



## Pathway to Link Humanitarian Cash to Social Protection through Social Accountability

Despite decades of progress, the world is currently witnessing a “truly unprecedented increase” in global poverty.<sup>i</sup> The World Bank estimates between 119 and 124 million additional people were pushed into extreme poverty in 2020. As the COVID-19 crisis continues to grip the globe in 2021, the estimated number of pandemic-induced global new poor will rise by another 20 million people – and may even reach 163 million.<sup>ii</sup>

Children are disproportionately affected. Even before the pandemic struck, 1 in 5 children worldwide – 385 million girls and boys – were living in extreme poverty: less than US\$1.90 a day.<sup>iii</sup> The socio-economic impact of the pandemic has deeply hit children, particularly the most vulnerable: girls and boys in extreme poverty, including those living in fragile contexts, disaster-prone and conflicted-affected areas, as well those who are forcibly displaced and living in urban informal settlements.

In response to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, governments have introduced over 1,600 social protection measures in almost all the world’s countries and territories. Cash assistance - a critical intervention in supporting the world’s most vulnerable people - also grew by 240% during this time, reaching 1.1 billion people.<sup>iv</sup> However, most of these support systems are temporary and there are critical gaps in coverage, adequacy and comprehensiveness of social protection interventions.<sup>v</sup>

Up to 600 million girls and boys are not covered by any pandemic-related schemes.<sup>vi</sup> Governments,

humanitarian actors and development partners must collaborate to close this gap.<sup>vii</sup> By assessing the strengths and constraints of social protection programmes and sharing information through their operational networks, cooperation will enhance capacity, coverage, timeliness and inclusion, leaving no one behind.<sup>viii</sup>



### CHILD-SENSITIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

**Child-Sensitive Social Protection** seeks to address children’s age- and gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities they may experience throughout their life cycle. The process maximises positive impacts and minimises adverse effects, by consistently consulting with girls and boys and their caregivers. Social protection includes the following elements:

**Social assistance:** non-contributory cash, vouchers or in-kind transfers (e.g. school feeding, child grants) that can reduce child poverty and vulnerability, as well as help ensure children’s access to basic social services.

**Social insurance:** contributory schemes providing compensatory support (e.g. Universal Health Care, unemployment insurance schemes) which support access to health care for children and their families.

**Social care services:** family support or alternative care for children, provided to those facing social risks, such as violence, abuse, exploitation and social exclusion.

**Labour market policies and regulations:** protecting families’ access to resources, promoting employment and supporting childcare roles (e.g. parental leave for childcare).

Source: Global Coalition to End Child Poverty

**Social protection is a right** and an essential policy and programme tool for reducing poverty and vulnerability. The right to social protection is recognised in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 26 and 27) and included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 1, 3, 5, 9, 10).

**National governments are responsible** for ensuring their children's right to social protection. Where governments are unable to fulfil these obligations, the international community has a duty to step in and support governments to strengthen and deliver social protection.

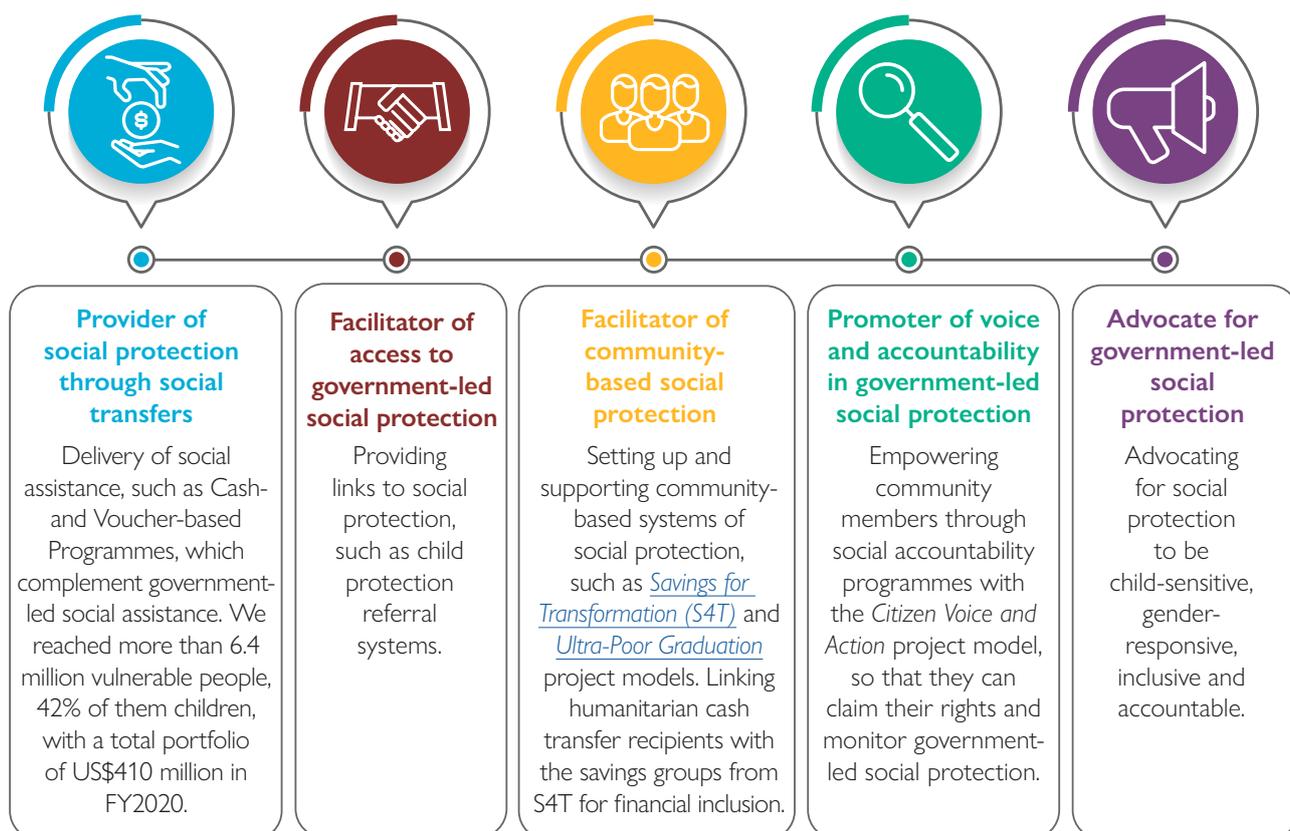
**Social protection should be child sensitive, gender-responsive, and inclusive.** Needs of the most vulnerable girls and boys should be met in a timely manner. Equitable and inclusive social protection systems are a key policy response to ensure lifesaving needs of the most vulnerable children are met, while also buffering against loss of productive assets that

