, …. Some work in bottom-up approaches, others might simply do specialised research. Together they cover quasi all social or economic sectors of society.

We often make separation of trade unions given their unique position as a social partner participating in regulated bi- or tripartite negotiations at various levels, whereas other CSOs might use other non-regulated spaces to influence other stakeholders. However, we acknowledge that, when we draw learnings, we can't attribute all our findings to all CSOs in general, given their different roles, sizes, views and attitudes. Therefore, we will try to distinguish between them, when our learning requires to be made more specific. A "network" simply refers to a form of cooperation between like-minded organisations agreeing on a common purpose, in our case, cooperation on influencing social protection policy. That purpose can be one-off, short-term or longer term. The way in which this cooperation is decided and organised can take many different forms. A network might or might not have a legal status. In the 4 countries in which we worked, our networks have taken different forms. Other terms, such as "alliance", "coalition", "platform" or "movement" might be more applicable to some of them. However, we don't expect this to impact our learning as such. When talking about the sustainability of these networks, we will refer to the characteristics as such, rather than to the correct terminology of the cooperation.

In the following chapters, we present our learnings on three main characteristics of well- functioning national social protection advocacy networks: inclusiveness, effectiveness, and sustainability. These characteristics have been assessed in the framework of this programme, with a focus on social protection budgets. In what follows, we first describe the context in which these networks work, explain the methodology used to derive these learnings, delve into past and current practices, while identifying key factors of success or failure. At the end we present our final conclusions and recommendations.

An informal worker in Nepal | ILO

2. Understanding the Contexts: Country Profiles

Cambodia

Cambodia has experienced rapid economic development, leading to its graduation into a Lower-middle Income Country and witnessing declining poverty levels. Nevertheless, the population, particularly those reliant on informal work, remains highly vulnerable to all kinds of crises, as became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, about 89% of all employment was categorised as informal according to the ILO.[2]

A significant milestone for the more than 16.4 million Cambodians occurred in 2016, when the Royal Government of Cambodia approved the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF). This framework established a comprehensive long-term vision based on international standards and integrated the existing social protection programmes, of which the National Social Security Fund (since 2008) and the ID-Poor programme (since 2006) were the most important. A National Social Protection Council (NSPC) was established to coordinate between all stakeholders and to steer the financing and implementation of the framework. Since the approval of the NSPPF, various new programmes have been piloted, such as the (targeted) Cash Transfer Programme for Pregnant Women and Children (<2y), and the inclusion of domestic workers in the Social Security Fund. A family package programme is under development, as well as a pension scheme for formal workers. In parallel, the government has been receiving increased international funding and support from organisations such as the ILO, UNICEF, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Asian Development Bank and the EU.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lock-down had a significant impact on the population of Cambodia. However, this challenging period also created momentum for the government to initiate the development of a more ambitious and more shock-responsive national social protection law in 2022, based on a review of the Social Protection Policy Framework. However, this law continues to be in the finalisation stage. To raise awareness among the population about the available social protection programmes, the government also started a communication campaign.

Despite all these initiatives, there is still a significant gap in social protection coverage for the Cambodian population. While formal workers contributing to the Social Security Fund can benefit from health insurance and occupational diseases and accidents compensation, not all of them are registered. Moreover, only a limited number of informal economy workers can access the Social Security Fund. People with disabilities (PWD) or those belonging to poor families only receive partial coverage by social assistance programmes, although health insurance is more advanced. In all, Cambodia still has a long way to go in achieving USP. SDG 1.3 monitoring based on the latest available figures[3] reveals that only 6.2% of the population receives benefit from at least one social protection scheme, whereas 31.4% of the population benefits from health protection schemes. Table 2.1 shows coverage of the various schemes that are in place. As a post-war priority, PWD are relatively well covered. In 2020, Cambodia spent 2.3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on social protection, including health protection that absorbs 1.4% of GDP. Although some new policies are in the pipeline, both horizontal (more schemes) and vertical expansion (higher benefits) depends on sustainable funding of these schemes.

A waste collector in Cambodial | Oxfam

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2 ILOSTA Database Explorer: https://www.ilo.org/shinyapps/bulkexplorer0/?lang=en&id=KHM_A
3 ILO social protection dashboard: https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=19

Table 2.1. Social Protection Coverage in Cambodia

Cambodia Effective Coverage (2020)	
Total Population (in million)	16.48
Government spending on SP incl. health (in GDP%)	2.30%
Government spending on health protection (in GDP%)	1.40%
% of population covered by at least 1 SP benefit	6.20%
% of population in health insurance scheme	6.20%
% of all children receiving child support	31.40%
% of vulnerable persons receiving support	4.50%
% of the elderly receiving support	4.30%
% of people with disabilities receiving support	70.10%
% of employed population with work injury insurance	17.20%

Source: ILO social protection dashboard: https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=19

Cambodia has witnessed a fast-growing civil society since the implementation of the peace accords, starting in the early nineties. Local and national NGOs, associations, and trade unions have emerged to serve and represent various social groups and work towards improving policies that directly affect these groups. Cooperation between civil society actors emerged soon, as challenges arose in areas such as labour rights, land rights, fishing rights, ... and more recently on civic space, climate change, gender discrimination, access to health, and since 2014, also on social protection. Nevertheless, civic space remains strictly regulated and narrow.

The funding made available through this and other programmes since 2014, has been instrumental in strengthening such cross-sectoral cooperation on social protection. In particular, trade unions and NGOs – which previously pursued advocacy efforts independently based on the interests of their constituents, have come together. This resulted in the creation of one national advocacy network, SP4ALL in 2022, which currently consisting of 20 active core member-organisations.

The formation of the network coincided with a favourable shift in the government's approach towards civil society engagement in social protection matters. The government created spaces for civil society to engage and comment on the social protection law development, and the creation of national coordination structures for development partners active on social protection. Currently 4 coordination groups exist, each having a diverse focus area including: social health, social assistance, social security, and an overarching coordination body that oversees all initiatives, including funding.

CSO and TU representatives in Cambodia | Oxfam

Nepal

Nepal is a multi-ethnic country with a predominantly rural population, soon to graduate to middle-income status. The country is prone to natural shocks, such as earthquakes, floods, and landslides. It has also been marked by political instability. In 2015, in the aftermath of the 10-year civil war, a new constitution paved the way to federalism which is still an ongoing process today. One in three working-age men is employed abroad, with personal remittances accounting for at least 25% of Nepal's GDP. The patriarchal social structure causes gender inequality and limits women's access to resources, education, and employment.

The idea that every citizen should have a minimum level of social protection, to protect against shocks and reduce poverty, has gained momentum with the Nepali Government over the last few years. Joint trade union lobbying with the government and employers contributed to the adoption of key labour and social protection laws, covering Nepal's 20 million active population, which also included provisions to further integrate the informal economy

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Social protection should be prioritised for three types of groups: children, youth, and elderly people. Life cycle vulnerability exists in these groups. There should be dedicated budget to cover these groups, moreover, the federal government can play an important role to expand such programs.

- Dr. Rina Yadav,
Member of Parliament during an interaction programme between CSOs and policy makers in Janakpur in March 2021.

There are also a range of social protection schemes, such as cash transfers, in-kind and food transfers, as well as insurance, subsidies and rudimentary public works or labour market programmes.

Table 2.1. Social Protection Coverage in Nepal

Nepal Effective Coverage (2019)	
Total Population (in million)	28 million
Government spending on SP incl. health (in GDP%)	3.3%
Government spending on health protection (in GDP%)	1.2%
% of population covered by at least 1 SP benefit	17%
% of population in health insurance scheme	10.9%
% of all children receiving child support	22.9%
% of vulnerable persons receiving support	14.8%
% of the elderly receiving support	84.2%
% of people with disabilities receiving support	13.7%
% of employed population with work injury insurance	4.5%

Source: ILO social protection dashboard: https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=13

After decades of advocacy from trade unions, the Contributory Social Security Act 2017 was a game changer as it provided social insurance mechanisms for workers. Presently, the challenge is to ensure that coverage includes informal and migrant workers, who make up a vast majority of the labour force.

Two organisations, namely the International Trade Union Confederation – Nepal Affiliates Council (ITUC-NAC) and the Social Protection Civil Society Network (SPCSN) work jointly in Nepal. ITUC-NAC is an umbrella organisation representing the three largest trade unions in Nepal (GEFONT, NTUC, and ANTUF) Under the umbrella of ITUC-NAC, they focus on common positions and advocacy strategies for their various campaigns.

SPCSN serves as a platform for 16 local CSOs advocating for the rights of various marginalised groups such as the elderly, children's rights movements, and PWD or people living with HIV/AIDS, among others. SPCSN focuses on cash transfers for nine social protection schemes, such as child nutrition grants, and old age and disability allowances. SPCSN also works with the Department of Civil Registration, on access to health care, and adaptive social protection in the event of shocks.

These two organisations bring together over 100 stakeholders through INSP!R Nepal, part of the International Network on Social Protection Rights (INSP!R) [See Box 3 for details]. Within this network, trade union members focus on contributory social security, while civil society and NGO members focus on non-contributory social security, such as child nutrition grants or old age allowances. Since 2020, ITUC-NAC and SPCSN have been working collaboratively to demonstrate that uniting civil society organisations and stakeholders through a rights-based approach can help ensure better coverage for more people.

| WSM

BOX 3. What is INSP!R?

As early as 2008, and as part of their efforts to achieve the ILO's "Decent Work Agenda", WSM and its partner organisations in Africa, Asia and Latin America started to implement a real networking strategy centred around a shared vision of the right to social protection. With the active support of the rest of the Christian Labour Movement in Belgium, and in particular the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (ACV-CSC) and the Christian Mutualities (CM-MC), this network has evolved into a comprehensive, multi-actor network, bringing together more than 100 social movements across 4 continents. In 2020, this network was renamed INSP!R.

INSP!R comprises social movements including, trade unions, mutualities, NGOs, youth, women, elderly etc, organizing multi-stakeholder collaborations at national, continental (Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe in the progress) and international levels. They have the flexibility to engage other CSOs and strategic partners to strengthen their joint advocacy efforts. So far, the networking efforts have yielded promising results both at national and continental levels. For this reason, the INSP!R in Nepal and Senegal have been the starting points to broaden our network strengthening in both countries.

The INSP!R vision on universal social protection is rooted in a human rights approach, considering the life cycle of individuals. It takes into consideration several sources of funding (contributory and non-contributory with international solidarity if necessary), several measures (preventive, protective, promotive, and transformative), effective participation of the state, the private sector, and civil society (tripolar model).

Children playing under an umbrella, symbolising social protection in the hills north of Kathmandu | WSM/Anuj Adhikari.

Senegal

Senegal stands out as one of the most politically stable countries in Africa, having witnessed peaceful transitions of power since gaining independence in 1960. The legislative elections of July 31, 2022, created an unprecedented situation in Senegal with a national assembly without an absolute majority. Despite the dynamics, so far Senegal has been spared the violence that is shaking the region.

In terms of economic indicators, Senegal recorded a GDP of $24.9 billion in current terms in 2020. In 2016, the country adopted a new national development plan, called the Emerging Senegal Plan (Plan Sénégal Emergent - PSE), whose main objective is the structural transformation of the economy.

As of 2019, the population of Senegal amounted to 16.2 million inhabitants.[4] There is a demographic contrast between rural and urban areas, with the rural population being younger while urban areas have a higher proportion of individuals in the working-age group. Each year, the cohort of young people entering the job market continues to expand, growing from 2,00,000 new entrants to the job market in 2000 to reach 4,00,000 in 2025 (Word Bank, 2017). Despite the achievements of the PSE, the job market is unable to provide employment opportunities for everyone. Historically, Senegal's social protection system has primarily focused on formal wage labour, which covered only 11.4% of the population in 2007, leaving workers in the informal economy, rural areas, and their families reliant on community systems for coverage.

The Senegalese National Social Protection Strategy set ambitious targets to increase the rate of health risk coverage to at least 28% by 2010 and 50% by 2015. As a result, from the 2000s onwards, the government made efforts to strengthen the system through assistance programmes[5] and other initiatives[6] were launched in 2012 with the aim of extending and strengthening social protection for the Senegalese population. By 2022, 53.2% of the Senegalese population should have health coverage through the various schemes.

Civil society and trade unions in Senegal have played an active role in advocating for social protection. They have organised themselves into the INSP!R network, which has developed partnerships with ministries and state institutions, influential associations, UN agencies, technical and financial partners to strengthen their contributions and influence in shaping social protection policies.

Prior to the start of the SP&PFM programme, INSP!R and its members were only working on the institutionalisation and extension of social protection. The organisations and their members had limited understanding and interest in social protection issues.

Monitoring of SDG 1.3 based on the latest available figures reveals that only 20% of the Senegalese population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, while 50% of the population benefits from health protection schemes. Table 2.3 shows the coverage of the different schemes in place.

Awareness raising in Senegal | WSM

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4 Projections from ANSD l (National Statistics and Demography Agency of Senegal)
5 SESAME Plan covers the care of the elderly, free childbirth, caesarean section, treatment of certain serious illnesses, illnesses requiring costly care and coverage of the care of the indigent through the issuance of a certificate of indigence (Law No. °62-29 of March 26, 1962 relating to certificates of indigence).
6 The National Program for Family Security Grants (PNBSF) which provides income to poor households, the Equal Opportunities Card (CEC) for services for the disabled, the National Program for Universal Health Coverage (PNCMU) for coverage and care of populations in the informal economy and rural areas.

Table 2.1. Social Protection Coverage in Senegal

Senegal Effective Coverage (Year)	
Total Population (in million)	16.296
Government spending on SP incl. health (in GDP%)	4.20%
Government spending on health protection (in GDP%)	0.9%
% of population covered by at least 1 SP benefit	20%
% of population in health insurance scheme	50%
% of all children receiving child support	1%
% of vulnerable persons receiving support	17%
% of the elderly receiving support	29.9%
% of people with disabilities receiving support	7%
% of employed population with work injury insurance	10%

Source: ILO social protection dashboard: https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=13

Social protection in Senegal is characterised by its fragmentation and the multitude of programmes, policies and actors. Social insurance schemes for workers in the formal economy include five schemes, two for civil servants (Health, National Pension Fund), three for the private sector (Social Security Fund, Retirement Provident Institution – IPRES) and health provident institutions – IPM. In addition to these schemes, there are voluntary contributory schemes grouping together three major types of organisations: community mutuals, complementary mutuals, so-called professional mutuals.

