

Temporary Coordination Group on Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) in the Sahel

Sahel Alliance joint key messages on Adaptive Social Protection

Over the past ten years, social protection systems in the Sahel have been leveraged to address chronic poverty, lean season food insecurity and, more recently, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sahel countries are investing in adaptive social protection (ASP) so they can scale up systems and address the multiple and protracted crises that go hand in hand with high levels of chronic poverty and vulnerability. Social protection systems that are able to adapt to shocks are critical in the Sahel, as its countries rank among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and to global crises, and face increased fragility and insecurity.

ASP systems allow governments to build the resilience of poor and vulnerable households in a sustainable way by investing in their capacity to prepare for, cope with, and adapt to shocks, ensuring that they do not fall (deeper) into poverty. Evidence demonstrates that strengthening social protection systems to be adaptive is critical to reduce poverty, build resilience, help households adapt to climate change, and mitigate the impacts of shocks.

In December 2023, under the joint German and World Bank presidency of the Sahel Alliance, a Temporary Coordination Group was set up to enhance members' joint understanding, coordination and approaches on ASP. This contributes to the priority area "Strengthening resilience to climate, economic and other shocks through adaptive social protection systems and integrated food systems" agreed by the July 2023 General Assembly. The group consists of partners engaging in ASP in the Sahel and aims to support increasing ASP coverage, improved coherence and convergence of ASP-related programs, and joint advocacy and communication on ASP. The group has formulated key messages on ASP in the Sahel that also serve as main principles guiding the group members' work.

Key Messages:

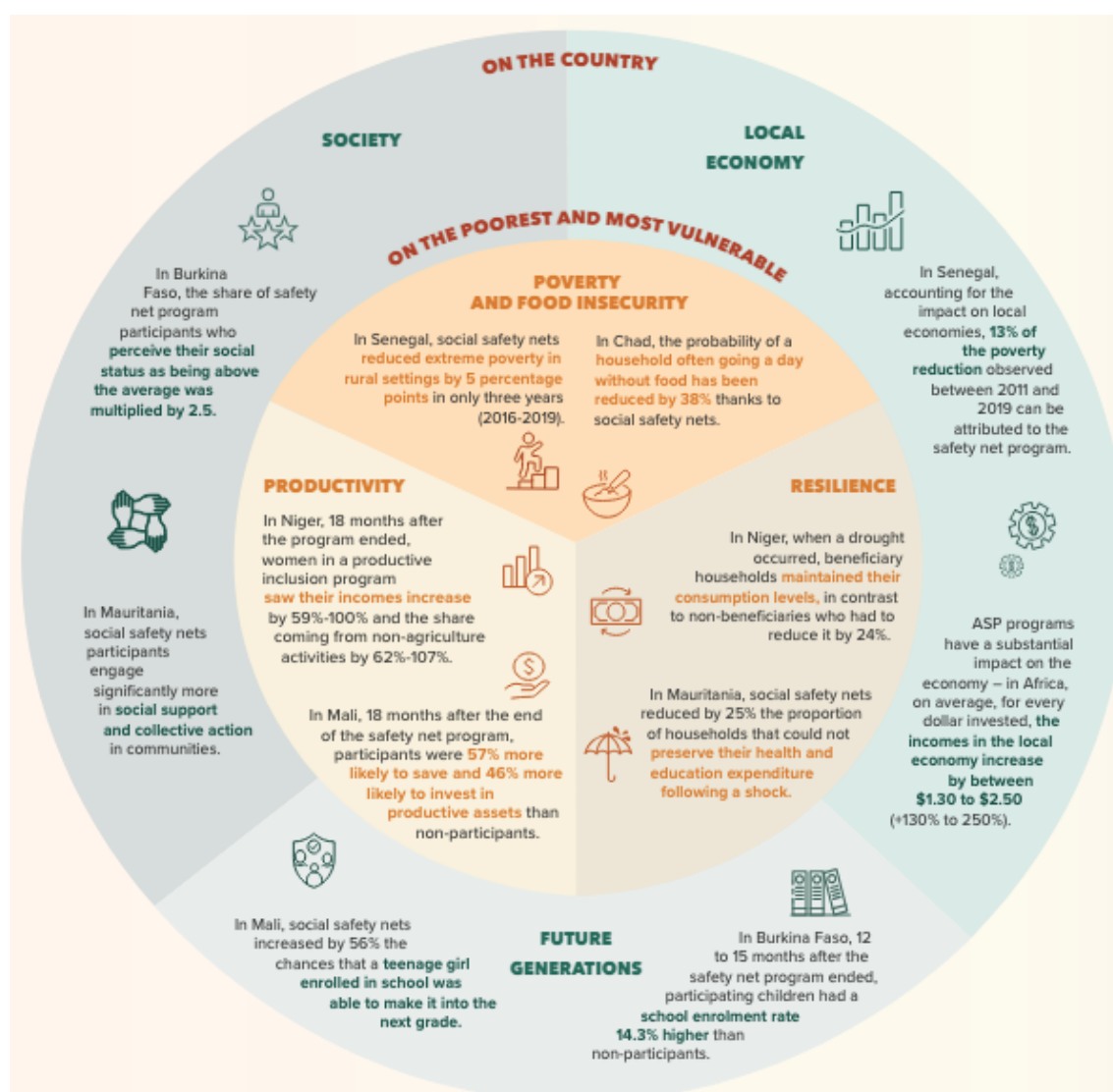
In the Sahel, adaptive social protection is an investment approach to improve the well-being of poor and vulnerable people, promote their human capital and productivity, and build their resilience to shocks. First, regular social safety nets enhance the welfare, human capital, productive capacity and resilience of the poorest by focusing on structural causes of poverty and vulnerability. Second, and in complement, shock-responsive programs allow the horizontal and vertical expansion of safety net programs to provide temporary support to the households most affected by shocks. The strength of ASP lies in its ability to contribute to addressing complex challenges such as chronic poverty and vulnerability, adapt to structural changes, and respond to shocks and multidimensional crises.