will severely hamper their families' ability to build back better in the long term.

**Social accountability is proven to improve the inclusion and effectiveness of social protection interventions.** Social accountability refers to the range of actions or strategies, beyond voting, that societal actors, namely citizens, employ to hold government accountable.<sup>ix</sup>

## World Vision's approach to social protection

World Vision's approach to social protection includes: direct delivery of social protection assistance, through cash and voucher programmes; facilitating access to government-led social protection; improving the effectiveness of the government-led social protection by promoting the voices and accountability of community members; and advocating for social protection that is child sensitive, gender responsive, inclusive and accountable.



## SPOTLIGHT: using social accountability to improve the delivery of social protection in Bangladesh

Over the years, Bangladesh has introduced a variety of social protection measures through Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNP), including old-age pensions, maternity benefits, disability allowances and food-for-work programmes. Even so, the rollout remains a challenge, with many **vulnerable groups being unaware of their entitlement and effective coverage remaining low.**

### Linking social accountability to social protection

Establishing Vulnerable People's Rights and Access to Social Safety Net Programmes (EVPRA) is an EU-funded project implemented by World Vision Bangladesh. Through it, local, indigenous civil society organisations (CSOs), local authorities and communities worked together to improve access to SSNPs using social accountability. World Vision applied their social accountability methodology, the Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) model, which is a powerful tool that transforms the dialogue between duty-bearers and citizens. CVA is globally applied in 50 countries and more than 600 programmes throughout the world and improves access to and quality of public services, such as healthcare and

### BANGLADESH - COUNTRY SITUATION

- Population effectively covered by social protection: 28.38%
- Children (aged 0-14 years old) covered by social protection: 29.44%
- Mothers with infants covered by maternity benefits: 20.93%
- Vulnerable populations receiving cash benefits: 11.03%

Source: ILO, Social Protection Floor

social protection. CVA amplifies the voices of and empowers the most vulnerable community members, including girls and boys.

Through the project, World Vision Bangladesh applied CVA to raise awareness and knowledge of the vulnerable community members, especially women and ethnic minority groups, about their entitlement to the social protection support provided by the Bangladeshi government. In addition, it equipped community members with a platform for effective and meaningful feedback.



## Citizen Voice and Action

World Vision's social accountability approach, Citizen Voice and Action (CVA), is designed to improve the relationship between communities and government in order to improve services such as health care, education, social and child protection. The approach begins with civic education on people's rights, entitlements and responsibilities, followed by a social audit that allows the community to assess whether government services meet the set standards. In a separate set of activities, communities use a scorecard to rate services against criteria that they themselves generate. The findings are presented and discussed at a town hall 'interface' meeting through which community members, service providers and other government representatives agree upon an action plan to improve services. Communities work with government and other local partners to ensure the action plan is being implemented. Since 2005, communities in 50 countries around the world have successfully applied the CVA approach, including in 15 countries designated as fragile contexts.