The Labour Ministry is putting in place a new scheme, called "Régime simplifié des petits contribuables" (Simplified regime for small contributors) targeting the informal economy in general. A pilot scheme has been set up in the handicrafts sector gathering at least 122 specialised trades. In the long run it will cover the 8 social risks that are currently guaranteed for the formal workers only.

The field of social assistance also remains heterogeneous with universal schemes aimed at the entire population or certain categories of people, such as free care for children aged 0-5, deliveries by caesarean section and dialysis, food and nutrition security in the event of shocks. There are also other schemes whose intervention is limited to populations designated as poor. For example: The family security grant which provides assistance for 3,16,940 households. These households also benefit from the assumption of responsibility for health expenses through community mutual funds, health care and access to the programme of family security grants for PWD and holders of the Equal Opportunities Card. (The SESAME Plan for senior citizens).

Within the International Network of Rights to Social Protection in Senegal (INSP!R), 14 organisations linked by WSM, several other CSOs and umbrella organisations have joined the coalition, which includes trade unions, the national platform of NGOs (CONGAD), the National Council of Elderly People (CNAS), the Federation of Associations of People Living with a Disability (FSPAH), two associations of women in the informal economy and the national association of motorcycle taxi drivers. The expanded cooperation among these 25 representative CSOs has led to a better understanding and cooperation on several social protection issues related to the protection and management of public finances.

Uganda

Social Protection in Uganda has evolved over the time. A number of positive traditional and informal social protection mechanisms exist in the communities such as family and clan support systems, mutual assistance schemes and neighbourhood support groups. These social protection initiatives have played a significant role in assisting individuals and families during times of need and distress.

The formal social protection interventions in Uganda include the Public Service Pensions Scheme (PSPS), the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and Parliamentary Pensions Scheme (PPS). The purpose is to ensure that workers are guaranteed a decent life upon retirement. Other social protection initiatives are embedded in various government programmes such as the Orphans and other Vulnerable Children Programme, Community-Based Rehabilitation Programme for PWD, School Feeding Programme and Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE), among others. These initiatives existed though limited in scope and coverage, were not coordinated under a unified policy framework until Uganda embarked on the establishment of a social protection system with the approval of the National Social Protection Policy in 2015.

To facilitate the implementation of this new policy, a programme plan of implementation was also developed offering guidance on the practical aspects of putting the policy into action, given the newness of this area of work in Uganda. However, despite seven years having passed since this policy's implementation, a Social Protection Implementation Strategy is yet to be put in place which poses a challenge to the effective execution of the policy's objectives.

According to the Uganda Social Protection policy, social protection is defined as public and private interventions to address risks and vulnerabilities that expose individuals to income insecurity and social deprivation, leading to undignified living conditions. In the Ugandan context, the social protection system consists of two pillars, namely: social security and social care and support services. Social security refers to protective and preventive interventions to mitigate factors that lead to income shocks and affect consumption. Social Care and Support Services, which is currently the least implemented, are a range of services that provide care, support, protection and empowerment to vulnerable individuals who are unable to fully care for themselves (The Uganda National Social Protection Policy, 2015).

Before the SP&PFM programme started, there was limited understanding, awareness and appreciation of the policy by different stakeholders. The Social Protection Network in Uganda (SPPU) had initially participated in the launch of the Uganda National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) and thereafter held regional workshops to increase knowledge about the policy and its objectives, as well as other social protection interventions the government and other stakeholders being implemented for different vulnerable groups. However, the network faced challenges due to resource constraints and its limited mandate, since it was not yet registered and had fewer members, lacking representation from NGOs, trade unions and the informal sector in general. Through various activities, the programme has created awareness among CSOs and trade unions. This includes dissemination of the simplified version of the policy in collaboration with Ministry of Gender and the Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). Trainings and advocacy efforts have been made to raise awareness, appreciation and engagement by policy makers both in Parliament and outside to allocate more funding to the social protection sector. The programme has focused on building capacity of CSOs to foster collaboration and effectively engage policy makers and implementers on social protection. A team of more than 30 CSOs and trade unions have participated in trainings that further equipped them with the knowledge and skills on social protection policy, PFM, and advocacy.

| HelpAge

In order to guide the strategic direction of the programme, HelpAge established a programme steering committee consisting of nine organisations representing different social protection floors in the country. This committee includes: Social Protection Platform Uganda (SPPU), Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Social Protection (UPFSP), Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA), Save the Children Uganda, Action on Disability and Development International (ADD), Grandmothers Consortium (GMC), Uganda Youth Network (UYONET), Development and Research Trainers (DRT) and Central Organisation of Free Trade Unions (COFTU).

There is one key network that brings together CSOs focused on social protection issues; namely, Social Protection Platform Uganda (SPPU). SPPU was founded in 2007 by CSOs to promote social protection and provide Social Protection-like interventions as a measure for tackling extreme poverty and addressing risk and vulnerability in Uganda. It currently has a membership of more than 40 organisations across the country. HelpAge is part of this network and has been supporting its growth and development, over the years, both technically and financially.

The programme has played a vital role in strengthening the capacity of SPPU with an aim to establish a stronger CSO- led social protection network in the country. The programme supported SPPU in development of the strategic plan, set up of internal control systems, governance and rebranding.

Of the 44.269 million total population, only a small fraction, around 2.8% is effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit. The percentage of GDP allocated to public social protection expenditure stands at 1.7%. The budget on social protection by Central Government stands at 0.7% as compared to 3.8% average expenditure in the Sub-Saharan Africa.[7] These statistics highlight the pressing need for increased efforts to expand social protection coverage in Uganda.

Table 2.1. Social Protection Coverage in Uganda

Uganda Effective Coverage (Year)	
Total Population (in million)	44.269
Government spending on SP incl. health (in GDP%)	1.7%
Government spending on health protection (in GDP%)	1%
% of population covered by at least 1 SP benefit	2.8%
% of all children receiving child support	-
% of vulnerable persons receiving support	1.2%
% of the elderly receiving support	11.2%
% of employed population with work injury insurance	9.8%

Source: ILO social protection dashboard: https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=13

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7 SDG 1.3. Indicators: see https://www.ilo.org/gimi/WSPDB.action?id=16

3. Methodology

The process to capture the learnings was initiated during mid-2022, involving Working Group of Coordinating Organisations (HelpAge, Oxfam, WSM) [WCO] country representatives and the headquarter representatives. Together, they engaged in brainstorming sessions to delve into the specific outcomes, progress and achievements of the programme to date.   Through a series of offline and online participatory exercises, the team collectively decided to focus on examining their experiences of "creating national advocacy networks on Social Protection and Public Finance Management" in the 4 GCSPF programme countries.

The rationale behind selecting this as the focus of our learning agenda was based on the recognition that these networks have become relevant in their respective national arenas, having overcome many challenges and achieved a certain level of maturity. Moreover, all the programme countries have considerable achievements and successes at this stage thereby providing rich material in the form of good practices, rooted in personal experience to be shared. The programme consistently emphasised the ideas of inclusiveness, effectiveness, and sustainability in the national networks, prompting the decision to document and explore learnings through these three dimensions. Through reflection and discussion, the team reached a shared understanding of these three dimensions, as outlined in Box 4.

| HelpAge

BOX 4. Three dimensions in the learning framework

We consider <u>inclusiveness</u> of our networks as an expression of our strategy towards USP and a rights-based approach, without discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status or ability. Each and every CSO or trade union, working for improved social protection of any social or economic group in a country can join and adhere to the network with equal rights, regardless of their status or strength, for as long as they commit to the vision and mission of the network, while contributing their added value to the network. Decisions are made democratically, while leadership embraces inclusivity and respect. We value and respect bottom-up approaches with participation from the constituents. Competition between groups must be avoided, while understanding that USP cannot be realised in a day. Consensus should rather be built on priorities, and solidarity between groups must guide such consensus. We believe that such characteristics of inclusiveness bring representativeness to the network, and hence also an increased legitimacy to speak on behalf of all, indispensable when engaging in advocacy.

We consider <u>effectiveness</u> of our networks as having the ability to act jointly and exerting influence over decision makers, especially those deciding social protection budgets. The members understand the basics of social protection standards and have a good understanding of the national social protection system in place, as well as of the social protection needs of the people they represent. They share their knowledge and skills with other network members and use their outreach and mobilisation capacity in support of the collective efforts. This enhances the credibility of the network and ensures that their spokespersons are listened to. Moreover, the members understand and coordinate their demands and advocacy strategies, striving to act in synergy and collaboratively. To the outside world they are visible, credible and where possible recognised by other stakeholders, in particular by government institutions. They have the ability to leverage windows of opportunity and occupy spaces that open up to actively engage in dialogue. Most importantly they contribute to positive change and impact, both in terms of more inclusive social protection policies as well as effective and sufficient coverage of more people.

We consider **sustainability** of the networks themselves as an important dimension, especially in terms of quality leadership, internal deliberation and decision making, ways of working (meetings, documentation, …), available resources, identity and status of the network as well as its strategic directions. Recognizing the current dependency on external funding, the facilitating role of the GCSPF and the short existence of the networks, we are keen to understand how and to what extent members address internal and external issues that extend beyond the lifespan of this project. Sustainability of the networks is important to retain the policy changes they successfully advocated for and continue occupying spaces for meaningful dialogue and negotiation they have created. Ideally, such spaces need to be institutionalised, producing further incentives to sustain the network.

The journey of capturing the learnings in this publication involved a learning framework namely, "systematisation of experiences" – where, the word "experiences" resembled events witnessed by the programme implementation team and members of our network in these 4 countries during its life cycle. More information on this methodology can be found in Box 5.

This framework broadly recommends five steps to systematise and extract the learnings, also depicted in figure 3. These are:

A. Participation in the experience proposed for systematisation: This step involves identifying the staff and other direct stakeholders who have participated in the programme during its implementation.

B. Developing a plan to systematise the experience: Initial exercise to identify and develop the objectives, the object, the focus areas (axis), sources of information to be used and the steps to move ahead on this journey to capture the learnings.

C. Recovery of this experience: Developing a structured (chronological) reconstruction of the experiences and using these tangible traces to identify the significant facts, choices and decisions made, different stages and changes that set the pace of the process.

Figure 3: Systematisation of experiences (learning) framework and its major steps

Learning Step

A — Participation in the experience
- Objective
- Object, focus areas and pathway

B — Developing a plan to systematise the experiences

C — Recovery of the experience
- Analysis
- Critical interpretation

D — In-depth reflection – analyse and interpret

E — Formulate conclusions and recommendations

Expected Outputs

- Participants are identified

- Tangible traces, facts, choices made, any changes - are identified
- Chronological reconstruction of experience

- Learnings and recommendations
- Communications plan and products

D. In-depth reflection: To interpret the findings of the recovery process and analyse the actions and interactions during the experience. At this stage, one can identify the critical points and questions raised by the experience. Further introspection of these questions helps in identifying the causes of what happened, which leads to identifying any tensions and contradictions, understanding interrelations, and examining objective- subjective aspects that arose during the process.

E. Formulate conclusions and recommendations: Summarising the learnings from this experience, its possible future, and most importantly, consolidating proposals and recommendations for initiating similar new experiences that the relevant actors could learn from the experience being extracted. Developing a dissemination strategy to cascade the learnings.

A consultant was hired to customise this framework into a process for our programme and train the facilitators on this methodology, its implementation and challenges we might face during the course of recovery.

As a part of executing this process, we convened our country teams for workshops at the regional level. One workshop took place in Africa, with Senegal hosting Uganda, while the other workshop occurred in Asia, with Nepal being hosted by Cambodia. Our decision to have two regional workshops rather than one global workshop was based on the assumption that the social context and policy environment in the region would have some similarities. This allowed the teams to reflect much better on the similarities and differences of their experiences at this level.
 The framework for the learning process was executed in three stages, as outlined below:

Phase 1: Before regional workshops – Preparation and recovery of the tools pertaining to the experiences.
First, we developed a comprehensive list of programme participants. It included the existing staff members, staff members who transitioned to other roles within or outside the organisations and themembers of the national networks and direct stakeholders in the four programme countries.

Second, the country teams conducted formal and informal meetings-cum-workshops with the direct stakeholders at the country level to reflect on the traces of their journey in building and strengthening the respective national networks. These in-country dialogues instigated the initial thought process of the participants to recall the events and flow of the programme in their respective countries.

Available material traces such as – programme proposals and budgets, event reports and write-ups, meeting minutes, pictures, annual programme reports, publications, lists of direct and indirect stakeholders, and other relevant material that was generated to date before and during the programme implementation were gathered. To ensure collection of comprehensive set of information and evidence, participatory tools were adopted during these country discussions and a sub-group was selected to participate in the regional workshop. The country representatives also identified one facilitator each from their countries, someone who was not a part of the programme but who understood the country and programme context. The members who left their roles in this programme due to professional reasons were also invited on voluntary basis to review this document before completion.

To ensure the effective execution of the process, the consultant trained the HQ representatives and selected facilitators on the methodology and process of systematisation. A guide was also developed by the consultant to use while facilitating the regional workshops.

Phase 2: During the regional workshops – Recovering the experiences and in-depth reflection.The national network members, country representatives of the four programme countries and the HQ representatives of the three coordinating organisations were shortlisted to attend the regional workshops. The regional workshops in Senegal and Cambodia spanned one week and provided dedicated time for the participants to recover, reflect, analyse, and interpret their experiences.

For the first two days, participatory and bottom-up approach was employed to recover the experiences that the participants

recalled using their memory, material traces, findings of country meetings, and relevant sources. The facilitators and the HQ representatives relinquished control over this process of reconstruction to ensure flexibility and identify hidden aspects of the experience. For the methodological and practical reasons (such as language), the country groups worked separately to reconstruct the chronological sequence of the experiences.

The two country groups in each regional workshop interacted with each other on the third day in plenary format to foster exchange and facilitate joint learning. To analyse and reflect on the outputs of the process, fishing groups were organised which helped in bringing together these two groups for playful restitution and traversal learning. Additionally, field visits were arranged for participants to engage with external stakeholders in the host countries, i.e., Senegal and Cambodia.

Before closure of the workshops, the participants also reflected on the communications products that could be prepared for GCSPF's internal and external stakeholders. It was unanimously decided to develop a detailed learning report and a brief document based on the findings. These documents would serve as valuable guides for the stakeholders across low and middle-income countries seeking to establish, revamp or collaborate with such national networks in their respective countries and contexts. Throughout the workshops, comprehensive notes, pictures, charts from group work, videos were utilised to document the proceedings and capture the essence of discussions.

