



**Save the Children**  
100 YEARS

# **CHILD SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION: AN ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION FOR ACHIEVING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND POVERTY REDUCTION**

## **Save the Children's Global Approach**

This document summarises Save the Children's approach to child-sensitive social protection (CSSP) with examples of initiatives spanning five main areas of focus.

Save the Children CSSP Technical Working Group

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Photo: Emnet Dereje / Save the Children



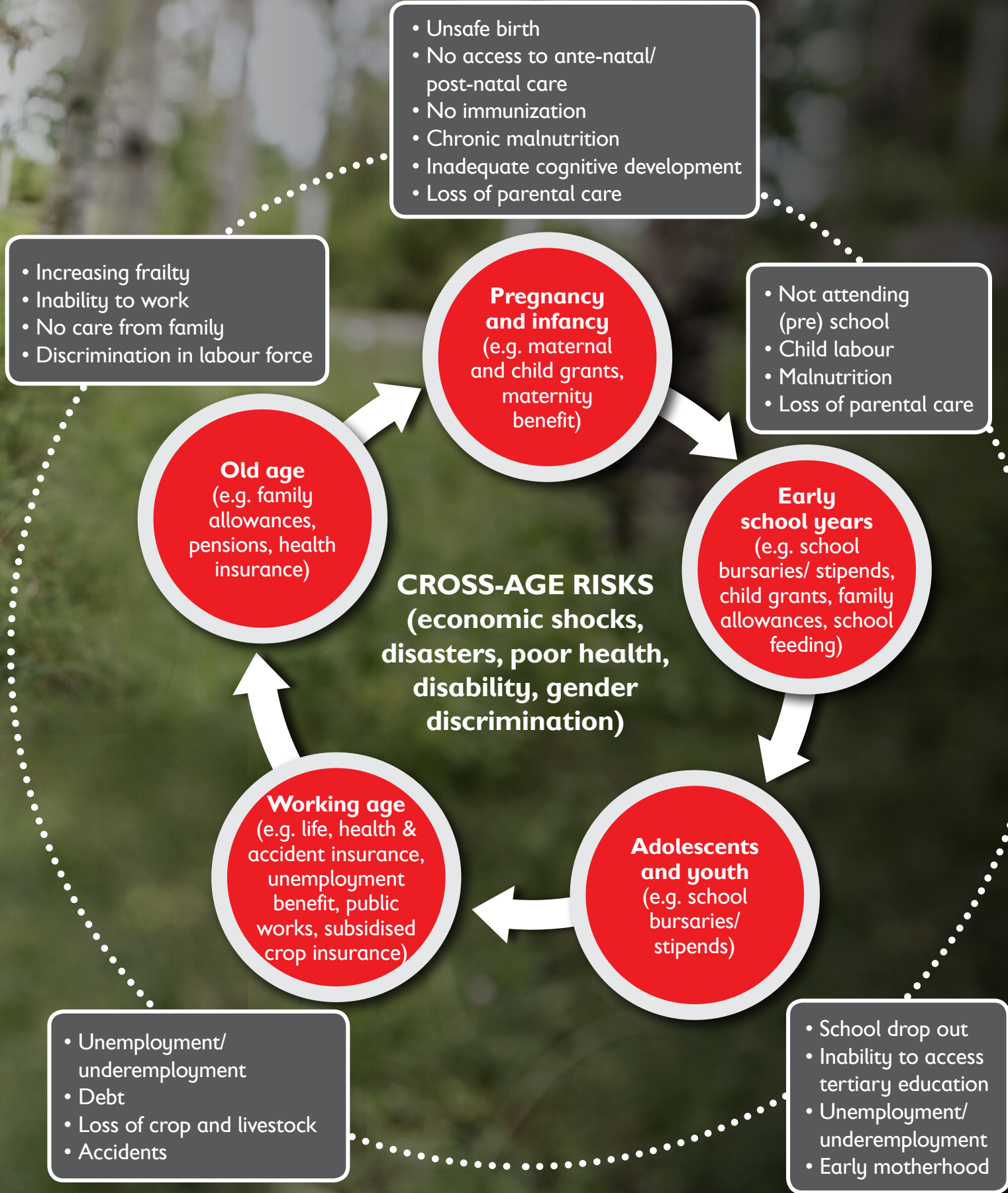
**SOCIAL PROTECTION PROTECTS AGAINST KEY RISKS THROUGHOUT THE LIFE CYCLE**

**1. WHAT IS SOCIAL PROTECTION?**

Before defining what CSSP is, we first define social protection more broadly as:

