

THE SINGLE WINDOW SERVICE: A MECHANISM FOR IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS IN ASIA

THE SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOOR

It is estimated that only about 20%ⁱ of the world's working-age population (and their families) have access to comprehensive social protection and enjoy a set of social guarantees that provide protection from social and economic shocks encountered across the lifecycle. Social Protection is a human right and ensuring that it is a reality, particularly for the most vulnerable, is a necessity.

The development of national Social Protection Floors (SPFs) aims to guarantee entitlement and access to basic social security for all members of a society (at a minimum). This concept is elaborated in the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), adopted nearly unanimously by 185 member States during the 101st session of the International Labour Conference (ILC). The SPF comprises four essential guarantees for all residents:

- access to essential health care, including maternity care;
- basic income security for children, including access to nutrition, education, care and any other necessary goods and services;
- basic income security for persons in active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability; and
- basic income security for older persons.

In accordance with the ILO's two-dimensional strategy for the extension of social security coverage, Recommendation No. 202 provides guidance to countries on:

- Establishing and maintaining national SPFs as a fundamental element of national social security systems; and
- Implementing SPFs within strategies for the extension of social security that seek to progressively ensure higher levels of social security for all.

Investing in the SPF is an investment in social justice and inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. Social

protection contributes to economic growth by raising labour productivity and demand as well as enhancing social stability. In times of crisis, a SPF acts as an automatic stabilizer for the economy by alleviating the decline in aggregate demand for goods and services. Calculations by various UN agencies show that a basic floor of social transfers is affordable at virtually any stage of economic developmentⁱⁱ.

The SPF's guiding principles

Universality Non-discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal coverage of all residents by comprehensive social security guarantees • Implementation based on equality of treatment • Respect of the right and dignity of people covered
Adequacy and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequacy and predictability of benefit packages • Consistent with national economic/development • Coherence across institutions responsible for delivering social protection
Progressiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progressive extension of social security following the stair-case approach • Regular monitoring of implementation and periodic evaluation
Fair balance of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent, accountable and sound financial management and administration • Tripartite administration and involvement of social partners in design and implementation • Efficiency and accessibility of complaint and appeal procedures
Collective financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social inclusion • Risks pooling (men & women, poor & rich ...) • Collective financing of benefits through contributions, taxation
State's responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit provision stated by law • State as ultimate guarantor of the fund

CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING SPFs

While preliminary assessments and calculations show that the *progressive* establishment of a nationally defined SPF is possible and affordable in all countries, implementation faces four main challenges in Asia, namely: lack of coordination among stakeholders at the national level and between national and subnational levels, lack of coherence and synergies between social protection and employment services; lack of resources to expand coverage and provide adequate levels of benefits; absence of national registry databases and management and monitoring systems; and lack of empowerment of local administrative units of government and key stakeholders.

The coordination challenge:

Implementation of SPFs necessarily cuts across sectors and incorporates both services and transfers, in order to address the multi-dimensional nature of poverty.

Responsibility for social protection issues and programmes is often divided among a range government bodies (Ministries of Health, Labour, Planning, Social Affairs and so on), which can

lead to fragmented delivery of social services. Multiple laws and decrees may result in a lack of coherence in the overall social protection framework. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies in the delivery of services and creates barriers to access. Final beneficiaries may have to register under multiple agencies and surmount a range of administrative hurdles before they can access the benefits to which they are entitled.

The financing issue:

In many developing countries, lack of fiscal space results in poor availability and quality of public social services and low levels of social protection benefits. In addition, the principles of transparency, accountability and sound financial management are not always instilled within governmental processes.

SPF planning should be guided by the principle that investments in human capital development are also investments in economic development. The cost of basic social security measures of the kind comprising the floor, can be kept within a relatively modest percentage of national income, even in low-income countries.