Phase 3: After the regional workshops – Documenting, analysing and concluding the learnings.

Following the regional workshops, WCO HQ representatives and the country representatives worked together to develop a layout for the detailed report and an end-to-end process to produce this document in a specified timeframe. The team iteratively contributed to this report in a phased manner based on their experiences, findings and conclusions from the in-country and regional workshops. Throughout the writing process, efforts were made to engage the country network members and GCSPF representatives, seeking their feedback and validation. Their input was actively sought and carefully considered, ensuring that their perspectives were reflected in the report.

BOX 5: Systematisation of Experiences

The concept of systematisation mainly refers to the classification, organisation, or categorisation of data and information, and putting them into some kind of system. This is the most common and widely used notion of this term 'systematisation'. In the field of popular education, it is used in a broader sense, which not only refers to the collection and organisation of data or information, but also to drawing critical learning from our experiences. There the process is called "Systematisation of Experiences".

"The Systematisation of Experiences is a reflection process that aims to order and organise a practice, a pathway, a programme, etc. and its results. This process looks for the dimensions that can explain the path taken by the work done." – Sergio Martinic, 1984.

More information: https://evalparticipativa.net/en/2021/03/22/systematisation-of-experiences-and-evaluation-similarities-and-differences/#_ftnref1

A participant in the Asia regional workshop | Oxfam

Building inclusive national social protection advocacy networks

Our Learnings

4. Our learnings

While Cambodia, Nepal, Senegal, and Uganda differ significantly in terms of their social, economic and political contexts, as well as the status of their national social protection systems, they all share a common focus on the GCSPF strategy to engage on public finance management for better social protection. Our approach involved building and strengthening national networks composed of a variety of CSOs and trade unions from different sectors in society and facilitating their effective engagement in the programme. This allowed for meaningful exchange, comparison and feedback between these countries, fostering deeper reflection and analysis. To draw lessons from this experience, the GCSPF agreed to focus on 3 main characteristics of the networks: inclusiveness, effectiveness and sustainability. While the definitions of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria on effectiveness and sustainability form a good basis for refection, it is important to notice that our aim is not to evaluate our work, but to organise our learnings around these three important aspects that are integral to social protection influencing: inclusiveness, effectiveness and sustainability.

4.1 Building inclusive national social protection advocacy networks

4.1.1 Cambodia
4.1.1.1 Past practices

Prior to 2017, social protection insurance (NSSF) or social assistance programmes (ID Poor, cash to PWD) were limited to groups such as formal workers, PWD and targeted poor households. This meant that large segments of society, including small holder farmers, the elderly, ethnic minorities, own-account workers, were excluded from any social protection policies. Additionally, there was a notable gender disparity, with more women than men remaining uncovered. This lack of inclusivity was reflected in the fragmented way civil society organised itself on social protection. Although Cambodian trade unions had experience of working together on issues such as minimum wages and workers' rights, cooperation between trade unions on social protection hardly existed. They primarily focused on improving access of their own formal worker .

members in the garment sector to the existing NSSF provisions Exclusion of informal workers from the NSSF, both by law (such as domestic workers) or by practice (lack of clarity, obstacles to access, no employers' commitment), was a major issue, yet cooperation among trade unions remained difficult, given their lack of access to these workers and poor membership rates in the informal economy. Self-employed informal workers' 'associations' took the lead in advancing social protection rights of their members, starting with small scale pilot schemes for domestic workers or tuktuk drivers to overcome existing obstacles. Yet, large groups of informal economy workers remained invisible, including the millions of smallholder farmers.

As for social assistance programmes, targeted at PWD and poor households, criteria for access were often unclear or highly stringent, resulting in many people remaining uncovered. This required their representatives to advocate for improving access to these schemes. For example: Home-based workers' associations advocated for access to the ID-Poor scheme.

As such, civil society organisations approached social protection policy influencing in a   non-inclusive, fragmented and siloed manner. Their efforts were often focused on the needs of their own constituents, with little consideration for others. Trade unions and other CSOs acted independently from each other, reinforced by the separation between social insurance and social protection policy pillars, as well as the lack of understanding, knowledge and oversight of the system. Only a few of them had a vision of promoting social protection for all.

A public forum on Social Pension | Oxfam

4.1.1.2 Current practices

With the infusion of programme funding from various sources aimed at fostering collaboration among civil society organisations, new ways of working were introduced, eventually leading to the creation of a national advocacy network on social protection (SP4ALL). This network encompassed a diverse range of civil society organisations, representing various interest groups, with strong links to the local levels owing to the inclusion of trade unions, associations, and community-based organisations. The network encouraged broad participation by being open to every interest group. The SP&PFM programme, along with other EU funding and prior funding from the Belgian Development Aid (DGD) has contributed significantly to this development.

Since 2019, bridges have been built between trade unions and some CSOS working on different pillars of social protection, arousing interest in other approaches and broader understanding of the field. SP4ALL now includes trade unions from various economic sectors (garments, tourism, services, food, transport, construction, plantations, ...), workers' associations representing informal economy workers, associations of smallholder farmers, women, PWD, and the elderly. In addition to these member-based organisations, NGOs specialising in social work, capacity strengthening, and poverty eradication have also joined. Importantly, the Budget Working Group, an existing CSO network specialised in government budget monitoring, has built strong links with SP4ALL. Furthermore, SP4ALL serves as a coordination platform for engagement in various donor-funded programmes on social protection.

Participation of the elderly in the National Public Forum on Social Pensions for older people in Cambodia | Oxfam

4.1.1.3 Lessons learned

Throughout this process, several enabling factors played a crucial role, although it's important to acknowledge that numerous obstacles had to be overcome along the way, providing valuable lessons.

The availability of funding, particularly from the EU, has been the most important enabling factor in promoting inclusiveness in social protection policy development, by providing essential support in fostering cooperation among various stakeholders. Notably, organisations such as Oxfam, with their strong connections and experience in bringing civil society actors together, have been instrumental in convincing a diverse range of CSOs to engage in exchange and discussion, laying the foundation for cross-sector cooperation. To overcome challenges related to restricted civic space and CSOs' apprehension to join policy work, the approach of presenting social protection work as an opportunity was effective. In the beginning, the initiative to cooperate was presented as open and flexible, allowing groups to easily step in and evaluate its relevance to them, without predesigned ways of working.

The process of jointly strengthening knowledge on international standards, especially on the life-cycle approach and rights-based principles, helped foster a shared understanding of universal social protection as an instrument to promote solidarity and social justice. This understanding emphasises the importance of inclusion and cooperation among representatives of "all people". In particular, the global level debates (SDGs, ILO Recommendation 202, Commission on the Status of Women ...) as well as the ASEAN Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection, have reinforced the narrative on universality of social protection. This garnered momentum in Cambodia: both civil society and the government committed to step up their efforts towards universal social protection.

The NSPPF was launched as a long-term integrated policy framework, for which the government set up coordination structures at different levels between all stakeholders, including CSOs. This encouraged civil society to look beyond their constituents' needs and cooperate across pillars. Reflecting on the needs of workers in the informal economy, and job insecurity faced by formal workers, especially in times of crisis, trade unions and informal workers' associations have realised the limitations of the contributory

schemes designed for formal employment (i.e. no decent pensions, no unemployment compensation), and led them to explore alternate potential social protection strategies (i.e. subsidised contributions, social pensions). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced this reflection, pushing trade unions to think out of the box and learn from others. This helped them challenge and dismantle prejudices about other approaches, particularly regarding the effectiveness of cash transfers in responding to shocks.

However, the network still faces certain weaknesses. Some social groups such as migrant workers remain unrepresented. Also, the members of the network have different levels of capacity, skills, tknowledge and resources, leading to uneven commitment, participation, power dynamics, which hinders inclusiveness. Improving decision-making processes within the network is essential to better reflect inclusive approaches, including gender inclusivity. This needs to be recognised and addressed.

4.1.1.4 Summary

In conclusion, the creation of the SP4ALL network in Cambodia by the GCSPF has been a significant achievement in fostering inclusiveness. This open and inclusive network has successfully brought together diverse sectors of society, including grassroots organisations, to advocate for universal social protection. The inclusive nature of SP4ALL has been facilitated by a combination of internal and external factors. The presence of a comprehensive policy framework and the proactive role of a convening organisation have been instrumental in fostering cooperation and inclusivity among CSOs. Additionally, dedicated funding for collaboration has played a crucial role in supporting these efforts.

While progress has been made in enhancing cooperation and coordination among trade unions and other CSOs, ongoing monitoring is necessary to ensure that inclusiveness is embedded in the network's ways of working. This entails addressing any power dynamics and gender disparities that may exist within the network, as well as actively seeking the involvement of underrepresented groups, such as migrants.

| Oxfam

4.1.2 Nepal
4.1.2.1 Past practices

The core issue plaguing Nepal was the divide between non-contributory and contributory social protection, which was reflected in the different approaches adopted by trade unions and civil society. National NGOs and social movements predominantly advocated for social assistance or non-contributory schemes such as allowances for target groups including children, PWD, single widows, and the elderly. Their demands were driven by the needs of specific target groups, rather than a rights-based approach, often resulting in separate databases and administrative processes.

On the other hand, trade unions leveraged their privileged political connections, to push for a contributory social security system to cover the active population. Their demands arose from a compromise with the employers' association, which sought labour market flexibility, to hire and fire workers more freely. This social security system was funded solely by contributions from employees (11% of salary) and employers (20%), with the Nepalese government covering the administrative costs. This configuration meant that both social partners naturally adopted a right-based approach and ensured representation on the governing bodies of this system.

Under the guise of inclusiveness, some donors tended to focus on the poor or marginalised in social protection efforts. However, it is important to recognise that everyone requires social protection, and universal coverage is crucial. This approach not only reduces administrative and overhead costs but also upholds a rights-based perspective that emphasises coverage throughout the life cycle, as compared to a needs-based approach. While targeting social protection for the poorest can be a valid strategy when financial resources are limited, it carries the risk of exclusion errors and higher administrative costs.

Much like in many countries, there have been limited coordinated efforts to advocate for coherent social protection policies in Nepal. Despite social protection increasingly becoming a political priority, partly due to pressure from CSOs and trade unions, various new schemes launched by different departments do not recognise the possible overlapping of coverage and the administrative burden of enrolling beneficiaries.

Another example of working in silos was the Social Protection Task Team, where donors and development partners convened to coordinate their efforts and approach the Nepali government in a coherent manner. However, this task team, led by the World Bank and UNICEF excluded civil society and trade unions, who lobbied by themselves, sometimes with conflicting or incoherent priorities. This led, for instance, to a GIZ-supported health insurance scheme, which saw no or very little involvement of civil society and partially duplicated efforts of the work-related accidents scheme that was part of the contributory social security fund.

4.1.2.2 Current practices

Through this programme, WSM brought together both civil society and trade unions, facilitating their collaboration and cooperation. Initially, informal stakeholders' meetings served as a platform for engagement. Later, they were brought together under the banner of a Nepalese multi-stakeholder network on social protection. This network became part of the International Network on Social Protection Rights (INSP!R).

Under this umbrella, trade unions and CSOs discussed joint position papers and priorities for the first time. Notably, the network issued joint press releases to mark important occasions like the National Social Security Day. The network's delegations also met with line ministries and high-level missions, such as the visiting UN Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights Watch.

| WSM

4.1.2.3 Lessons learned

The division between CSOs and trade unions in Nepal necessitated external intervention and the implementation of this programme to foster cooperation and recognise the value of coordinating their efforts. Over time, through various exchanges at different levels, the program gradually dispelled mistrust and misunderstandings that existed between the two groups. This included the involvement of high-level leadership, such as during the Nepal-Cambodia learning exchange, as well as the active engagement of programme staff in organising joint activities and conducting lobbying efforts. At the grassroots level, members, and beneficiaries of CSOs and trade unions were brought together in different geographic areas where these organisations operate.

While significant progress has been made, it is important to acknowledge that achieving such collaboration is an ongoing effort that cannot be taken for granted and requires sustained efforts.

This programme also provided an opportunity for closer collaboration with donors and development partners through the Social Protection Task Team. The closer cooperation between the ILO and UNICEF Nepal with the Nepalese government and its line ministries has led to a further intensification of the exchanges between CSOs and donors. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic limited direct contacts and affected the launch of the program in Nepal, which had to be conducted online. Similarly, due to the pandemic, the steering committee comprising implementing agencies, the EU, and the Nepali government was unable to convene in person.

Through the exchange with Cambodia, the Nepalese delegation also learned from the interactions of the Cambodian government with the ILO, UNICEF, and the EU Delegation which appear to be more systematic..

4.1.2.4 Summary

Ensuring inclusivity often means having to bridge gaps, divides. Bringing together CSOs and trade unions in a network focused on the complementarity of social protection schemes, some of which are assistance and others that are contributory. While you are a worker, you can contribute to maternity leave for pregnant women. You might save up money for a better retirement than the universal old age allowance offers. Everyone needs access to health, not only for work-related accidents but also for the entire family through a health insurance scheme.

In conclusion, the efforts to promote inclusiveness in Nepal have made significant strides in addressing the issue of representativeness. The inclusion of informal workers and migrant workers, which was a key priority for trade unions, was finally addressed with the adoption of working procedures in December 2022. INSP!R Nepal also engaged specific social movements representing various marginalised groups, including child rights movements, PWD, individuals living with HIV/AIDS, LGBTIQ+ communities, and the elderly. However, to further enhance inclusiveness, there is a need for a proactive approach to ensure the involvement of civil society organisations focused on healthcare access and expertise in public finance management.

| WSM

4.1.3 Senegal
4.1.3.1 Past practices

The National Social Protection Strategy (SNPS) aims to establish an inclusive system by 2035 through more efficient use of resources and harmonisation of systems. The system is essentially based on three pillars: a contributory system, a non-contributory system, and a mixed system for health care coverage. Despite the many initiatives taken by Senegal, the social protection system continues to struggle to achieve its population coverage targets due to several factors, mainly the lack of resources, and fragmentation with a multitude of programs, policies and actors.

Previously, the actors (NGOs, trade unions, organisations of social assistance beneficiaries, professionals' organisations) involved in social protection worked individually, driven by their own logic, resulting in the lack of mutual understanding, harmonised vision, and collaboration. This posed challenges in terms of representativeness for civil society and trade unions, as well as difficulties in engaging with the government and partners and low capacity to influence policies. Some trade union organisations such as the CNTS (National Confederation of Workers in Senegal), the most representative trade union organisation in Senegal, enjoyed recognition and influence with the State. Civil society was represented in the discussion and consultation frameworks by CONGAD (National Council of Development NGOs), a multipurpose organisation without sufficient expertise in social protection.