*A set of public policies, programmes and systems that help women, men and all girls and boys to: (1) reach and sustain an adequate standard of living; (2) improve their ability to cope with risks and shocks throughout their life cycle; and, (3) claim their rights and enhance their social status.*

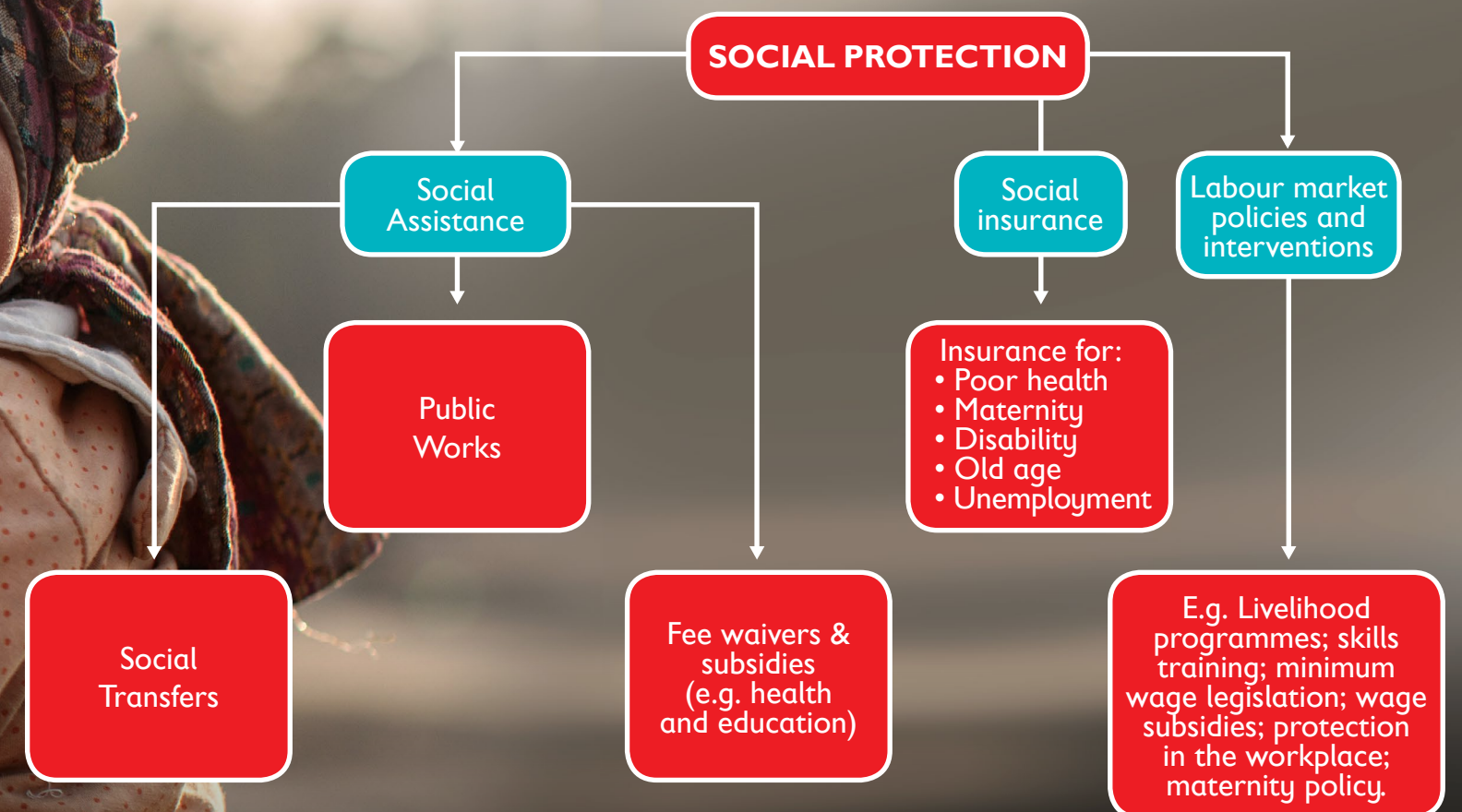
The figure depicts some of the key risks all of us can face at different points throughout our life cycle (grey boxes) and the different forms of social protection that can be used at each stage to address those risks (red circles). Many countries use this concept of the life cycle when designing their social protection policies and strategies. In addition to the risks that are specific to different stages of our life, some risks are faced throughout our lives that can also require social protection, including: poor health, disability, gender discrimination, and external shocks and crises.