The absence of national registry databases and management and monitoring systems

If the universality of the SPF is given as a core principle, the accurate identification of the beneficiaries among the population remains a significant challenge due to the absence of national registration databases in many countries. The difficulty of identifying potential beneficiaries often leads to coverage gaps and to a lack of overall monitoring of social protection programmes.

Additionally, social security systems can appear complex and confusing to beneficiaries: the absence of a unified identification and targeting mechanism often leads to incoherent results due to different targeting methodologies applied by different programme administrators.

Finally, the absence of national database makes it impossible to properly monitor the extension of coverage as it is not possible to track who is entitled to what programme.

The lack of empowerment of local administration and persons of concerns:

Because SPFs are designed to reach the whole population with a focus on the most poor and vulnerable, delivery of social services and transfers should take place at the local level. Sub-national administrative bodies are thus appropriate channels for implementation of the SPF. In many developing countries, however, the decentralization process is still in its early stages and sub-national levels of administration suffer from lack of resources and capacities.

Moreover, the sub-national administration does not always have the legitimacy required to represent the people (nomination versus election). Hence it is important to guarantee full representation of the persons of concern e.g. through community representatives or trade unions as well as independent and transparent complaints and appeals mechanism.

Finally, emphasis on decentralized delivery mechanisms should not be at the cost of portability of benefits for those who may migrate. Through common rules in designing and implementing programmes, and shared management information systems, access to the SPF should be guaranteed throughout people's lives including when relocating.

THE SWS CONCEPT IN OPERATION

The Single Window Service concept

The Single Window Service (SWS) concept stems from the guiding principles enshrined in the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202). The SWS advocates coordination and monitoring of all social protection and employment programmes through empowerment of the sub-national administration.

Benefits expected from the SWS	
Extend social protection coverage and reduce vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unified database on beneficiaries Shared procedures and tools (at least for registration) Proximity of the SWS to the beneficiaries Installation of combined benefit packages
Increase efficiencies and traceability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared administrative processes Unified database on target beneficiaries and programmes Unique Management Information System (MIS) to track the implementation and functioning Installation of appeals mechanism
Trigger cross-ministerial coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combined benefit packages Joint monitoring of the Social Security System Use of the same procedures and resources
Empower communities and local administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concrete roles and responsibilities to sub-national administration in the delivery of services and transfers Proximity of the SWS offices to the beneficiaries

The SWS is a "one-stop shop" for the delivery of social protection programmes and employment services. Embedded in government institutions and operated by the sub-national administration, the SWS is linked to the central level via a formalized reporting system. This reporting mechanism should

ensure the transparency and traceability of the social protection system. It also facilitates better coordination between the local level (responsible for service delivery) and the central/national level (responsible for policy development, planning, monitoring and evaluation).

Operations at the SWS office

Practically, the SWS performs tasks that were previously under the direct supervision of different service providers in addition to coordination activities:

1. information dissemination on existing programmes;
2. enrolment facilitation in the SSDM and applications to social programmes;
3. maintenance of the management information system;
4. assistance in the appeals process; and
5. provision of services.

Families or individuals register in a single office at sub-national level. An assigned "case manager" assesses the vulnerabilities and skills of potential beneficiaries, develops a personalized plan with them covering skills development, enterprise creation or job placement, channels information on all social services they are entitled to, provides support for registration to the schemes, delivers social protection ID cards, facilitates access to benefits in cash or in kind, and collects contributions (if any).



Similar mechanisms have already been successfully implemented in countries including India, Brazil, Chile, South Africa, and Pakistan.

THE COMMITMENT OF CAMBODIA & INDONESIA TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SPF AND EXTENSION OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Cambodia



The right of social protection for everyone is clearly enshrined in the constitution of Cambodia. Government efforts at reducing vulnerability, alleviating poverty, and improving livelihoods through social protection have gathered pace since the early 2000s, notably with the adoption of the Social Security Law by the Cambodian parliament in September 2002. The Law includes a range of new initiatives and programmes aimed at extending access to basic services such as health care and income support for various social groups.