ASP aims to optimize social protection program coverage and delivery systems to ensure effective support before, during, and after a shock. This entails (i) optimizing the coverage of routine social protection programs such as longer-term safety nets to strengthen resilience over time, (ii) ensuring continuity of the delivery of existing programs during and after shocks, and (iii) expanding the depth and scope of social protection programs in response to a shock, using dynamic delivery systems, anticipatory action approaches and early warning systems to trigger responses.

In the Sahel, ASP is a crucial instrument to address the unequal impacts of climate change and strengthen the resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable members of society. ASP can play a crucial role in helping the poorest and most vulnerable groups adapt to climate effects as part of countries' climate strategies. This is realized by providing timely support to those affected by climate shocks, helping households adapt their livelihoods to the impacts of climate change, and building their resilience and ability to cope with future climate shocks.

ASP can help reduce future humanitarian needs in the Sahel. ASP systems can be an effective instrument to implement the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus and contributes to breaking recurrent cycles of crisis in the Sahel. Actors can avail of elements of the national ASP system, for instance using social registries to jointly plan and target shock-response interventions, even if operational approaches relying on partners and civil society can remain necessary in fragile or conflict contexts. Overall, ASP's combination of regular support to foster resilience and shock response programs, its delivery efficiency, and its impact on household resilience to future shocks can help reduce reliance on, and costs, of humanitarian assistance financing.

In the Sahel, ASP has demonstrated its transformative impacts on poverty and vulnerability for program beneficiaries and society at large. Social protection programs, globally and in the Sahel, have demonstrated a high return on investment, with long-term positive impacts on poverty, food security, and vulnerability to shocks. Social safety nets and economic inclusion programs also foster sustained longer-term economic impacts for the most vulnerable through investments in productive assets, increased productivity, and diversification of livelihoods. Careful design can also ensure that interventions contribute to reducing gender inequality. Beyond beneficiaries, ASP contributes to societies and economies by increasing social cohesion, promoting healthier, more educated, and more productive future generations, and boosting local economies through local multiplier effects.



Impacts of Adaptive Social Protection in the Sahel – Evidence from rigorous impact evaluations of social safety nets, productive inclusion, shock response and other social protection program. More details on: www.worldbank.org/saspp
In the Sahel, national ownership of social protection systems is central to ASP systems' success in delivering their full impact on poverty and vulnerability. Strong national social protection systems

can help address current bottlenecks such as fragmentation of programs, inconsistencies in program parameters, or duplication of programs, as well as inefficiencies resulting from uncoordinated support. At the same time, ensuring full coverage will require concerted and synergetic support from donors and technical partners. The delivery of ASP programs can at times call for an operational approach that relies on partners and civil society in fragile or conflict contexts. However, partners supporting ASP should seek to support national ownership and coordination whenever possible, and will work towards alignment with national strategies, programs and instruments whenever possible, irrespective of the delivery mechanisms adopted.

Conclusion

Programs like the World Bank’s [“Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme” \(SASPP\)](#) and the [WFP-UNICEF Joint Programme “Responding to COVID-19 Pandemic through Social protection systems in the Sahel - Towards addressing the socioeconomic impacts of multiple shocks”](#) are already focusing on strengthening ASP in the Sahel. They are exemplary joint initiatives that foster coordination, cooperation and alignment of various Temporary Coordination Group members in the Sahelian countries. The Temporary Coordination Group encourages further investments in these programs or in coordination with these programs to support the expansion of ASP coverage in the region. ASP can significantly contribute to reducing extreme poverty, increasing food security and lowering the impact of climate change on poor and vulnerable households in the Sahel. Investing in strong ASP systems is a key strategy, contributing to addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by Sahelian countries.