At the national and local levels, underrepresented populations in the informal economy and rural areas, who were excluded from the formal social protection systems, took initiatives for their social coverage through health mutuals, dahiras (Muslim religious associations) and other traditional solidarity systems that improved grassroots inclusion. However, these initiatives had no relations either with the local authorities or with the State, therefore having weak representativeness.

In 2013, Senegal adopted a universal health coverage strategy, leveraging the dynamism of the community mutual health organisations. This provided basic health care coverage to almost 20% of the Senegalese population in the informal economy and rural areas. To ensure greater social inclusion, the State contributed 50% to this system, while the mutualist populations contributed the remaining 50%. In addition, the State took care of indigent and vulnerable groups.

4.1.3.2 Current practices

Recognising the limitations of their individual actions, CSOs and trade unions have organised themselves into a network, INSP!R, the objectives of which are to (i) constitute a framework/instrument for consultation and collaboration between civil society actors, (ii) be a source of proposals to exert influence to improve the contribution of CSOs and trade unions to policies and programs and (iii) constitute a centre of expertise in the field of social protection.

The INSP!R network constitutes a framework for collaboration between non-state organisations[8] and takes into account the representation of women, young people, PWD, the elderly, through their umbrella structures, as well as in the context of participation in activities. Prior to the establishment of INSP!R and the broader coalition facilitated by the programme, there was limited articulation between this movement and actors involved in other dimensions of social protection.

The network's activities seek to promote social inclusion with its various members offering services in the areas of vocational training, labour rights, social dialogue, health coverage for actors in the informal and rural economy, social protection for groups with special needs, support for the empowerment of indigents and vulnerable groups. etc.

Interaction with a CSO-TU leader in Senegal | WSM

8 These organisations include NGOs, organisations of the beneficiairies of the social assistance, cooperatives and the media.

To maintain the network's integrity and effectiveness, certain criteria have been established for the recruitment of new members, including legitimacy, credibility, representativeness, internal democracy, and autonomy towards governments or economic actors.

Through its advocacy and capacity building activities, the network has succeeded in strengthening its visibility and representativeness with the State, local governments and partners involved in the field of social protection in Senegal. It strives to involve public, semi-public and cooperation institutions in its activities in terms of strategic alliance. The State and partners involve the network in activities relating to social protection.

It is in this context that the Senegalese ministry in charge of social protection issued a decree setting up a joint steering committee for this programme comprising representatives of the government, development partners, CSOs and network member unions. Thus, a mechanism of inclusive governance of the programme and search for synergy between actors was ensured.

However, the network faces certain obstacles owing to its dynamics. Challenges include coordinating and managing activities, scheduling meetings to accommodate conflicting agendas among members, and navigating complex procedures for admitting new members. Furthermore, the change in government in 2019 and the establishment of a new Ministry in charge of social protection[9] along with the establishment of the institution[10] responsible for coordination of the sector within this ministry, have impacted the network's momentum and influenced discussions on social protection laws.

4.1.3.3 Lessons learned

The establishment and growth of the network highlight the importance of investing in actions that promote appropriation by member organisations, ensuring their active participation and support for network activities. In this regard, the start-up phase and the first two years of the programme were dedicated to learning, fostering mutual understanding, sharing the vision, objectives, challenges and addressing capacity building needs. WSM has

developed a tool called "house of social protection" which has been instrumental in this process.

The creation and development of the network were supported by the synergy of actions existing before the start of this programme, between organisations having the same partner (the WSM programme is financed by the Belgian Development Cooperation).

4.1.3.4 Summary

In conclusion, the collaborative efforts of the CSOs and trade unions active in the field of social protection in Senegal have led to a strengthened synergy of actions, capacity to influence and effective communication. The establishment of a thematic advocacy network has not only attracted other actors but has also played a crucial role in creating an inclusive social protection system.

The network aligns with the various state programmes in a country where social protection coverage till 2017 remained low at 20% and where there is a high demand for jobs among the young population[11].

Building mutual confidence among previously unconnected CSOs necessitates investing time in fostering mutual knowledge, recognition, and a shared vision. A thematic network, focused on inclusive social protection, seems to be a relevant and valuable strategy, providing added value to the individual actions of its members.

Below is a testimony by a trade union leader in Senegal:

"

For Ndiouga Wade, the Deputy Secretary General of the CNTS, the network is a first experience of its kind that provides expertise, coordinates, relays and strengthens the actions of its members. The CNTS, although enjoying a capacity of influence unparalleled in the trade union world in Senegal, needs other organisations for inclusive social protection.

-Ndiouga Wade
Deputy Secretary General

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9 That Ministry is called "Ministère du Développement communautaire, de l'équité sociale et territoriale", i.e. Ministry of Community Development, Social and territorial Equity.
10 "Délégation Générale à la protection sociale et à la solidarité Nationale (DGPSN)", i.e. General Delegation to Social Protection and National Solidarity.
11 SNPS et Programme national de la CMU 2012 - 2017
12 https://www.wsm.be/files/files/divers/20.01.14-RDPS-WSM_Maison-de-protection-sociale_Senegal.pdf

4.1.4 Uganda
4.1.4.1 Past practices

The implementation of social protection initiatives in Uganda has often occurred in isolation, with various CSOs and trade unions working independently. For example, Social Protection Platform Uganda (SPPU), Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Social Protection (UPFSP), Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG), Economic Policy Research Centre (EPCR), Institute of Social Economic and Research (ISER), Development Research and Training (DRT), ILO and UNICEF, Save the Children Uganda, The Uganda National NGO-Forum, Central Organisation for Trade |Unions (COFTU), National Organisation for Trade Unions (NOTU) and a host of other Age Care Organisations like Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA), The Aged Foundation Uganda (TAFU), Health Nest Uganda (HENU), etc. have usually planned and executed their activities in their separate spaces.

The lack of unified voices among these institutions often led to conflicting messages and a competition for engagement with policy makers. This dynamic originated not only from competing for resources from development partners to implement their individual initiatives but also from a lack of knowledge and awareness regarding the power of working together. There was a concern among them that collaborating with others might result in their own contributions being overshadowed and their credit and recognition being compromised.

The working relationship described above, often resulted in limited consultation and insufficient involvement of grassroots communities in the implementation of social protection activities. The voices of some groups such as older people and PWD were also left out or not well catered to in the planning and budgeting processes by government, owing to their small numbers. The allocation of resources and attention within the under-budgeted social protection spending layout often favoured the larger and more visible vulnerable groups, such as women, children, and youth who were more easily heard rather than the minority vulnerable groups.

4.1.4.2 Current practices

With increased awareness and improved coordination, there has been a notable improvement in the planning of engagements carried

out by CSOs and trade unions; and within the NGOs which scarcely existed before the programme. There is a high degree of inclusiveness of the rights holders and recognition by international NGOs of the need to empower local CSOs. CSOs like CSBAG are now more inclusive and have brought on board other advocacy organisations. Financing of such activities is still a challenge as some CSOs need to strengthen their capacity of facilitation. One positive aspect of the programme is the joint planning and contribution of resources by the implementing partners – ILO, UNICEF and HelpAge.

With one of the important programme activities being the facilitation of the formation and strengthening the national social protection network, HelpAge supported an existing network, viz. Social Protection Platform in Uganda to become more effective, inclusive, and sustainable. The Platform was supported to ensure its legal compliance and operational legitimacy, enabling it to register with the government and operate within the legal framework. Regular meetings for its Steering Committee were facilitated along with the review of its 5-year Strategic Plan. An important milestone was reached when the Platform held its Annual General Meeting for its members, at which they elected a more inclusive leadership of the Steering Committee with representation from the different vulnerable groups such as older people, PWD, women, children and youth. The efforts of the Platform in mobilising and engaging vulnerable groups have gained recognition from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

| HelpAge

4.1.4.3 Lessons learned

The joint funding has significantly enhanced collaboration and the recognition of each partner's unique skills. UNICEF's experience in working with mothers and children; ILO's expertise in working with trade unions and other informal sectors and HelpAge's specialisation with CSOs brought added value to the collective efforts. This also applies to members of the platform who actively share their work plans and pertinent information on social protection, thus, supporting the activities of the Platform.

The approach of selecting a leading organisation for specific activities, such as advocacy and engagement with Parliament, has proven effective. In this regard, the three implementing organisations (ILO, UNICEF and GCSPF-HelpAge) agreed to contract and let UPFSP take the lead in the advocacy. In addition, whenever the Parliamentary Forum is to carry out important national advocacy activity, it brings on board the Platform either in physical participation or contributing to the thinking and planning process.

Regular meetings between the implementing partners were quite helpful in facilitating successful advocacy engagements with policy makers.

The policy framework on social protection, developed under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development which spells out the various roles of key stakeholders, coordination structures and mechanisms has guided NGOs in redefining their roles and responsibilities in implementing the social protection policy. This also prompted a renewed focus on engaging actors in the informal sector which is predominantly organised by the trade unions. The realization of the informal sector's importance and its exclusion from social security by trade unions prompted discussions between them and CSOs. They recognised that a collaborative approach is crucial, as the informal sector was disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. CSOs were able to access midterm benefits under the Social Security Fund, highlighting the need for inclusivity and the importance of working together to ensure better results.

4.1.4.4 Summary

Trade unions and CSOs held differing perspectives regarding the

to have savings for hard times, such as in old age. This misalignment arose due to divergent views between trade unions and CSOs, though they appreciated the value and feasibility of social security. However, with the COVID-19 pandemic causing business collapses due to prolonged and repeated lockdowns, the trade unions realised the significance of having long-term savings schemes like the Social Security Fund. The trade unions also acknowledged their lack of knowledge about the need for saving and held a bias that the government would misappropriate workers' funds, leading them to believe that there was no need to save with the social security fund.

This situation prompted trade unions and CSOs to engage more closely and learn from each other's expertise. The trade unions sensitised their constituents to join the Social Security Fund. They sought to learn from CSOs about effective mobilisation, sensitisation and member training strategies to appreciate the role of the National Social Security Fund and its benefits. Additionally, trade unions aimed to establish a collaborative relationship with CSOs to ensure the protection of workers' funds once they were deposited in the Fund. Prominent trade unions, such as COFTU, are currently in the process of registering and becoming members of the Social Protection Platform Uganda.

| HelpAge

4.1.5 Conclusions on Inclusiveness: From Fragmentation to Cooperation

The four country experiences examined highlight a significant gap in social protection coverage prior to the adoption of the ILO Recommendation 202 on social protection floors. Only workers in the formal sectors enjoyed partial social security coverage (not all the 9 risks recognised by the C102 were covered). In all the countries, the majority of the population in the informal economy, and other vulnerable groups lacked any form of social protection. This lack of coverage was exacerbated by contradicting strategies, resulting from a lack of comprehensive and integrated policies, or a fragmented system without inclusive coordination.

CSOs and trade unions often lacked unity and coherence, sometimes delivered contradicting messages and competed to engage with policy makers. In almost all the four countries, only trade unions involved in tripartite dialogue were included in the elaboration and management of the contributory social security schemes (formal sector). Apart from trade unions involved in tripartite social dialogue, there was no other form of institutionalised policy dialogue with CSOs, even those involved in innovative social protection strategies targeting the missing middle (informal economy workers).

With the launch of this programme on SP&PFM in 2019, the GCSPF through three of its active members across the continents operating in Cambodia, Nepal, Senegal and Uganda (WSM, OXFAM, HelpAge), has built thematic networks of social protection (elderly, informal economy workers, multi-stakeholder networks). Through these networks, the GCSPF has managed to expand and consolidate strong coalitions of broad based, legitimate, credible and representative CSOs including the informal economy, PWD, the elderly, women organisations and those involved in child social protection.In all the four countries, the coalitions were built upon existing structures, with support from three GCSPF members, acting as coordinating organisations.

The support from key development partners played a crucial role in facilitating these achievements. Additionally, the momentum created by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, sparked a genuine interest in social protection as a coping strategy. This brought CSOs together to address the pressing need for comprehensive social protection measures.

Several key factors have contributed to the success of these inclusive networks, such as mapping and establishing contacts with relevant CSOs and trade unions, capacity strengthening and coaching for common vision on social protection and leveraging the previous experiences of the coordinating organisations in networking. The partnership between the three implementing partners ILO, UNICEF and the GCSPF, has allowed them to capitalise on the added value of their complementary strategies: UNICEF's experience with mothers and children, ILO's experience in tripartism (Government, Private sector and the trade unions), and the coordinating organisations' extensive network of CSOs including trade unions, informal economy workers and, rural workers' organisations, organisations working for the elderly, PWD and women, etc.

While progress has been made in terms of inclusive networks, challenges remain for the networks to overcome suboptimal cooperation between CSOs and trade unions, particularly considering the existence of several trade union confederations with differing visions. Due to lack of efficient coordination among sectorial ministries in charge of social protection programmes in some countries, CSOs and trade unions may be tempted to cooperate more with their respective sectorial social protection ministries (Ministry of Labour, Gender, Social Affairs, …). Despite the results of advocacy activities done so far, key strategic actors like Finance Ministries, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have yet to adhere to systematically and adequately involving relevant CSOs, and trade unions in structured dialogue mechanisms on PFM and budget allocation. The GCSPF and its members must examine reliable approaches to consolidate the results achieved so far.

It has also been observed that some institutional donors and development partners work in silos, with a focus on their usual target groups only (women, children, older people, ...). At times, they integrate selective CSOs of their choice, in their strategies, without creating spaces for inclusive CSO-participation. This modus operandi inadvertently encourages competition among CSOs. Furthermore, some donors perceive the target groups of their initiatives as "passive recipients of assistance" rather than as rights holders, which explains the lack of spaces created to hold dialogues with them. In this regard, collaboration between the ILO, UNICEF and the GCSPF has been crucial in challenging and breaking this trend.

Building effective national social protection advocacy networks

Our Learnings

4.2 Building effective national social protection advocacy networks

4.2.1 Cambodia
4.2.1.1 Past practices

Prior to the approval of the Cambodian Social Protection Policy Framework, civil society actors advocated individually for better social protection for their constituents. They engaged directly with the concerned line-ministries or social protection institutions, aligning with the applicable laws at that time. Home-based workers' representatives advocated for access to ID-Poor provisions while representatives of PWD engaged on improved access to cash-transfers for them. Trade unions negotiated for better access and coverage of formal workers, mainly by way of their representatives in the tripartite Social Security Fund Committee. Other trade unions negotiated bilaterally with the Fund for improved regulation.