Implementation, however, has largely been ad hoc, geographically limited, under-funded and heavily reliant on non-sustainable external funding that compromises the continuity and sustainability of programmes. The Royal Government is assuming stronger ownership of the coordination, execution and funding of social protection, as reflected in several recent policy documents. Most recently, the National Social Protection Strategy for the Poor and Vulnerable (NSPS-PV), launched by the Prime Minister in 2011, reaffirmed the government's commitment to universalising basic transfers and services based on the expansion of existing social protection measures, the introduction of new schemes and the installation of a coordination mechanism.

The Single Window Service is one of the key recommendations of the Social Protection Assessment Based National Dialogue Exercises conducted in Indonesia and Cambodia in 2011 and 2012. In Cambodia the Single Window Service, under the name Social Service Delivery Mechanism (SSDM), was adopted by the government as the implementation and coordination mechanism of the National Social Protection Strategy for the Poor and Vulnerable.

THE SWS CONCEPT AND DECENTRALIZATION IN CAMBODIA AND INDONESIA

Decentralization has been a key feature of both Indonesia and Cambodia's transitions to democracy, shifting the responsibility of providing services from national to local government. Both countries continue to work on reforms that will assign and delegate more responsibilities to local authorities.

Objectives of decentralization

Decentralization is associated with objectives of democratic decision-making, popular participation in government, and accountability of public institutions to citizens.

Decentralization aims to give citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision-making through the greater participation of sub-national authorities. This ensures that decisions are better informed and more relevant to the diverse interests of a society than those made at the central level. The electoral selection of representatives in local jurisdictions allows citizens to better know their political representatives and ensures that elected officials are familiar with the needs and desires of their constituents.

Decentralization is also motivated by the need to improve service delivery to the population and recognition of the limitations of centralised administration in delivering services. It is generally accepted that the decentralization of certain sectors or services such as health care, infrastructure management, social services and natural resources management, should lead to better services for residents. The

Indonesia



Indonesia is working to extend social protection coverage to the entire population. Since its amendment in 2002, the Indonesian Constitution recognizes the right to social security for all, and the responsibility of the State in the development of social security. Although existing social protection schemes tend to be fragmented and scattered, progress is being made towards more comprehensive social protection coverage.

An important milestone is the progressive implementation of the National Social Security Law (Law No. 40/2004 regarding the National Social Security System). The law mandates the extension of social security coverage to the whole population in the categories of health and employment. The Law follows a staircase approach with non-contributory schemes for the poor, contributory schemes for the self-employed and statutory social security schemes for formal sector workers. The Law on Social Security Providers (Law No. 24/2011) operationalizes Law No. 40/2004, with implementation of universal health insurance expected to commence in 2014 and other schemes related to employment anticipated to begin in 2015. The SWS is expected to play a key role in facilitating access to social insurance for informal economy workers and for the delivery of antipoverty programmes targeting the poor and vulnerable; the SWS will also be instrumental in updating the national database of beneficiaries.

process of decentralization can substantially improve the efficiency, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of service provision compared with centralized systems.

The proximity of decision makers to members of the community should ensure their commitment to deliver quality services that reflect local priorities. This in turn should encourage civic participation at the local level.

However, decentralization takes time to establish and its design must be in line with the capacity of subnational administration.

Contribution of the SWS to the decentralization process

Despite ongoing reforms, the roles and responsibilities of local administration remain rather imprecise in Cambodia and Indonesia.

The SWS has the potential to give concrete functions to the sub-national administration in the delivery of social services. The SWS is embedded in government structures and contributes to building the capacity of local institutions to administer and monitor existing social protection programmes.

The SWS provides a coherent framework for the implementation of national social protection strategies in an integrated, effective and efficient way, by establishing a management system and a reporting mechanism that links the central government to villages, communes, districts and provinces.

