



# How is the World Bank considering Child Protection in its COVID-19 Social Protection Response?

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The COVID-19 pandemic has uprooted children's lives around the world and continues to put undue stress on an already strained child protection system.

BIC analyzed 55 COVID-19 social protection projects to better understand how they consider child protection in design.

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# Introduction and Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has uprooted children's lives around the world and continues to put significant stress on an already strained child protection system.

Responding swiftly to the COVID-19 crisis, the World Bank (the Bank) announced an unprecedented commitment of \$157 billion<sup>1</sup> for COVID-19 response, a sum with the potential to produce transformative effects in the social and economic structures of the countries where the funds are spent. Of this commitment, as of September, 2021 the Bank had already deployed over \$10 billion through its Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice to support social safety-nets and other social protection projects.<sup>2</sup> Given that social protection projects are purportedly designed to target the members of society most vulnerable to violence, abuse, and exploitation, the Bank should consider child protection as a crucial element of its investments so that these projects also identify and reach the children most in need of social protection services.

The pandemic and its compounding effects have had a profoundly negative impact on children around the world. Various studies document increased levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and sense of fear related to education disruptions, isolation, and loss of family members and reduction in their families' income levels.<sup>3</sup> COVID-19 has also exposed weaknesses in child protection systems globally and disrupted violence prevention and response services in over 104 countries, leaving much of the world's children with little outlet for help.<sup>4</sup> Access to adequate psycho-social support has been limited as social workers are constrained by movement restrictions and

child protection support systems are overwhelmed, putting at increased risk children suffering from trauma.<sup>5</sup>

As a member of the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B), the Bank signed onto A Joint Statement on the Role of Social Protection in Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic, which includes a commitment to "prioritize the most vulnerable" and identifies that children are "especially vulnerable to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic."<sup>6</sup> The statement also calls for crisis response measures to be designed to strengthen medium and long-term social protection systems.<sup>7</sup>

The Bank's accelerated and increased investment in social protection projects as part of the COVID-19 response has the potential to significantly strengthen child protection systems, which provide protection from and respond to violence against children (VAC), child sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEA/H), and neglect. Protecting children from VAC and SEA/H, in addition to being an ethical imperative, is absolutely critical to the Bank's ability to achieve its development mandate as VAC and SEA/H can impede children's development in ways that lead to productivity losses over their lifetime. Sources estimate that VAC leads to up to \$7 trillion in losses each year, equivalent to 8 percent of global GDP.<sup>8</sup>

To better understand possible linkages and opportunities for a concerted approach, the Bank Information Center (BIC) undertook a landscape analysis of how 55 COVID-19 social protection projects,<sup>9</sup> providing \$9.9 billion in financing, incorporated child protection in project design.

The purpose of this research is to serve as a snapshot of where the Bank stands in terms of including child protection in its COVID-19 social protection response. This paper identifies key trends, highlights promising findings and emerging best practices, identifies gaps and opportunities for ongoing and future projects, and features relevant case studies from projects of merit and interest. This paper focuses on certain

1 World Bank. "World Bank Group's \$157 Billion Pandemic Surge Is Largest Crisis Response in Its History," World Bank. World Bank Group. July 19 2021. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/07/19/world-bank-group-s-157-billion-pandemic-surge-is-largest-crisis-response-in-its-history>

2 David Malpass, "Remarks by World Bank Group President David Malpass at High-level Event on Jobs and Social Protection for Poverty Eradication," (speech, Washington, DC, September 28, 2021), World Bank Group, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2021/09/28/remarks-by-world-bank-group-president-david-malpass-at-high-level-event-on-jobs-and-social-protection-for-poverty-eradication>