From 2014 onwards, there was a noticeable increase in funding available for joint advocacy, particularly aimed at extending social protection coverage to informal economy workers. This coincided with increased efforts to organise informal workers, resulting in the emergence of various strong informal workers' organisations, putting social protection higher on the priority list. This included domestic workers, home-based workers, sub-contracted workers, own-account workers, student workers, among others.Additionally, farmer groups began expressing interest in social protection as a means to reduce vulnerability. A gender analysis of social protection coverage was added by women groups. Most efforts were still focused on knowledge building on social protection systems.

Despite these efforts, there was no clear joint influencing strategy. Occasionally, social protection proposals were added to the list of joint demands presented at the occasion of Labour Day or Women's Day. Some pilot programmes were initiated in cooperation with the ILO and the Social Security Fund to include informal economy workers. Social protection issues were more often covered in the media, slowly increasing public attention to the topic. Advocacy

efforts, however, achieved moderate successes and focused on improving implementation of existing policies rather than increasing coverage. The issue of increased financing of social protection policy remained unaddressed.

4.2.1.2 Current practices

With the introduction of the SP&PFM programme in Cambodia, focus on the issue of financing social protection through improved PFM highlighted the need to develop more effective advocacy strategies. The urgency was further emphasised by the COVID-19 pandemic to step up efforts. The national civil society network, SP4ALL, became an important platform for discussions and joint action in the light of these developments. Various new initiatives were undertaken to support a more effective advocacy strategy. Joint capacity strengthening on PFM and other aspects of social protection policy were expanded to reach many more network members. Funding was made available for research efforts (such as impact of the pandemic, the contributory capacity of informal economy workers, effectiveness of the available social accountability mechanisms etc.) that underpins the suggested recommendations. The network organised conferences bringing policymakers and interest groups together in a multi-stakeholder approach, fostering greater visibility and empathy for specific needs of various groups. Other communication materials like videos and stories, were spread through social media, generating momentum and garnering support from the wider public. Twice, a national social protection week could be organised with active participation of civil society.

Female informal workers presenting their needs and requests during the National Workers' Forum on Social Protection forInformal Economy Workers, July 2022. | Oxfam

As a result of these collective efforts, the network gained informal recognition by the government. The National Social Protection Council invited the network members to provide comments on the draft social protection law in 2022, signalling a willingness to involve civil society in the policymaking process. Some of these comments were taken on board, although the law is yet to be finalised. The growing openness of the government to civil society initiatives was also demonstrated through the development of the National Communication Strategy for Social Protection in 2022, which was based on a civil society pilot programme for awareness raising.

Later that year, the government recognised the need for improved coordination for the initiatives of all development partners involved in supporting the development of social protection laws. As a result, four national coordinating Working Groups were created bringing all relevant stakeholders together, including civil society representatives on social assistance, social health protection, employment-based social security, and an overarching group on policy coordination, including financing. Some CSOs were welcomed to be part of these working groups.

4.2.1.3 Lessons learned

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the development of a national social protection law, created a strong impetus for civil society to unite and advocate for a more beneficial social protection law. In this context, the network served as a valuable platform and provided necessary resources to support these advocacy efforts.

The diverse composition of the network brings a lot of advantages. Members with extensive experience and influential voices can take the lead and rally others on board effectively. Smaller NGOs benefit from working with others, leveraging their expertise and resources. Each member brings unique assets and skills, enabling the creation of a more comprehensive strategy and efficient division of tasks. Notably, the cooperation of the Budget Working Group was valuable as they contributed insights and skills in budget monitoring.

However, it remains a challenge to balance the strategies used by members with different backgrounds, making it difficult for outsider strategies (public campaigns, rallies, ...) to work in synergy with insider strategies (lobby, public hearing, cooperation, ...) while avoiding competition.Strong organisations with rigid ideologies might become very dominant in the network, pushing their views and hindering building real consensus, weakening the network's overall performance. Democratic leadership should be placed at the core of the ways of working.

The network's close connection to the grassroots is a significant strength, rooted in a long-standing tradition of organising. This connection enables the network to amplify the voices of the people from the grassroots and ensure that policymakers hear and listen to their concerns.

The existing tripartite Social Security Fund committee doesn't allow negotiation about the overall social protection policy. Trade unions have taken the initiative to become active in different types of spaces of dialogue, while fostering new alliances including conferences, coordinating meetings, presentation of research, direct exchange,

| WSM

among others. However, the spaces that were created remain informal and ad hoc in nature. The network can utilise these spaces to build visibility and credibility, leading to a factual recognition of the network (rather than a legal one). This opportunity can be further leveraged, because the government is keen to demonstrate accountability and responsiveness to the people. Moreover, they recognise the importance of understanding the impact of their policies and meeting the needs of the population, relying on civil society for valuable insights. Quality research and surveys have helped to demonstrate this asset. Moreover, it is crucial to recognise that informal spaces can be lost due to both external and internal factors. The government still has to show more commitment to advance universal social protection, which requires close monitoring.

Working closely with ILO, UNICEF and other development partners proves to be very useful to access information and engaging with policy makers so as to anticipate upcoming initiatives. The newly created national working groups for development partners are equally important venues for sharing and accessing information that helps the network to position itself.

4.2.1.4 Summary

The network has proven to be an effective platform for implementing more effective advocacy strategies by leveraging the combined strengths and assets of its members. Through better coordination and a more diversified and comprehensive set of activities, the network has achieved greater synergy, visibility and credibility. This enabled network members to seize new opportunities for influencing policies while working together.

However, there is a need for continued effort in building a unified strength, consensus and vision while ensuring democratic and inclusive leadership. Currently, the network lacks a collective voice in the newly created spaces for dialogue. These spaces remain informal, and the network could benefit from more institutionalised spaces for dialogue, alongside existing tripartite opportunities.

To enhance effectiveness, the network also seeks to forge collaborations with other national platforms that advocate on issues that are relevant for a rights-based approach to social protection: right to information, anti-corruption, fair taxation or digital rights.

Furthermore, the network could strengthen connections with other development agencies that support the government on social protection policy development and financing, such as the World Bank, the Asia Development Bank and other UN agencies. These connections would be aimed at promoting the rights-based and universal approach to social protection.

Forum on Social Protection for informal economy workers| Oxfam

4.2.2 Nepal
4.2.2.1 Past practices

Nepal has increasingly recognised the importance of social protection as an investment rather than a cost. However, there is still a lack of a cohesive vision and coordinated efforts by policymakers to ensure universal coverage. At the central level, there are over 85 schemes, primarily focused on providing assistance. Issues related to beneficiary registration and implementation often arise, resulting in a low social protection coverage of only 17%. As a 2023 Human Rights Watch mission found: "Targeted programmes are often too narrow; selection processes are costly, inaccurate, and can be prone to corruption; and many eligible people find it hard to apply or don't apply due to the stigma."[13] In 2022, the Child Grant, Nepal's main family income support programme covered only about 40% of children under the age of 5 and only 9.5% of all children in the country, indicating the limited reach and impact of social protection initiatives in Nepal.

4.2.2.2 Current practices:

Legislative reforms: Despite frequent changes in government, advocacy efforts contributed to two major legislative changes:

› Integrated Social Protection Framework: Recognising the need for more coherence among the numerous schemes, the Nepal Planning Commission published this framework. For example, as a network, the CSOs highlighted aspects of social accountability and transparency, as well as taking the first steps to render social protection more adaptive in the event of shocks.

› Working procedures for informal, self-employed, and migrant workers to register in contributory social security were endorsed and enrolment commenced in April 2023.

Budget allocation:
In recent years, there have been notable improvements in PFM, resulting in increased financing for social protection in Nepal. Over the past decade, real expenditure on social protection has more than tripled, reaching NPR 189 billion. This translates to an increase from 1.9% of GDP in 2011, to an estimated 4.8% in 2021. As a result, the number of citizens receiving cash transfers has doubled. Currently, social protection programmes serve over 10.5 million people of a total population of 30 million. Social insurance programmes, including

public sector pension and health insurance schemes, reach more than 3.7 million beneficiaries, accounting for 56% of total social protection expenditure. Social assistance programmes cover more than 6.8 million people (41% of expenditure). In September 2021, the monthly allowance for senior citizens, single women, and the disabled increased by 33%. Labour market programmes cover around 0.2 million people but account for only 3% of the social protection spending. Recognising the need to work towards achieving universal social protection, the government can take steps to increase domestic resources through tax system reforms[14] (Nepal's tax-to-GDP ratio is below the 20% ratio recommended by the UN as a minimum level to achieve Development Goals). It is important to note that the wealthiest 20% of the population currently receive the largest share (34.7%) of benefits and social protection spending, compared to 21.9% for the bottom 20%.

4.2.2.3. Lessons Learned

Essential elements for successful advocacy came through the combination of unity and diversity among different stakeholders. Despite political instability and frequent changes in government, the three main trade unions maintained consensus on the demand for contributory social security, with the trade union having privileged access to the Labour Ministry consistently pushing for this legislation. This unity among trade unions played a crucial role in pushing through the legislation, given the country's history of political instability, where governments lasted an average of nine months.

In the case of non-contributory social assistance schemes, the right based approach from CSOs and the support of international donors were instrumental in piloting and gradually expanding these schemes. For example: The child nutrition grant, initially implemented in 11 districts, was expanded to cover 25 districts, representing one-third of all districts in Nepal.

Finally, regarding the Integrated Social Protection Framework, international organisations and donors heavily invested to facilitate this process, led by the Nepal Planning Commission. Different CSOs had some involvement and access to various key members and submitted their key proposals through those contacts.

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13 Nepal's Social Protection System Reinforces Inequality. Expand the Child Grant; Include Informal Workers. Human Rights Watch, 2023
14 NEPAL Social Protection: Review of Public Expenditure and Assessment of Social Assistance Programs, MAIN REPORT FY11–FY20, World Bank (2021)

Though initially there was less consensus building here, INSP!R Nepal played a crucial role in bridging the divide between various organisations representing diverse groups such as the elderly, PWD, etc. as well as the trade unions representing the formal and informal workers. In terms of effectiveness, CSOs and trade unions had to ensure these schemes reach the intended beneficiaries.

However, there were challenges related to enrolment. Often, the schemes existed on paper, and budgets were allocated, but expenditure was low because potential beneficiaries were either unaware of their rights or could not register due to administrative hurdles. To address this, trade unions organised events in all provinces, drawing public and media attention with rallies such as one on May Day. They promoted the social security schemes to their members and assisted them in enrolling, either electronically or at the government offices. Trade unions also approached local level authorities to facilitate the enrolment of informal workers, with several municipalities agreeing to contribute the employers' percentage in cases where there was no clear employer, such as for self-employed or home-based workers. CSOs in Nepal have also effectively used tools to raise awareness among citizens about schemes with a right-based approach. They published leaflets, utilised social media platforms to inform and raise awareness and educate people about different schemes and procedures, created radio jingles, issued press releases on National Social Security Day, organised community days and helpdesks, and even produced TV talk shows discussing social protection issues that were broadcasted nationally and shared on YouTube.[15]

While trade unions used their social dialogue structures and representation on the board of the Social Security Fund, Nepalese CSOs proved particularly adept at using local-level social accountability tools to ensure more people got better coverage.

1. Improving Civil and Social Protection Registration
CSOs played a crucial role in strengthening the registration process for social protection programmes in Nepal. They ensured training for municipal and ward staff involved in the operation and maintenance of the national registration system for social protection and vital

events. They also worked towards strengthening the mandated grievance-handling mechanism at the ward and municipal levels. By deploying social protection facilitators and setting up help desks, CSOs effectively supported individuals in need, such as PWD and widows, throughout the application process. This enabled them to identify deficiencies and make recommendations for improvement.

Although many of the initiatives outlined include measures that can be viewed as promoting transparency and accountability in relation to access to social protection, a number of specific activities were undertaken to publicise information and provide opportunities for a public official to be held accountable.

2. Publish the list of beneficiaries
Municipalities were encouraged to display the full list of social protection recipients, either as a printed document or posted on office walls. While some critics of this method raised concerns about privacy and potential stigma, implementing this approach within a rights-based framework can enhance transparency and facilitate registration.

| WSM

15 https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLACmLpxLYEa451gdVw1EteQoef0g8hPMk

3. Public hearings on social protection

Ward offices were supported by civil society to conduct public hearings on social protection. During these hearings, the ward secretary shared information such as the number of beneficiaries for each scheme along with names and citizenship numbers; the amounts paid out; names of newly enrolled; and a list of beneficiaries who have been eliminated from a scheme. The chair of the ward then opened the floor for people to voice their problems, seek clarifications, and share both complaints, as well as positive experiences. Concerned service providers, such as ward secretaries and bank staff, were present to address the questions raised. Owing to efforts of CSOs like the Social Protection Civil Society Network and Save the Children, over 100 ward offices are now organising public hearings on social protection programmes.

4.2.1.4 Summary

In conclusion, Nepal has made progress in recognising the importance of social protection as an investment, but there remains a lack of cohesive vision and coordinated efforts for universal coverage. Despite these challenges, there have been notable improvements in budget allocation and legislative reforms. Lessons learned include the importance of unity among stakeholders, the role of CSOs in advocacy and awareness-raising, and the need to address enrolment issues and improve registration processes. Efforts to promote transparency and accountability, such as publishing beneficiary lists and conducting public hearings, have also been effective in enhancing social protection in Nepal.

The examples provided regarding regulatory frameworks, budget allocation, CSO capacities, and enrolment highlight the effectiveness of CSOs in advocating for and contributing to improved social protection coverage. Through their efforts, CSOs played a vital role in mobilising funds, promoting efficient resource utilisation, and extending the reach of these programs to a larger population. Efforts to promote transparency and accountability.

4.2.3 Senegal
4.2.3.1 Past practices

To address problems of social protection of populations, CSOs and trade unions adopted distinct approaches in relation to their target groups. Trade unions focused on workers' rights in the field of formal employment and social dialogue, while others such as mutual organisations, certain NGOs and beneficiary organisations focused on health insurance, considering the rights of specific groups: children, women, the elderly, PWD, etc. As a result, several negotiating spaces coexisted. The trade unions were in dialogue with the Ministry in charge of Labour, and the Head of State, beneficiary organisations and NGOs collaborated with the Ministry of Health, craft workers' organisations interacted with the Ministry in charge of handicrafts, and women's organisations held discussions with the Ministry of Women. The advocacy objectives were diverse and different organisations could undertake similar actions with the same target.