### Improved effective delivery of social protection



**Informed citizens:** access to SSNP information for communities increased from 15% (baseline) to **83%**  
**Satisfaction of the participants:** **84%** were satisfied with access to information where the starting value was just **57%**



**Equitable access:** access to SSNP increased to **74%** from only 5% at the project's outset

### Improved child wellbeing outcomes



**Decreased child marriage** (over the 4 years): At the end of the project, 52.7% of respondents in the project area said "no", whilst 27% said "rarely" when asked about incidences of early marriage. This was drastically less than the prevalence of child marriage in the neighbouring communities in Joypurhat (where the rate of child marriage is reported to be 83.5%) and Dinajpur (78%) and just over a third of the national average (62.8%).<sup>x,xi</sup>



**Decreased school drop-out rates:** the school-leaver rate in the project area dropped from 37% to 14% for girls, and 63% to 26% for boys.

### Women's empowerment



**7,775 women** in poverty and vulnerability now have access to social safety nets.

As a result of the project's resounding success, the Bangladeshi government now includes civil society organisation (CSO) representatives as observers in government committees, so that the perspectives of the most vulnerable groups are reflected. The government also significantly improved its overall policy on safety nets, increasing the budget, upgrading guidelines and increasing SSNP coverage.

## Conclusion and recommendations

We are not out of the grips of the global pandemic – more and more vulnerable groups still need social assistance. Social protection should be at the centre of any COVID-19 response, as it is a critical policy and programme tool to respond to the needs and rights of the most vulnerable children and communities in both development and humanitarian work.

While continuing to deliver Cash and Voucher Programming, World Vision will expand its advocacy for the establishment, expansion and improvement of government-provided social protection. For many governments, effectively accessing the most vulnerable population through social protection scale-ups remains a challenge – especially in fragile contexts and complex crisis settings. The role of CSOs with an in-depth community knowledge and wide acceptance is crucial for the efficient and effective implementation of social protection – whether from a humanitarian disaster management perspective, recovery or longer-term development/poverty alleviation approach. CSOs also play a vital role in facilitating social accountability, with greater opportunities for communities to make government answerable for their social protection services. All stakeholders should collaborate to deliver social protection that is child-sensitive, gender-responsive, accountable and inclusive.

Based on extensive experience working with children and families in vulnerability and fragility, World

Vision calls on governments and the international community to:

- Make decisive policies to transform short-term social assistance, in particular cash assistance, **towards longer term, community empowering, sustainable social protection floors.**
- **Protect and expand spending on social protection**, to fulfil commitment of 'leaving no one behind'.
- Invest in **robust and adaptive social protection** mechanisms, especially in humanitarian and fragile contexts.
- **Strengthen social accountability mechanisms to improve the effective delivery of child-sensitive social protection.** Ensure the views of the most vulnerable girls and boys, as well as their caregivers, are included through participatory social accountability mechanisms.
- Design **child-sensitive and gender-responsive social protection** interventions, which can be effective in economically equipping women, reducing gender-based violence, addressing key drivers of child marriage and improving the wellbeing of girls and boys.
- **Ensure strategic alignment**, integration and coordination between child protection, formal and informal social protection, health and education policies and systems for achieving better outcomes for children's wellbeing.

<sup>i</sup> World Bank (2021), [https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/updated-estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty-looking-back-2020-and-outlook-2021?cid=pov\\_tt\\_poverty\\_en\\_ext](https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/updated-estimates-impact-covid-19-global-poverty-looking-back-2020-and-outlook-2021?cid=pov_tt_poverty_en_ext)

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> ILO and UNICEF, "Towards Universal Social Protection for Children: Achieving SDG 1.3", 2019. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---soc\\_sec/documents/publication/wcms\\_669336.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_669336.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> World Bank, 2021. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/game-changer-social-protection-six-reflections-covid-19-and-future-cash-transfers>

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2020. [https://alliancecpa.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/social\\_protection\\_and\\_child\\_protection\\_v2.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=41479](https://alliancecpa.org/en/system/tdf/library/attachments/social_protection_and_child_protection_v2.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=41479)

<sup>vii</sup> Agenda for Humanity, "Learnings On Linking Humanitarian Cash & Social Protection", 2021. [https://socialprotection.org/system/files/GB%20Case%20Study%20Synthesis\\_0.pdf](https://socialprotection.org/system/files/GB%20Case%20Study%20Synthesis_0.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> The Grand Bargain Sub-group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection, 2020. <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Grand-Bargain-Sub-Group-Humanitarian-Cash-and-Social-Protection-and-COVID-19-response.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> Simon C. O'Meally. 2013. Mapping Context for Social Accountability: A Resource Paper. World Bank

<sup>x</sup> Context of Child Marriage and its Implications in Bangladesh, Department of Population Sciences University of Dhaka, 2017 – page 18, <http://dpsdu.edu.bd/images/ChildMarriageReport.pdf>

<sup>xi</sup> Government Planning Commission, Bangladesh (2018), "District Statistics: Dinajpur and Joypurhat, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Gender Statistics", page xxiii.

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