3 See Yeasmin, S. et al. "Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of children in Bangladesh: A cross-sectional study." *Children and Youth Services Review* vol. 117 (2020): 105277. ; Haffeejee, S. and Levine, D. "When will I be free?: Lessons from COVID-19 for Child Protection in South Africa." *Child Abuse & Neglect* vol. 110, Pt 2 (2020): 104715. ; and de Figueiredo, C. et al. "COVID-19 pandemic impact on children and adolescents' mental health: Biological, environmental, and social factors." *Progress in Neuro-Psychopharmacology & Biological Psychiatry* vol. 106 (2021): 110171. "Voices of Children and Young People: Global Child Helpline Data for 2020," Global Child Helpline Data. <https://child-helplineinternational.org/voices-global-2020/>

4 UNICEF. "COVID-19 causes disruptions to child protection services in more than 100 countries, UNICEF survey finds." 17 Aug 2020

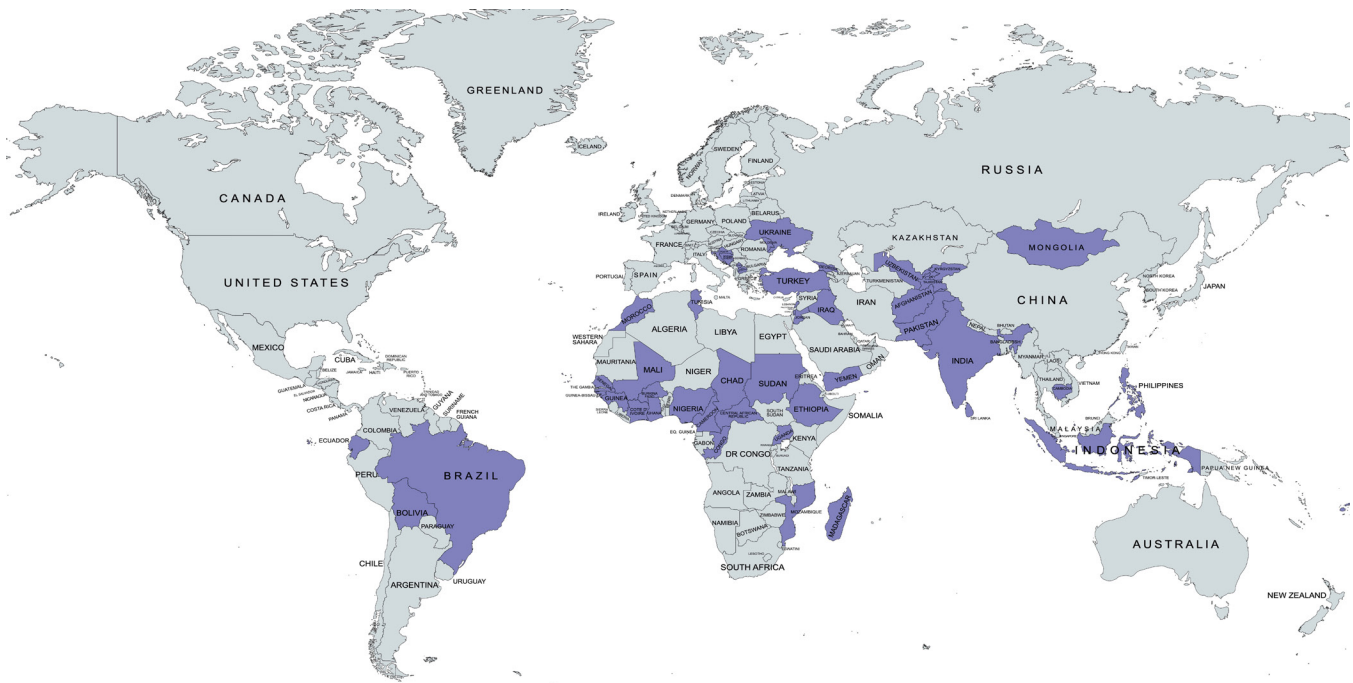
5 UNICEF. "COVID-19 causes disruptions to child protection services in more than 100 countries, UNICEF survey finds." 17 Aug 2020.

6 Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board et al., "SPIAC-B: A Joint Statement on the Role of Social Protection in Responding to the Covid 19 Pandemic," socialprotection.org, 2020, <https://socialprotection.org/discover/publications/spiac-b-joint-statement-role-social-protection-responding-covid-19-pandemic>.