Trade unions employed various advocacy methods, including media communications, strikes, settings and marches. The other organisations utilised communication and political mobilisation through marches or rallies.

The unions achieved agreements with the State for the improvement of workers' conditions owing to their representativeness, capacity to influence, experience and the specificity of their members. The same is true for women's organisations, for actions relating to the conditions of women. However, the impact of civil society actions was comparatively weaker.

Other organisations faced challenges due to their limited representativeness (NGOs), inexperience and organisational weaknesses (mutuals, cooperatives). These organisations lacked effective communication and advocacy skills and were unfamiliar with the political landscape and key stakeholders necessary for targeted advocacy actions. In addition, many organisations did not have the opportunity to participate in policy and programme development, implementation and monitoring/evaluation processes. Consequently, they were unaware of strategies for influencing these policies and identifying the themes for advocacy.

Financial constraints and limited expertise hindered the planning and execution of advocacy actions, which often required resources for media engagement, mobilising communities, knowledge to develop advocacy arguments and conducting research. Moreover, members of these organisations were not sufficiently informed to understand and participate in advocacy actions.

4.2.3.2 Current practices

The network constituted a framework for capacity building, reflection, planning, sharing experiences, thematic expertise and development of action strategies between CSOs and trade unions. CSOs and trade unions engaged in reflections, carried out research and studies to gain a comprehensive understanding of the social protection landscape, identified bottlenecks in coverage expansion and address other pertinent issues. Through contextual analysis within the framework of five-year programmes, in collaboration with the WSM, the network was able to define, objectives for changes within political action, using the methodology of impact mapping. With the objective of involving social movements (unions, mutuality's, CSOs) in the management cycle of social protection policy (2014 to 2016), INSP!R is committed to bringing decision-makers to put in place instruments for legal and legislative provisions relating to CMU (Universal Health Coverage), Recommendations 204 and 202 of the ILO, and Regulation No. 07/UEMOA/CM/2009 of the UEMOA (2017-2021 and 2022-2026)

| WSM

The network's action strategies encompass (i) expanding membership and allies, (ii) capacity building of members, allies and government officials on topics related to social protection. The goal was to ensure expertise among stakeholders, avoid discrepancies in actions and promote information symmetry in communication. Capacity building actions have enabled a common understanding of different fields of application of social protection (material and personal), and cross-cutting themes such as gender, environment, and (iii) employment of advocacy/lobbying efforts to influence the policies and decision-making processes.

The network carried out a mapping of actors, identified their interests and capacities for influence, developed arguments and formulated a good advocacy/lobbying strategy for the defence of social protection with various decision-makers. Key decision-makers targeted for engagement included government officials from key ministries and institutions working in social protection or holding unequivocal decision-making power such as the Presidency, the National Assembly, the High Council of Territorial Communities, the National Council for Social Dialogue, the Ministry of Health and Social Action, the Ministry of Development Community, of Social and Territorial Equity, the Ministry of Women, Family, Gender and Child Protection, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Employment, the social welfare bodies.

To strengthen its visibility and foster internal and external cooperation, the network is implementing a comprehensive communication plan that leverages social media, press engagements, newsletter, information media, public events, etc.

4.2.3.3 Lessons learned

As part of the implementation of the GCSPF component of the SP&PFM programme, the network has established a management framework to coordinate and develop various organised strategies to promote approaches and practices. Internally, the technical committee and the thematic groups, like its essential pillars, serve as spaces for reflection, analysis and the formulation of strategies and themes for action. Planning workshops such as the inception workshop of the GCSPF programme have equipped stakeholders with the capacity to analyse the social protection sector in Senegal, identify instruments, programmes and actors (construction of the house of social protection). Through periodic monitoring/evaluation activities, advocacy plans have been refined and "impactful" arguments have been developed. The strategy of stakeholders' analysis through the mapping and assessment of stakeholders based on their powers and interests has enabled the identification and targeting of key stakeholders for effective action and collaboration.

Training on financing social protection in Senegal | WSM

4.2.3.4 Summary

The network has strengthened the capacities of civil society actors and trade unions in analysing the social protection ecosystem and adapting communication and advocacy strategies appropriate to this field. As a result of their membership in the network, member organisations have considerably improved their visibility and positioning in the areas of design, implementation, monitoring/evaluation and dialogue on specific social protection policies. This has had a positive impact, by ensuring that the needs of vulnerable populations and the perspectives of non-state actors are taken into account.

The network has strengthened its position and contributes to the definition of social protection policies and programmes due to its representativeness (number, diversity of members, specificity on the topic of social protection and its financing) and its expertise on the topic.

Other spaces of dialogue were created complementary to the formal tripartite social dialogue, for example the dialogue between the government and community based mutual health organisations, for universal access to health care.

Thanks to the various actions of the mutualist movement and other member organisations of the network, Senegal has witnessed a significant increase in health coverage. The health coverage rate has risen from 20% in 2013 to 53% by the end of 2021, with coverage for the informal economy increasing from 7% to 40%. This inclusive system, organised according to the life cycle, also extends coverage benefits to 900,000 elderly people, 550,000 poor households registered on the single national register, 69,447 PWD and 3 million children aged 0 to 5 years.

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For André Wade, President of the Union of community mutual health organisations and lead of INSP!R-Senegal, this is a major step forward that deserves to be shared with the world. However, he emphasises that the journey is not over yet. The Coalition must continue to advocate for the State to respect the regularity of payment of subsidies to mutualist populations and for the adoption of a law on social protection, including universal health coverage, as well as an increase in the budget allocated to social protection.

- André Wade,
President of the Union of community mutual health organisations and lead of INSP!R-Senegal.

| WSM

4.2.4 Uganda
4.2.4.1 Past practices

The Uganda Social Protection Platform (USPP), now formally known as the Social Protection Platform Uganda Limited (SPPU), was established in December 2007 as an informal coalition of eight CSOs, convened and coordinated by the NGO Development Research and Training (DRT). Over time in October 2020, the membership grew to around 30 NGOs involved in social protection promotion, leading to the initiation of formal registration with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB). The registration process resulted in a slight name change to SPPU, with URSB Registration No. 80020002756898. The Platform's Vision is "a strong social protection sector in Uganda that effectively addresses risks and vulnerabilities". Its Mission is "to enhance the capacity of CSOs to effectively engage in development and implementation of social protection policies and programmes at all levels in Uganda".

Given the newness of the social protection sector and limited awareness among stakeholders about its importance to national development, formalised spaces for negotiation and engagement were organised. Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development played a pivotal role in formulating social protection policies and the Platform leveraged this space to contribute to policy development. Capacity building events were organised to educate NGOs about social protection and the roles and interventions of different stakeholders in providing social protection.

However, the Platform faced several challenges. One of the weaknesses was its short-term rotational leadership from Secretariat to Chairmanship, which hindered its stability and growth. With a two-year term for each leadership role, it was difficult to plan implement strategies effectively. Additionally, leadership changes under a rotational basis often led to a decline in the platform's strength. Resource mobilisation posed another challenge as the secretariat of the host NGO was voluntary (non-paid staff), limiting the investment in staff and member development.

Furthermore, the Platform was not inclusive in its membership recruitment and majorly worked with CSOs. It did not bring the leadership of trade unions on board, despite over 90% of the workforce operating in the informal economy and not benefitting from the contributory schemes.

4.2.4.2 Current practices

The Platform recognised the need for strategic adjustments to address its challenges. An important step was to establish a more stable secretariat, ensuring that it remains under the leadership of a member for at least two or three consecutive terms. Additionally, there was a realisation of the importance of investing in capacity building for its members.

Currently, the Platform has linkages and works closely with other like-minded forums at the national level to advocate for increased social protection programming and funding. It has developed a strategy that will guide its activities through the next five years, focusing on fostering synergies with other networks on promoting social protection issues, mobilising resources and conducting research to influence the social protection landscape.

The Platform has re-branded itself as all-inclusive by ensuring it brings on board the trade unions which bring together workers in the formal and informal economy. In all its engagements, it ensures that membership is empowered with advocacy skills and knowledge, and that they actively participate in development processes, particularly at the lower local government level to influence planning and budgeting processes from the grassroots.

Hon'ble Flavia Kabahenda, Chairperson Parliamentary Committee (Gender and Equity) in Uganda, speaking on the need for universal social protection | Helpage/UPFSP

4.2.4.3 Lessons learned

Collaboration with other like-minded networks is crucial for the Platform to have a meaningful impact in the social protection sector. By developing a deliberate plan and well-defined strategy, the platform can create regular opportunities for interaction and discussion on social protection issues. This will not only enhance its visibility and recognition among stakeholders but also foster a conducive environment for learning and knowledge exchange.

To foster inclusivity and expand its knowledge-sharing and skills-building efforts, the Platform recognises the importance of strengthening its collaboration with trade unions. A deliberate effort to include trade unions in the strategic plan and its governance structures will help the trade unions build trust and confidence in the Platform.

The Platform has also recognised the value of designing capacity building programmes for its members to strengthen the network.

Thus, it is important to work closely with partners like ILO to design interventions to address risks and vulnerabilities among the vulnerable population of Uganda.

4.2.4.4 Summary

Through their collaborative efforts in various programme interventions, CSOs and trade unions have gained valuable insights into their respective strengths and identified areas where they can support each other for greater success. Recognising the importance of sustained dialogue and strategic cooperation, CSOs and trade unions have agreed to continue their collaboration even after the programme concludes. They aim to engage key stakeholders in the planning and budgeting processes, advocating for improved financing of social protection initiatives. It has been acknowledged that capacity building for both CSOs and trade unions, as well as enhancing their skills in holding the government accountable for delivering on its social protection mandate, are crucial action points that require joint efforts.

Training of Uganda Parliamentarians on Social Protection | HelpAge, ILO, UNICEF

4.2.5 Conclusions on Effectiveness: Harnessing Collective

Prior to the programme, joint advocacy initiatives remained scattered and often siloed. Trade unions focused on influencing social insurance policies, while CSOs often advocated for improved social assistance programmes or health insurance. In many cases, CSOs and trade unions acted on their own, without cooperation. They usually advocated for better access to social protection schemes for their own constituents, while competing for government attention and budgets, often without understanding much of each other's work. Inclusiveness proved to be a good basis from which to start building joint influencing power in favour of universal approaches towards social protection policy systems. However, to develop effective advocacy strategies, a step-by-step approach was necessary.

Initially, significant effort was required to strengthen these networks, given the uneven knowledge and capacities of its members. Knowledge building was focused on social protection standards, rights-based approach and more comprehensive social protection frameworks in general. This was crucial to create a shared vision on social protection.

While progress has been made in developing this common vision, it is an ongoing process that requires more discussion, especially considering the differing levels of advancement across countries. At the same time, existing social protection policies in each of the countries had to be analysed and compared to existing standards. Alongside training initiatives, valuable knowledge was generated through exchange and discussion between network members, each bringing their own expertise, but also generating lively debates. Although understanding of how social protection policies are financed was absent in all cases, yet it gradually gained members' interest, thanks to training (see Box 6).

BOX 6: PFM training manual

In support of the four country teams, the GCSPF developed a training manual on Public Finance Management for CSOs. The manual explains how budget cycles are usually organised at different levels of the state apparatus, who is involved in this exercise, where decisions on budgets are made, and where opportunities for possible influencing present themselves. The manual can be downloaded here: https://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/our-library/.

Other knowledge products can be found on the programme's webpage: https://socialprotection-pfm.org/knowledge/training/

Subsequently, network members in all four countries swiftly engaged in joint public activities such as conferences, social and other media, public debates and hearings, and awareness raising campaigns. These actions were facilitated by the supporting organisations, which provided essential resources, connections and capacity. Importantly, network members played a significant role in raising awareness about the social protection needs of the communities they work with, and sharing proposals for improvement of social protection policies, hereby reflecting a rights-based approach. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic served as a significant catalyst, underscoring the urgency to prioritise increased investments in social protection on the political agenda of the respective governments.

In all four countries, the network members began engaging more collaboratively with the relevant government institutions on social protection policies. However, the nature of these engagements varied, depending on factors such as network dynamics, political context, civic space for dialogue in general, and newly created openings specific to social protection policy. Only in Uganda and Senegal, the networks developed a joint advocacy strategy for social protection, based on a stakeholder analysis and a joint communication plan. In Uganda, this led to a meaningful engagement with the Parliament. In Nepal and Cambodia, the network members engaged in joint advocacy activities in response to specific opportunities such as international social protection week, launch of a new policy, etc....). Throughout these efforts, the networks acknowledged each other's needs and aimed to create added value and synergy. In Cambodia and Uganda, cooperation was sought with existing networks which brought added value for specific demands such as the Budget Working Group in Cambodia and a Research Network in Uganda.

All networks have created spaces for dialogue. The tripartite i nstitutional dialogue is used in Cambodia, Senegal and Nepal, but reserved to (some) trade unions, and with regard to social insurance for workers only. Trade unions have a made significant progress in coordinated their approaches compared to the past. Formalisation of the informal economy is integrated as a crucial element in their dialogue with government and employers. In Cambodia, trade unions

are also turning to tax-based solutions to protect informal economy workers, especially in times of crisis. Uganda still lags behind in this respect.

Network members with connections to various line-ministries in charge of social protection delivery continue to utilise these informal spaces for dialogue. However, they have adopted a more collaborative approach by sharing information and avoiding competition among themselves. Networks have actively created new spaces for dialogue by inviting decision-makers to participate in their public activities such as conferences and radio talk shows. The increased visibility and attention generated by the network have motivated decision-makers to attend these events and prioritise the topic of social protection. In Cambodia and Nepal, research by experts working for the network, added to the credibility of these initiatives.

The collaboration with the development partners (ILO, UNICEF, the EU delegations) was an important factor in facilitating policymakers' engagement with civil society. In Cambodia, the government proactively sought feedback from civil society on social protection law proposals, indicating an increased level of credibility and trust. The government is now taking steps to formalise spaces for coordination among all concerned development partners, including for some civil society actors, to collectively address social protection issues.

Some interesting initiatives were undertaken in Uganda and Cambodia with regards to improved social accountability mechanisms, leading to additional opportunities for the network to provide feedback to the government on social protection delivery.

However, despite the progress made, none of these new spaces for dialogue and genuine participation with civil society that were created have been institutionalised so far. Depending on the political context, there is no guarantee that advocacy leads to lasting impact, given that the rules of engagement are not clear.