## A TYPOLOGY OF SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS

The figure below groups social protection mechanisms into three commonly defined categories:<sup>1</sup>

- **Social assistance:** regular and predictable transfers in the form of cash, vouchers or in-kind (e.g. school meals) that do not require a contribution from the beneficiary. Examples of cash transfers include maternal and child grants, pensions, disability grants, widowhood grants, etc. Social assistance also includes subsidies or fee waivers for goods and basic services.
- **Social insurance:** beneficiaries typically contribute to this through insurance contributions, though it may be subsidised by government, especially for the poorest. Examples include health and accident insurance, disability insurance, maternity benefits, workplace pensions, unemployment benefits.
- **Labour market policies and interventions:** e.g. livelihood programmes, skills training, minimum wage policy, wage subsidies, maternity policy, protection in the workplace.



**Source:** Adapted from O'Brien et al. (2018).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The measures in the figure represent a globally agreed definition of social protection. However, within Save the Children, some of the specific interventions are dealt with by thematic areas other than CSSP. For example, promotion of universal healthcare is a key focus for health advocacy while livelihoods and adolescent skills are covered by Food Security and Livelihoods teams.

<sup>2</sup>O'Brien et al. (2018) Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Toolkit. Available from: <https://www.opml.co.uk/files/Publications/a0408-shock-responsive-social-protection-systems/srsp-toolkit.pdf?noredirect=1>

## 2. WHAT IS CHILD SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION (CSSP)?

At Save the Children we advocate for a particular approach to social protection, namely Child-sensitive Social Protection (CSSP). We define CSSP as:

*Public policies, programmes and systems that address the specific patterns of children's poverty and vulnerability, are rights-based in approach, and recognise the long-term developmental benefits of investing in children.*

CSSP uses the same approaches described in the typology above but ensures that there is a strong focus on considering the needs of children within the household.

In other words, to be child-sensitive, social protection does not need to always target children as the main beneficiary (i.e. child-focused social protection), but it must be designed to maximise the benefits for them where possible and avoid any unintended negative impacts.

One important programming principle for ensuring that social protection is child-sensitive is to create effective linkages with basic services (health and education) and social services (family support and social welfare services). When delivered alongside cash this is what is referred to as a [“Cash Plus” approach](#).



Photo: Jordi Matas / Save the Children

**Key factors that determine how child-sensitive a social protection programme or system is, are:**

1. The extent to which girls and boys of different ages (and their caregivers) are able to access and benefit from social protection at each point in their life cycle;
2. The degree of positive impact on children (by age, gender and different forms of vulnerability);
3. How far we minimise negative or adverse consequences for children; and
4. How far we listen to, and act on, the voices and views of children and their caregivers.

# 3. OUR VISION AND OUR APPROACH TO CHILD-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

Save the Children's vision for CSSP is that:

*All children, especially the most deprived and marginalised girls and boys, have access to, and benefit from, government social protection programmes that address their specific needs and vulnerabilities throughout their life cycle.*

For this vision to be realised, Save the Children must play an even more active role in more countries to promote understanding of, and investment in CSSP among our partners, including governments, donors, international organisations, national civil society and research organisations.

To date, the large majority of Save the Children's work on CSSP has tended to focus on strengthening the child-sensitivity of cash transfers in particular and building evidence on the same. However, through Save the Children's work across various thematic areas, we also engage with other forms of social protection, such as health insurance, fee waivers or subsidies, as well as campaigning on issues such as maternal labour policies.



# 4. WHY MORE ENGAGEMENT IN CSSP IS ESSENTIAL FOR REDUCING MULTI-DIMENSIONAL POVERTY



1

**There are five key reasons why we must invest more in CSSP:**  
**The right to social protection is enshrined in human rights**, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948).<sup>3</sup> Without securing children's access to social protection, we will fail to deliver on their fundamental human rights. The expansion of CSSP is also central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, where it is reflected in at least five of the 17 SDGs.<sup>4</sup>



2

**Although children comprise one third of the global population, they represent half of the world's population living in extreme poverty** (i.e. living on less than \$1.90 per day).<sup>5</sup> Also, we know that a child who is deprived during childhood is more likely to be deprived as an adult, which reinforces the inter-generational transfer of poverty and deprivation.



