

## Workshop on Shock-Responsive Social Protection

A two-day workshop on Shock-Responsive Social Protection was held on 16-17 December 2021 at the Godavari, Lalitpur by Social Protection Civil Society Network in collaboration with WSM and Save the Children and in coordination with CWISH. 25 participants attended from various non-profit making organizations. The workshop was made insightful by Thakur Dhakal, Social Policy Specialist, from UNICEF Nepal, Ms. Jyoti Maya Pandey, Social Protection Specialist, from World Bank, Dr. Raju Thapa, from DPNet, Hemanta Dangal from Danish Red-Cross, Prakash Kafle from OXFAM, Biswo Ratna Pun, of the Children Save, Basanta Raj Gautam, Former Joint Secretary and facilitated by Ram Gurung, Former Consultant, World Bank.

While describing the importance of SP, Mr. Thakur Dhakal emphasized the cash-based program. He further opined that SP is the best option for reaching the people in crisis during the time of shock. SRSPs can reach those people with cash assistance. Cash is more effective and efficient so a question like why cash should not be raised. Certain vulnerable populations are covered by social security schemes like children, the elderly, or some groups of the active population. We can render these SRSP, which would reach them as fast as needed in case of emergency.

Likewise, it reaches faster to everyone and can be adapted according to everyone's needs. We should not question why to give cash, but ask ourselves why NOT to provide cash? Studies have shown that cash is more effective and efficient. In Nepal, in 2015, only 15% was provided as cash by the GoN, while UNICEF provided 21% as cash support of its total assistance.



On the other hand, most specifically Mr. Hemanta Dangal put the light on the matter of forecast-based action along with shock responsive social protection. He defined SRSP, a new concept and pilot project. He focused on how this practice was implemented. The focus areas are shown, with flood-affected areas.

The SMS communication system was the fastest and most effective, though in some municipalities no phone numbers were available and people didn't pay much attention to SMS sent by the municipality office, so the red cross volunteers were given the info and went door to door.

He further added, along with Cash, "Cash plus" scheme is appropriate to provide other services such as counseling or specific foods to specific groups.





Another speaker during the workshop was Jyoti Pandey from the World Bank asserted that SP has layers of programs that needed to be interlinked. To mitigate the risk due to lack of integrated data, adaptive information systems i.e. digitization of uniquely identified HHs. should be incorporated.

Another option is to promote resilience: features to preparedness, public works to climate adaptation. PMEP: 700.000 people registered for unemployment but only 200.000 were offered work. There is a big

role of local-level authorities to determine such projects.

Likewise, the development of adaptive financing and Institutional coordination between NDRRMA from the Home Ministry along with SP agencies are ways to deal with the crisis in Nepal.

Dr. Raju Thapa stated there is a lack of common understanding of SRSP which has hampered a clear policy or guidelines. He shared that DPNet is close to GoN policy-making agencies.

No common concept of SRSP, which hampers a clear policy or guidelines.

589 municipalities are connected to the banking system. Land management is one of the stakeholders, also holds information regarding the economic situation in 63 districts and could be used for early warning. They use a questionnaire of 100 questions to determine the economic level of HHs. It took GoN ten years to draft the National Disaster Management Act. Only with the earthquake did GoN realize the importance of this. Need for a more bottom-up approach, explaining from the local level how this is needed. The idea of a basket fund to which all agencies can contribute and then the GoN can allocate funds. All stakeholders have to be made aware of these issues.

Mr. Prakash Kafle from Oxfam delivered his idea on Disaster Risk Reduction and climate change adaptation in the context of social protection. According to him, climate change: systematic change in long-term statistics of climate variables, such as temperature, precipitation, pressure, and wind sustained over several decades. Can be natural or human-induced. ADB has projected warming in Nepal will be higher than the global average. Natural hazards such as drought, river flooding, heatwaves, and glacial lake outburst are all projected to intensify over the 21st century.

Climate Change Adaptation is to reduce the negative impact of climate change. It can be reactive or anticipatory, which would lower long-term costs and be more effective. It differs from mitigating (reducing) risks of climate change, but merely adapting to it.

The GoN focuses on over 6 policies on climate change adaptation (national environment policy 2019, national climate change policy 2019, DRRN strategic action plan, etc.) However, these are not enough to not mitigate the problem in the long run, which can be regrettable.

Climate change will not only affect agriculture or the forests but also exacerbate poverty and cause shocks. SP can cover or reduce those effects and improve their lives, so increase resilience. Early warning systems and cash transfers before a shock are more effective. With life expectancy

increasing, more elderly people are also more affected. Labor market policies could promote a just transition and greener jobs, but the private sector needs to invest a lot more to create these jobs.

Ms. Bishwa Pun, from Save the Children, thinks there are multiple risks in our lives such as economic or natural shocks, health, disability, gender discrimination. Among all these risks in the life of children is multidimensional and may include long-term adverse effects throughout life.



She feels that priority should be given to children because of these vulnerabilities. Some SP can hurt children, for instance, the cash for work might push parents to leave their children alone if there is no daycare planned, or children who are the breadwinners might be excluded from such cash for work programs. If provided in kind (for instance school

uniforms or stationary) those children might stand out, be stigmatized, and get bullied. Dignity should be guaranteed, so some of these groups might have to be kept confidential, for instance for children living with HIV/AIDS. CSSP refers back to a joint statement of several agencies in 2009. She closed off with some examples of CSSRSP: child grant top up the program, piggybacking (super flour distribution), parenting life skills, cash for work for lactating mothers with flexible hours or child daycare center, child impact assessments. StC studies have shown that cash+ programs have a greater impact than just cash transfers.

Basant Raj Gautam, Former Director-General of the Department of National ID and Civil Registration indicated currently we lack a scalable program of Social protection.

However, the expenditure for SP has grown over 3x times since 2011 in Nepal, most likely the highest in South Asia. GoN has very ambitious plans of reaching 60% coverage by 2025 and 100% coverage for health by 2043. Likewise, the 15<sup>th</sup> plan Policy: SS program can be made disaster sensitive. Initial rapid assessment to collect data, only for a fixed duration. The local govt could better provide this data. There are some major guidelines with limited elements on shock response. At least 12 guidelines per shock guide packages and support related to shocks (flash floods, lightning,...). Examples:



- Method of the disaster assessment guide
- Grants distribution procedure for reconstruction of private houses and rehabilitation of fire victims - each has its guidelines and amounts.
- Victim resettlement
- Crop and livestock
- Risk settlement relocation procedures

Government's commitment to consolidate SP programs, also an early warning system that is fairly well established. However, it has limited scientific criteria and limited ways to tweak (less horizontal or vertical expansion, or reluctant to do piggybacking)

To carry out SRSP we need,

- Integrated social registry of HHs to identify BNF
- Scalability of existing programs, especially SSAs and PMEP
- Financing: how to fund, also where local governments do local additional support
- Clearly define roles of provincial and local governments
- Long term: legislation and policy amendments



While winding up the workshop the facilitator of the workshop Mr. Ram Gurung, emphasized the scalable schemes of adaptation of Social Protection. He opined that the social protection relief program should be based on universal humanitarian activities. He further added SP is still new in Nepal, accelerated since 2015. Studies and tools have come out since 2018 to make SRSP more concrete. We need evidence-based data to work on rendering shock responsive social protection.

In Nepal, around 85 social protection schemes are operational, but we don't know how many can be rendered SRSP. SRSP will not solve all problems, but it is one of the ways, the tools which we should develop and monitor.