This explains why some national networks have more impact on social protection than others, even though all of them made significant contributions towards putting a social protection floor in

BOX 7: Impact in Senegal

In Senegal, the network engaged in intensive advocacy with various Ministries and the President's office, to secure an increase in the social grant provided to poor households. As a result, the grant has been raised from €38.11 to €53,11 per quarter, benefitting nearly one million households. The networks managed to convince the government of Senegal to reimburse €1,524,490 for the subsidies of the universal health coverage schemes targeting the informal economy and poor households. These results were possible through the reallocation of subsidies and exemptions on fuel costs that benefited the private sector. The network's positions and arguments were supported by the findings of an ILO study on 8 financing options and trainings they received from the GCSPF. The next phase involves institutionalisation of these mechanisms through a social protection law that will soon be submitted to the Parliament.

place. Over a period of three years, the networks, in collaboration with ILO and UNICEF, have facilitated positive policy changes and secured increased budgets for social protection. In Cambodia, social assistance budgets increased after the COVID-19 outbreak. In Nepal, the monthly allowance for senior citizens, single women, and PWD witnessed a 33% increase. Moreover since 2023, self-employed, informal and migrant workers have been able to enrol in contributory social security schemes. Finally, in Senegal, the government decided to increase and extend the social allowances to poor households (see Box 7).

Building sustainable national
social protection advocacy networks

Our Learnings

4.3 Building sustainable national social protection advocacy networks

4.3.1 Cambodia
4.3.1.1 Current Practices

Although significant progress has been made in network building, the coordinating organisation acknowledges the challenges that may have been posed. At regular times, such issues were discussed at network meetings, and the following issues have been identified as the most important:

› The coordinating organisation may quickly assume a dominant position within the network due to its control over resources and agendas. This can undermine the ownership of the network by its members. To address this, after long discussions, leadership roles were transferred to an elected chair and a deputy chair for a limited period of time. Decision making authority was placed at the member level, while the coordinating organisation took on a limited role of technical support and facilitation.

› Some members have their own resources and can take up responsibilities for the implementation of the network's decisions while others may not have the same capacity. This can lead to friction in the network.

› Relying solely on programme funding not only poses the risk of the network collapsing once the funding ends but also limits the network's ability to set its own agenda. Activities need to align with the programme's priorities and goals. This becomes more complicated with additional funding being obtained, bringing new priorities with it. The organisations channelling this funding have an important responsibility to ensure that ownership remains with the network, rather than using the network for their own goals.

› The greater the diversity of the network, the more difficult it becomes to make consensus-based decisions. This is especially true when members maintain strong ideological views on social protection, or prejudices with regards to social protection programmes they know little about. A considerable amount of time

has been invested in discussing and clarifying the decision-making procedures to ensure inclusivity and democracy. However, the lack of clarity on a common goal has further complicated decision making. At this time, these issues remain under discussion.

› Leadership is closely connected to the above observations. Good leadership is crucial to guide the network through challenging times, both formal and informal capacities. However, leaders also hold positions of power. Representation and legitimacy remain issues to be resolved as the network has no legal status and cannot legally represent civil society in dialogue with policy makers or implementers, despite having visibility and informal recognition. This limits the scope of action and clarity of the mission and goals of the network. While exchange, sharing, coordination, joint activities, and knowledge strengthening are evident, joint advocacy remains a challenge.

Despite these difficulties, the network remains dynamic, driven by the momentum of the social protection law development, the creation of informal spaces for dialogue and the trust established with key.

A participant in the Asia regional workshop | Oxfam

4.3.1.2 Ways Forward

To further strengthen the SP4ALL network, several steps can be taken:

1. Training: Providing comprehensive training to all members can help bridge existing knowledge gaps between members and enhance their understanding of social protection issues.

2. Leadership and decision-making: Establishing clear leadership roles and decision-making procedures within the network can improve efficiency and ensure decisions are made collectively. Defining representation mechanisms, agreeing on a common vision and mission followed by a joint advocacy strategy can help facilitate decision-making.

3. Flexibility: Maintaining a level of flexibility remains important to allow the network to adapt to different contexts and seize opportunities as they arise. Official registration should only be pursued if there is a valid reason to do so.

4. Dependency on the coordinating organisation: Dependency on the coordinating organisation for channelling funds, administrative support and technical assistance remains an issue. Clarity is required to ensure ownership remains with the network members and that their priorities are not solely driven by donors or NGOs channelling the funds. Coordinating procedures between organisations providing funding should be established, and coordination among international NGOs with easier access to funding is recommended.

5. Commitment and awareness raising: Network members should commit to considering social protection as a core aspect of their work and invest in raising awareness among their constituents, so as to strengthen legitimacy and garner support from the public.

4.3.2 Nepal
4.3.2.1 Current Practices

From the advocacy perspective, it is important to ensure that social protection schemes, such as child grants (recently increased in coverage), maternity leave, work-related accident allowance, or pensions which have been successfully lobbied for and implemented in the country are expanded to more people, sustained and not discontinued once the programme is complete. Registration and implementation, particularly for informal workers, the self-employed, and migrant workers, remains problematic but the adoption of a rights-based approach and continued demands from civil society and trade unions will help ensure that these schemes are not "forgotten" or remain only on paper.

Effective advocacy leaves lasting coverage, but it is important to recognise that the work is never complete. Social protection, just like the concept of decent work, is an ongoing process that requires continuous improvement and adaptation to changing circumstances. One aspect of this improvement is the expansion of existing schemes and the allocation of increased budgets to account for inflation and changing needs. This can involve broadening the coverage of social protection schemes to include a larger portion of the population, making the schemes increasingly universal and/or targeted towards specific vulnerable groups. Additionally, administrative hurdles should be removed, especially in times of expanding digitalisation to ensure efficient and accessible delivery of social protection benefits, so as to leave no one behind.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for adaptive social protection measures. Informal workers, who were severely impacted by the crisis and lost their sources of income, required swift adjustments to social protection schemes to provide them with the necessary support. Nepal is still struggling to embrace the concept of adaptive social protection and is reluctant to initiate cash transfers. Another example is the recent phenomenon of digital platform workers and how they can be enrolled in social security.

In addition to advocacy, capacity building of civil society and trade unions have enhanced their ability to promote social protection floors. Through research conducted on themes such as the involvement of CSOs at the local level in two municipalities, financial management of a social security fund through ILO experts, and the concept of adaptive or shock-responsive social protection after earthquakes, landslides, or pandemics are some examples of where civil society and trade unions have gained a deeper understanding and can now play a more active role in advocating for better coverage and inclusion.

This capacity strengthening can be seen institutionally as well. CSOs and trade unions under the umbrella of INSP!R Nepal have increased representation and recognition as important stakeholders. As shown through various studies, a bottoms-up approach to social protection and a structural involvement of civil society leads to better and more sustainable social protection schemes, which are not a cost but an investment with proven return. Trade unions in Nepal sit on the Social Security Fund board and are therefore actively involved in the design, administration and evaluation of the contributory social protection schemes. Unfortunately, this structural involvement is still lower for the non-contributory social protection schemes and CSOs have limited space for representation. They have worked with the Nepal Planning Commission to raise concerns about the proposed Integrated Social Protection Framework. Development partners like UNICEF or the World Bank can play an important role in ensuring systematic inclusion processes for CSOs in their bilateral work with the government.

Participants in the Asia regional workshop | Oxfam

Transitioning from issue-based, loose platforms to thematic, structural networks, it has become apparent from the exchanges between Cambodian and Nepalese networks that while individual members may change, institutional roles and representation persist. Therefore, knowledge needs to be shared, renewed, and passed on to other stakeholders. A structural, long-term network with a multistakeholder approach in this sense is relevant and necessary, which is why the stakeholders in Nepal are in the final stages of drafting the terms of reference for INSP!R Nepal. It facilitates the involvement of over 100 stakeholders through annual meetings and online consultations, with a steering committee structured around social protection floors that meets regularly. Administrative and financial management are overseen by two leads. Advocacy and capacity strengthening activities are cost-effective to carry out and will, therefore, continue to be supported by WSM after this programme. This is consistent with Nepal's graduation from Low Income Country status. Providing adequate social protection is the responsibility of the State; CSOs and trade unions must ensure the State assumes that responsibility, rather than taking over that role.

4.3.2.2. Ways Forward

Being part of the global INSP!R network, INSP!R Nepal has the opportunity to promote social protection at a global level, engaging with regional bodies and organisations like the ILO. In an increasingly globalised world, it is crucial to ensure that social protection and decent work are universally accessible. The future holds a choice: either everyone will have access to social protection and decent work, or no one will. It is a collective responsibility to work towards a world where no one is left behind.

Stakeholder meeting in Nepal| WSM/SPCSN

4.3.3 Senegal
4.3.3.1 Current Practices

INSP!R-Senegal consists of active members, allied members and honorary members. The network is organised through various bodies including a general assembly, a decision-making body, a political committee for orientation, a permanent technical committee and five thematic groups. These groups include (i) health social insurance, (ii) informal economy, vocational training and professional insertion, (iii) unionisation, (iv) political action and (v) gender. To ensure its functioning and animation, one member organisation serves as a lead for coordinating actions and partnership frameworks. The lead organisation provides the secretariat and facilitates coordination with a participatory mechanism and involvement of other member organisations. It also provides representation, administrative and financial management of the network. Additionally, another organisation such as the CNTS, leads the political actions of the network. Depending on the specific theme, member organisations are responsible for organizing relevant actions.

The permanent technical committee has various responsibilities within INSP!R-Senegal. These include planning, implementation, monitoring/evaluation of activities, half-yearly and annual reporting and communication. The technical committee plans and budgets the activities and submits them to the political committee for approval, which in turn has them validated by the general assembly. After approval, the technical committee entrusts the coordinator with the implementation of the activities. The coordinator presents a quarterly report on the progress of activities, resource utilisation, and the schedule for the upcoming quarter. Every six months, the technical committee prepares a comprehensive technical and financial implementation report, along with planning and budgeting for the following semester, which is submitted to the political committee. For information and internal communication, various channels are used including telephone, social media, correspondence, newsletter, mutual participation in member activities and mutual visits. Information and external communication are carried out, in addition to the channels mentioned above, through the dissemination of reports, gadgets, written, electronic, social media, etc.

INSPIR-Senegal has established partnerships with other organisations actively engaged in social protection work as strategic allies within the framework of its actions (especially political actions) as well as with international NGOs and certain State services. WSM remains the main partner, supporting the network through mobilising projects/programmes and funding that have strengthened the network's capacities, in addition to the annual contributions of members (membership and dues).

The network has strengthened its identity and representativeness by embracing the diversity of the profiles of its members and forging alliances, and its involvement in reflections on social protection. Individually, member organisations have incorporated the techniques and tools that they have acquired into all aspects of the advocacy and lobbying efforts. INSPIR has strengthened its own capacities and those of its members in PFM and stakeholder analysis.

However, attention should be paid to the mobilisation and rigorous management of endogenous resources to ensure the autonomy of the organisation. INSPIR must increase its visibility with technical and financial partners positioning itself as a valuable contributor to the implementation of their programmes and initiatives.

Interaction with media | WSM

4.3.3.2 Ways Forward

To further strengthen the SP4ALL network, several steps can be The sustainability of the strategies developed during this programme is promising, as evidenced by the involvement of the INSP!R -Senegal network being part of the global INSP!R network having the will to promote social protection at the global, continental, and national levels in collaboration with regional bodies and international organisations such as the ILO.

In addition, the participatory approach used for planning, monitoring and evaluation of joint actions, along with the leadership and coordination mechanisms established, the acquired skills during the programme (for instance on the linkage between PFM and social protection), and commitment to raising awareness among the grassroot members are likely to continue beyond this project.

Lastly, the network will continue to capitalise on the experience of collaborating with other organisations like the ILO, the UNICEF and other international NGOs, to gather valuable insights for ongoing advocacy efforts.

Awareness raising campaign | WSM

4.3.4 Uganda
4.3.4.1 Current Practices

The network successfully set up governance structures such as working sub-committees that provide support to the Steering Committee in its operations. For example: the finance sub-committee supported the internal audit process. The leadership has representation from all vulnerable groups (women, youth, PWD, older people, formal and informal workers through trade unions) and is thus inclusive. During the last general meeting, it was decided to extend the terms of office to five years. This longer tenure provides greater stability and allows for effective leadership in driving the implementation and monitoring of the new strategic plan until its successful completion.

In addition to the diverse set of members, the national network has established connections with Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group and Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection. The network members work closely with these organisations, establishing effective mechanisms for coordination and timely interventions. Group meetings and activities are carefully synchronised with the parliament's schedules, budget cycle, and other relevant processes.

Box 8: Transform training for the Members of Parliament in Uganda

GCSPF, ILO, and UNICEF organised a three-day residential workshop on social protection financing and financial management in coordination with UPFSP in Uganda. It focused to equip the Hon'ble members of parliament with skills and tools to effectively engage in social protection policy discourse. The legislators committed to ensuring there is a national social protection system to shield their constituents from income shocks and other related life challenges.

The program engagements have facilitated the establishment of new partnerships with trade unions and key partners such as ILO and UNICEF. These partnerships have significantly expanded the network's opportunities to participate in national spaces where it previously had limited visibility. As a result, the network's visibility and resource mobilisation have improved. Currently, the Platform has been invited by the Ministry of Gender to participate in key processes of development of policies and strategies. For instance, the network has been formally invited and included in the committee responsible for the ongoing development of the Social Protection Strategy.

4.3.4.2 Ways Forward

The Platform has a multitude of opportunities to capitalise on and further strengthen itself based on the lessons learnt over the programme period. It is important to consolidate the achievements and explore additional avenues for partnerships. A pressing priority is to expand the network's national reach by enlisting new members from across the country and implementing interventions at regional and district levels. Establishing coordination mechanisms with local district government structures through their district-based members and participating in the planning and budgeting processes is essential.

Efforts should be made to enhance membership engagement in, enabling the tracking of resources allocated from the Central government to lower local governments and ensuring effective service delivery for vulnerable groups.

Lastly, the Platform should collaborate with other partners and conduct research to support advocacy initiatives at district and national levels. This research will provide evidence of social protection as an investment, thereby persuading the government to allocate more resources to the social protection sector.