3

**Children are dependent upon adults for their welfare** – particularly in their earliest years, children rely on adults to meet their basic needs and realise their rights. This requires us to ensure that adults are well equipped to adequately nurture and invest in children. Their specific needs and vulnerabilities therefore demand extra attention.



4

**CSSP is a proven way of reducing the multiple dimensions of child poverty and helping families adapt to climate change** – sustained improvements in the welfare of children can only be achieved when governments themselves invest more in their own social protection systems alongside basic services. The vast evidence on the effectiveness of social protection is one of the reasons why governments and donors have supported its expansion. Save the Children is a key contributor to this evidence base.<sup>6</sup> Social protection is also a direct way of helping households and children build economic, human and other forms of capital to build resilience to climate-induced shocks.<sup>7,8</sup>



5

**Despite an impressive growth in social protection in many parts of the world, many children remain without access to child sensitive social protection and where schemes exist, levels of benefit are often inadequate.** While 87% of children in Europe and Central Asia receive some form of benefit, only 66% do in the Americas, falling to just 28% in Asia and only 16% in Africa.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, levels of benefit are often only a small fraction of the poverty gap, and not enough to meet even the most basic needs.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Devereux, S. (2017). The Right to Social Protection in Africa: from CCCCDPRTs to CLSPPPs. RiA Recht in Afrika, Seite 11-32, Jahrgang 20 (2017), Heft 1. <https://doi.org/10.5771/2363-6270-2017-1-11>  
<sup>4</sup> Op. Cit. ILO (2017).  
<sup>5</sup> UNICEF and World Bank. (2016) Ending Poverty a Focus on Children. New York: UNICEF  
<sup>6</sup> Harman, L. (2018) The Role of Cash Transfers in Improving Child Outcomes: The importance of child-sensitivity and taking a "Cash Plus" approach. Save the Children Report. Available [here](#).  
<sup>7</sup> UNICEF. (2011). Exploring the Impact of Climate Change on Children in South Africa. Pretoria: UNICEF South Africa.  
<sup>8</sup> Diwakar, V., Lovell, E., Opitz-Stapleton, S., Shepherd, A. and Twigg, J. (2019) Child Poverty, disasters and climate change: investigating relationships and implications over the life course of children. London: Overseas Development Institute.  
<sup>9</sup> ILO (2017) World Social Protection Report 2017-19 Universal Social Protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Geneva: International Labour Office.



## 5. SAVE THE CHILDREN'S FIVE STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS FOR ADVANCING CSSP

Having considered our key strengths as an organisation relative to other actors, we focus on five strategic areas for CSSP at Save the Children. A cross-cutting activity is the generation, gathering and sharing of evidence to improve impact for children and raise awareness of the need for CSSP.

Click on the links below to find out more about some examples of our work.



### 1 STRENGTHENING THE CHILD-SENSITIVITY OF EXISTING SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

This approach involves helping make existing government programmes more child sensitive. The work spans various thematic outcome areas, including improving early childhood development outcomes, nutrition outcomes, education outcomes and reducing child labour among others. It also includes making economic strengthening programmes, such as graduation programmes and public works, more child sensitive.

#### Improving impact for children of government cash transfer programmes:

- Philippines – Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program: [Project Brief](#) [Parenting Guide](#)
- Zambia – Social Cash Transfer Programme: [Forthcoming](#)
- India – Palanhar Yojana (Caregiver Scheme): [Video](#) [Parenting Guide](#)
- Nepal – Child Grant: [Research brief](#) [Parenting Guide](#)
- Bangladesh – Maternity Allowance: [Brief](#)

#### Improving child-sensitivity of public works programmes:

- India – Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: [Video](#)



Photo: Jonathan Hyams / Save the Children

## 2 PILOTING NEW CHILD-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES USING EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES

This work involves piloting new approaches where there is a need to develop evidence or experience and capacity to address gaps in CSSP. The focus is on cash transfers, though as a movement, Save the Children engages in a range of activities to advance CSSP, such as the promotion of universal health care and insurance.