Implementing the SWS in Cambodia and Indonesia offers a significant opportunity to support these countries in their respective decentralization and democratization efforts, for

example through comprehensive plans to raise capacity at the sub-national level for transparent delivery of national social protection programmes.

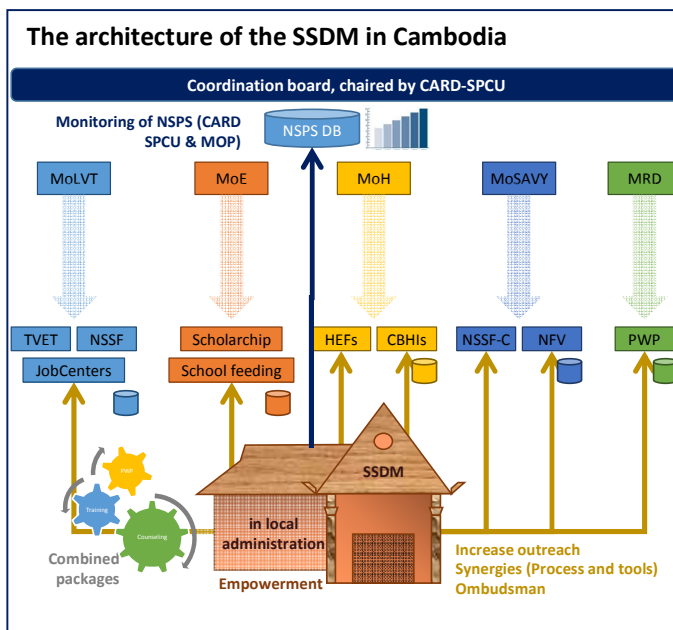
THE DESIGN OF THE SWS IN CAMBODIA AND INDONESIA

The ILO has been working in collaboration with national and sub-national governments in both countries to develop a SWS design adapted to the national and local contexts. The design of the SSDM in Cambodia was completed in September 2013, while the design of the SWS in Indonesia is expected to be finalized by the end of 2013.

The main features of both SWS designs are:

- Local teams embedded in government institutions and operated by the sub-national administration. The teams assist residents to access social protection and employment services. They also represent the interests of beneficiaries through an appeals mechanism.
- An integrated management information system to collect information at the decentralized level on beneficiaries, existing social services and the utilization of services by beneficiaries to allow a better monitoring.
- Operational linkages with existing social protection and employment programmes.

To ensure optimal proximity to final beneficiaries and to facilitate integration of the existing institutions, each level of the sub-national administration will have a role to play in SWS functions (application of the subsidiarity principleⁱⁱⁱ).



IMPLEMENTATION

As requested by the Cambodian and Indonesian governments, the ILO will continue to support implementation of the SWS mechanism in a number of pilot provinces. In both countries, the first SWS offices are anticipated to open before the end of 2013.

To ensure ownership of the SWS at both the national and decentralized levels of administration, the implementation and administration of the SWS will adopt a participatory approach, engaging representatives of workers and employers, government, civil society and development partners involved in the implementation of social protection programs.

To ensure financial and institutional sustainability the SWS will be embedded in government structures and additional SWS staff hired through local administration.

An ILO project team will be established to support implementation of the SWS at the national and decentralized level:

- At national level, the project team will support the central government to coordinate all stakeholders and to update the legal framework required for efficient implementation of the SWS. The team will also support monitoring of project implementation and refining SWS design to ensure effective operations and proper governance;
- At decentralized level, the project team will work in close cooperation with the sub-national administration to establish SWS offices in communes and districts. The project team will support the sub-national administration to negotiate MoUs with local social service providers and to raise awareness of social protection and the SWS mechanism in order to better reach potential beneficiaries.

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ⁱ World Social Security report 2010-2011, ILO, 2010

ⁱⁱ Social protection floor for a fair and inclusive globalization, report of the advisory group chaired by Michelle Bachelet, 2011

ⁱⁱⁱ Principle of devolving decisions and activities to the lowest practical level