4.3.5 Conclusions on Sustainability: Ensuring Continuity and Impact

The WCO country teams acted as the coordinating organisations in the four programme countries employing a participatory approach to organise the existing and new members in the country networks. The role of the coordinating organisation had varied power dynamics in the four countries – in Cambodia, the coordinating organisation provided resources, subject knowledge and organised capacity building initiatives as entrusted by the network members. In Nepal and Uganda, the coordinating organisations catalysed strategy development of the national networks, and in the case of Senegal, the coordinating organisation handled administrative tasks while the technical committees carried out their assigned responsibilities through participatory processes. These varied dynamics reflect the trust of network members in the coordinating organisations, owing to their transparency balance in terms of power, inclusion, decision making, strategic pathways, financials, and other core aspects. Since the inception of this programme, there has been a deliberate effort to bring diverse organisations on board these national advocacy networks, fostering collective leadership and actions, and flexible cooperation which resulted in sustained advocacy efforts at the country level.

The national networks have refined their vision and adopted various modes of cooperation and decision-making processes within their respective countries, while maintaining individual autonomy in terms of organisation level mission and vision for the cause they work for. This exclusivity of diverse members makes the national networks inclusive and better equipped to ensure long-term sustainability.

Each network member contributed subject matter knowledge from their specific areas of expertise. At the national level, they not only complemented each other but also enhanced their knowledge through the peer group interactions and capacity strengthening initiatives initiated through this programme. Capacity strengthening is a continuous process, and participants in the regional workshops indicated the criticality of bridging knowledge gaps through regular trainings, research-driven evidence creation, utilising existing knowledge and mutual learning, this can go a long way to sustain these networks.

Collective planning and actions in all the four countries resulted in numerous successes. The networks have gained acceptance from national governments and bureaucracy enabling them to negotiate and advocate for the voices and needs of marginalised groups. The Cambodian country network was invited by the government to participate in the development of social protection policy during COVID-19 pandemic. The Nepal network successfully advocated for numerous policy and programmes benefiting various marginalised sections. The Uganda network engaged parliamentarians to advocate for increased spending for social protection in the country and the Senegal network created new spaces for negotiation through its political action committee. Such opportunities, which were previously limited for civil society and trade union representatives, were achieved due to collective and strategised actions of the network members, catalysing individual efforts. This result-oriented progression demonstrates the strengthening of networks throughout the programme period, indicating their potential to exist and continue even after the closure of the funding/programme. It is important to highlight the Uganda network's collaborations with stakeholders such as the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group and the Uganda Parliamentary Forum on Social Protection throughout the programme. The network members have worked with them in a coordinated manner, establishing institutional mechanisms for regular and timely coordination. This exemplifies the need to institutionalise processes and spaces to maximise efficiency and create sustained impact.

The sustainability of the national networks is also influenced by the political environment and government ideology which can impact the level of permissible elasticity in the civil society spaces. Spaces available to the networks could be affected due to political turmoil, changes in government (political parties, head of the state/kingdom), or situations of crisis, which can potentially undermine the progress and achievements of the networks thus far. Regularly monitoring social protection policies and public finance spaces, and responding to the changes being made by the government are essential areas of work for the national networks. Government interest in this area of work might vary which could have catastrophic consequences on the sustainability of the national networks and the impact created in these four countries.

The question on legitimacy of these national networks is worth mentioning in terms of sustainability. Under this programme, the convening organisation as the recipient of funding, was solely responsible for legitimate utilisation and reporting of the actions. While decision-making authority is delegated to the network members, the coordinating organisations had the responsibility to carefully examine the decisions, particularly regarding actions funded through the programme. Not all four countries registered the national networks under the national laws but continued to work on the agenda which enabled the results mentioned above. In terms of sustainability, the authors would suggest that the decision to register as a formal organisation or remain an informal network depends on the country context, and network members should collectively decide on the appropriate approach. Considering the functions and strategic planning of the registered networks, it is likely that a registered

organisation can build the capacities to handle programme administration and financial resources, reducing the dependency on convening agency leading to decentralised power dynamics and legitimacy of the network.

While one can argue on the power held by the programme bearers acting as convening organisations, the authors would like to highlight their observations during the regional workshops. They observed that the strength of these networks lies in the trust established between the network members and the opportunities for collaboration and collective action as civil society rather than individual organisations. These national networks have achieved numerous successes throughout the programme period, and it is highly probable that these actions, ongoing processes, and positive outcomes will continue to motivate the networks and their members to sustain their collaborative efforts in the future.

Older people spending time with their peers on World Elder Abuse Awareness day | HelpAge

5. Paving the Path to Universal Social Protection: Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Through this learning exercise, we have gained valuable insights into how this programme has contributed to the creation or consolidation of inclusive, effective, and sustainable networks and coalitions of broad base CSOs working on the thematic of social protection. The dynamics observed in different countries were influenced by their unique national contexts, existing policy and institutional frameworks, and the dynamics within the civil society landscape.

Prior to the launch of this programme in 2019, the development and structuring of networks varied across the four countries. These networks had been in existence for more than 10 years. While in Senegal and Uganda, networks included organisations supported by various donors or without foreign support, in Nepal and Cambodia they included organisations financed by a same donor and were quite informal. In all the countries, the four GCSPF coordinating organisations have been instrumental in connecting the organisations around their historical networks: HelpAge (for the older people), OXFAM (formal and informal economy workers, women, youth, farmers), WSM (trade unions, mutual health organisations, women and youth organisations, elderly and farmer associations, cooperatives and other initiatives of the social and solidarity economy).

However, it was evident from the beginning, there was a lack of collaboration and synergy between CSOs and trade unions. CSOs primarily focused on non-contributory schemes like social assistance and social transfers, while trade unions primarily dealt with contributory and social insurance schemes for the formal economy workers and were board members of the social security funds in the above-mentioned. Trade unions, as part of the tripartite governance structure alongside the government and private sector, utilised social dialogue as a strategy to influence policies, especially those related to contributor systems. On the other hand, CSOs engaged in advocacy efforts towards sectorial ministries such as gender, youth, and disability, aiming to participate in informal consultations that have yet to be institutionalised.

To foster collaboration between trade unions and CSOs, the programme implemented several strategies. One approach involved mapping and connecting relevant organisations and integrating them into existing networks. Another strategy focused on power mapping or stakeholder analysis to identify key actors and their roles. Additionally, capacity building initiatives were conducted, which included workshops, webinars, and seminars at both the international and national levels. These events featured experts from organisations such as ILO, UNICEF, and GCSPF, providing opportunities for mutual learning and knowledge exchange.

To align with the programme's objectives, particular attention was given to enhancing expertise in social protection policies and ensuring the sustainability of its financing. Numerous training sessions were conducted to provide in-depth knowledge on various topics, including PFM, budget elaboration and a pproval processes, programme-oriented budgeting, fiscal space for social protection, and budget accountability. These training initiatives aimed to equip participants with the necessary skills and understanding to effectively navigate the intricacies of social protection financing and contribute to the development of robust policies.

In conclusion, it is essential to highlight the significance of the active involvement of CSOs in seemingly technical matters like PFM for universal social protection. This active participation is crucial for promoting inclusive governance and achieving sustainable development that leaves no one behind, as outlined in the SDG Agenda 2030.

To overcome the historical separation between trade unions and civil society and leverage their unique capacities in mobilisation, service delivery, and influence, it is crucial to foster mutual understanding and trust. This can be achieved by establishing inclusive spaces for structural policy dialogue that actively involve both civil society and trade unions. However, it is important to ensure that these new spaces do not undermine the existing institutionalised platforms where trade unions are already engaged, as mandated by international regulations such as ILO conventions.
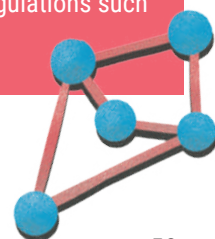
These new spaces are essential for shaping comprehensive policy development that encompasses all sectors of society. They provide a platform to advocate for improved integration of social protection schemes and frameworks, enhancing the coordination between social assistance and social insurance programmes. Additionally, these spaces facilitate discussions on sustainable financing of social protection schemes, promoting better allocation of domestic resources and improved financial management practices. It is important to extend this dialogue to strategic ministries such as Finance or Planning, even though historically they have been less open to engagement, to ensure a more inclusive and effective policy-making process.

In addition, structural collaboration between international networks such as the GCSPF and international cooperation partners such the UN multilateral cooperation agencies or bilateral country cooperation agencies on the theme of social protection and SP&PFM has played a crucial role in fostering trust and strengthening relationships between the governments, private sector, and civil society, (including trade unions). This collaboration serves as a best practice that can be replicated in all future programmes.

The successful advocacy efforts carried out by this programme can be attributed to the utilisation of inclusive networks, thematic expertise, coordinated strategies, high visibility, amplified voice and bottom-up approaches. These tools have enabled intensive advocacy to influence policy processes, resulting innotable achievements across all countries involved. For example, strategic alliances were formed with groups of parliamentarians in Senegal and Uganda who are actively engaged in promoting social protection; in Cambodia, Nepal and Senegal, the governments have increased budgets for some non-contributory social protection programmes, thus covering a greater number of beneficiaries. In Nepal, it was noticed that registration to contribution-based security schemes has more than doubled since 2019, partly due to the SP&PFM Programme (see ILO twitter @soc_protection). This progress has extended to include informal and self-employed workers who are now able to register for these schemes. In all the four countries, synergies and complementarities with other social protection programmes funded by the EU or by bilateral development cooperation with some European countries has been encouraged. To strengthen advocacy actions and the elaboration of position papers, the programme has capitalised on the recommendations derived from studies conducted by other stakeholders participating in joint programmes such as the ILO, UNICEF, or GCSPF members.

One significant achievement of this multi-actor programme was the establishment of inclusive governance systems right from the beginning. This included the formation of a joint steering committee comprising of all stakeholders including the government, international cooperation partners, CSOs, and trade unions. For instance, in Senegal, the programme led to the ratification of a ministerial decree, marking a positive step towards institutionalised dialogue that involves civil society in all processes. However, in other countries, the establishment of such mechanisms proved challenging.

While the actors involved express their commitment to sustaining the inclusive network created for universal social protection, it remains uncertain whether they will be able to continue to work on PFM as a key strategy. Challenges persist in gaining recognition for the role of CSOs from influential ministries of finance. To address this, the global coalition floor continues to intensify campaigns at international level targeting traditional partners of those ministries such as the IMF or the World Bank, so that they could contribute to an enabling environment at the national level. In the next stage, efforts may focus on collaborating with in-country networks to influence the IMF country teams, the World Bank, and regional banks, given their prominent advisory roles in PFM.

To reach the wider public, the Programme has forged strategic alliances with the media, including social media, and produced relevant communication and visibility tools to disseminate relevant information and raise awareness.
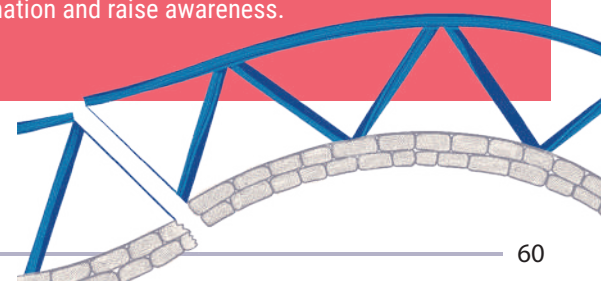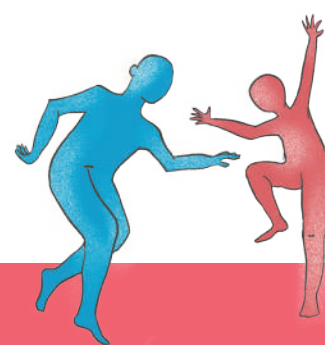
Recommendations

As we reflect on the accomplishments thus far, it is important to acknowledge the progress made in the four countries. However, it is crucial to recognise that further efforts are needed to cultivate the seeds that have been planted, to fully realise the benefits in terms of improved PFM and expanded social protection coverage "for all".

It is essential to emphasise the importance of encouraging development cooperation partners not to work in siloes or with the organisations supporting their traditional core groups, but to facilitate a coherent and coordinated approach among the most relevant CSOs and networks. By fostering an environment of cooperation and inclusivity, development cooperation partners can maximise their efforts and achieve better outcomes. Therefore, supporting cooperation among civil society actors is seen as a major step forward.

According to a recent study by HIVA, the initiative of bringing together broad-based CSOs and trade unions organisations continues to be a key strategy in advancing the agenda for universal social protection and plays a crucial role in advocating for sustainable financing, fostering inclusive, democratic, effective, and sustainable governance of social protection systems. The participation of CSOs in governance of sustainable development contributes to bridging representational gaps, garnering societal support to policies and regulations, facilitating communication, addressing institutional governance deficiencies at the global level, and addressing implementation gaps in upscaling services delivery initiated by CSOs, to ensure no one is left behind.[16]

Depending on the specific national contexts, it was observed that the engagement of civil society in policy elaboration, monitoring, and evaluation was often limited to informal or weak consultations. However, as part of social compact and from a human rights perspective, we recommend that the institutionalised dialogue mechanisms that facilitate the interaction and collaboration between the government, and civil society, continue to be guaranteed in all countries, as a pathway forward for any society to achieve sustainable development.

In light of this, the establishment of institutionalised mechanisms for dialogue between policymakers and civil society on social protection policy development, implementation, and sustainable financing is instrumental in safeguarding and preserving inclusive spaces for equitable engagement. It is important for civil society to democratically represent all social layers and interest groups across the life cycle. This form of dialogue should not replace tripartite social dialogue, which remains crucial in this domain, but rather complement it by systematically and effectively incorporating the perspectives of other civil society actors at regular intervals. By doing so, a more comprehensive and inclusive approach can be achieved.

In order to ensure the long-term financial sustainability and consolidation of the results achieved through this programme, particularly on the linkage between PFM and universal social protection, we recommend members of the coalition to continue advocating for domestic and international resource mobilisation to strengthen inclusive, effective, and sustainable networks. Additionally, it is important to address the potential replication of the innovative approaches, strategies and tools that have been developed with this programme in other contexts, with necessary adaptation to the specific national contexts. If possible, the GCSPF should consider engaging in international lobbying and advocacy efforts to secure the renewal of such a global programme.

To enhance their capacity for action and broaden the scope of their lobbying and advocacy work, civil society and trade union coalition members should be encouraged to expand or intensify the training programmes developed during this programme to benefit their current and new members. This will enable them to effectively advocate for social protection and drive positive change on a larger scale.

Together, by fostering inclusive networks, strengthening dialogue, and advocating for sustainable financing, we can build a future where universal social protection is a reality for all and no one is left behind.

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16 Elena Briones Alonso & Jan Ongevalle (HIVA), Sustainable and inclusive social protection systems: civil society's role in their design, implementation and upscaling (2023).