### Maternal and child grant programmes:

- Nigeria – Child Development Grant Programme (CDGP): [Endline summary report](#)
- Myanmar – LEGACY: [Endline Evaluation Brief](#) [Endline Evaluation](#)
- Cambodia – NOURISH: [Endline Survey Report](#)
- Guatemala – PAISANO: [Final Report](#)

### Cash Plus parenting packages:

- Somalia – Child Grant Pilot in Hargeisa: [Forthcoming](#)
- Burkina Faso – Tackling Child Poverty and Vulnerabilities in the Boucle de Mouhoun (PEPSE): [Forthcoming](#)

### School bursary schemes:

- Malawi – Keeping Girls in School (KGIS): [Project Brief](#)
- DRC – Girls Education Challenge (REALISE): [Project Brief](#)
- DRC – Vas y fille: [Final summary report \(French\)](#)

### Health insurance:

- India – Community Health Protection Programme: [Video](#)



Photo: Blmala Sapkota / Save the Children

## 3 IMPROVING ACCESS TO EXISTING GOVERNMENT SOCIAL PROTECTION AMONG THE MOST MARGINALISED AND DEPRIVED, THROUGH STRENGTHENING INCLUSION AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

Another key focus of our work is to address the barriers faced by the most deprived and marginalised children, their caregivers and other people to access existing social protection schemes. For example, part of this work has involved improving access for people living with disabilities. In addition to carrying out analysis of access and barriers, we promote mechanisms for strengthening transparency, accountability and social inclusion.

- [Nepal](#)
- [India](#)
- [Philippines](#)
- [Bangladesh](#)
- [Nigeria](#)





Photo: Jamie Baker / Save the Children

## 4 ADVOCATING FOR INCREASED GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN CHILD-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR EXPANDED COVERAGE

Save the Children has a crucial role to play, in coalition with its partners, to increase awareness and understanding of social protection among the public, civil society and politicians, to build broad-based support for CSSP. In addition to awareness raising, other key elements of this part of our work involve helping to cost and provide analysis on how governments can sustainably finance CSSP.

- Nigeria – Child Development Grant Programme (CDGP): [Brief](#)
- Myanmar – Maternal and Child Grants: [Brief](#)
- Somalia – Somaliland Social Protection Scoping and Sector Review: [Forthcoming](#)
- Nepal – Child Endowment Fund: [Brief](#)
- Burkina Faso – Campaign for Health Fee Exemption for Mothers and Children: [Article](#)

## 5 SUPPORTING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND SHOCK-RESPONSIVENESS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION, WITH A FOCUS ON THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

With the threat of climate change posing increasing challenges for the world's most vulnerable children, we commit to greater collaboration with our food security and livelihood colleagues and partners to explore how social protection can help households adapt to climate change. We also work with governments to help strengthen the shock-responsiveness of social protection, with particular consideration for the needs of children and their caregivers.

- Malawi – Shock-responsive social protection: [Project Brief](#)
- Malawi – Adaptive social protection: [Forthcoming](#)
- Multi-country – Supporting shock-responsive social protection during COVID-19 [Forthcoming](#)



Photo: Mark Njoroge / Save the Children

## 6. HOW DOES CSSP LINK TO HUMANITARIAN CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE?

There are important linkages and differences between social protection and humanitarian cash and voucher assistance (CVA). The main difference is that while humanitarian CVA offers support in the event of a crisis and its aftermath, social protection is concerned with an ongoing social contract between a government and its citizens to protect them against risks experienced throughout their lifecycle (regardless of whether there is a humanitarian crisis or not).

Social protection programmes and systems can and should also be able to adapt in the event of a crisis. This can be done by being designed in a way that they respond to and meet different needs faced in the event of a large shock. For example, by increasing levels of support, adapting how social protection is delivered, and even reaching new beneficiaries.

Two concrete ways humanitarian CVA and social protection actors can work together are:

1. Strengthening the “shock-responsiveness” of social protection programmes and systems to ensure they (a) continue to serve their purpose for existing beneficiaries even in the event of a large external shock and (b) where feasible, flex and expand to reach others in need for the duration of that shock.
2. Supporting governments experiencing protracted crises to transition from humanitarian support to (re)establishing a longer-term, inclusive and accountable social protection system for its citizens.





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