7 *ibid.*

8 Santos Pais, Marta. UN. "The economic cost of violence against children." Accessed June 21, 2022. [https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/economic\\_costs\\_of\\_vac\\_viewpoint](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/economic_costs_of_vac_viewpoint).

9 Projects selected for this analysis include World Bank COVID-19 projects with a strong social protection component approved as of March 31, 2021 and available on the World Bank website COVID-19 project [page](#).



aspects of child protection that can be understood from Bank project documents and does not purport to be exhaustive. We hope this analysis and subsequent recommendations will inform future project design.

## Methodology

This paper presents a snapshot of 55 COVID-19 social protection projects that were approved as of March 31, 2021.<sup>10</sup> BIC analyzed publicly available project documents to understand how the design of these projects incorporated elements of child protection and child protection systems strengthening.

In the project document review, projects were assessed on the basis of the project’s inclusion of specific elements that contribute to child protection<sup>11</sup>

10 World Bank, “World Bank COVID-19 Projects,” World Bank (World Bank Group), Accessed March 31, 2021. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/what-we-do/brief/world-bank-group-operational-response-covid-19-coronavirus-projects-list>.

11 According to UNICEF, “Child Protection is the prevention of, and response to, exploitation, abuse, neglect, harmful practices and violence against children. It is embedded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals.” UNICEF. “Child Protection Strategy: 2021 - 2030”. <https://www.unicef.org/documents/child-protection-strategy#:~:text=Child%20Protection%20is%20the%20>

and/or child protection systems strengthening,<sup>12</sup> directly and indirectly.

Social protection projects that design services targeting the needs of children, promote coordination between implementing agencies, consult with civil society and beneficiaries including children, that are accessible to child beneficiaries, and collect disaggregated data on results can have a massive, positive impact on generations of children. Accordingly, our assessment focused on five broad categories of child protection: (1) Service delivery; (2) Multisectoral collaboration; (3) Child-friendliness;

prevention, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

12 According to UNICEF, child protection systems can be defined as “the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors... to support prevention and response to protection-related risks. These systems are part of social protection, and extend beyond it. At the level of prevention, their aim includes supporting and strengthening families to reduce social exclusion, and to lower the risk of separation, violence and exploitation. Responsibilities are often spread across government agencies, with services delivered by local authorities, non-State providers, and community groups, making coordination between sectors and levels, including routine referral systems, a necessary component of effective child protection systems.” UNICEF. “Child Protection Systems Strengthening Approach.” <https://www.unicef.org/media/110871/file/1.%20The%20UNICEF%20Child%20Protection%20Systems%20Strengthening%20Approach.pdf>.

(4) Stakeholder engagement; and (5) Data collection and disaggregation.<sup>13</sup>

The criteria that make up these categories refer to discrete design elements that can contribute to the strengthening of child protection systems and could be tracked in World Bank documents. When the criteria considered in these five categories are integrated into a project's design and implemented properly, the project can help to build or reinforce child protection systems. The criteria assessed, though divided into five categories, build upon one another to enhance a project's ability to strengthen child protection systems. The selected criteria do not exist in siloes and are often cross-cutting, and through effective coordination can help strengthen child protection outcomes of a particular project. These criteria are not exhaustive, and there are many additional actions that could be taken to strengthen child protection systems. Individual criteria used in this research are described further in the sections for each category below.

Projects were also assessed for inclusion of child protection as a key design element and outcome. This occurred in three ways. First, the project could exclusively focus on child protection outcomes and systems strengthening, such as the [Sint Maarten Child Resilience and Protection Project](#), which is used as a comparative case example later on in the paper. The project could also be a broader social protection project that effectively integrates children into the government's social safety net and facilitates greater access to child welfare services, such as the [Lebanon Emergency Crisis and COVID-19 Response Social Safety Net Project](#). Finally, the project could also build the capacity of the borrower's ministry handling child protection or other relevant child protection providers, as occurred in the [Salvador Social Multi-Sector Service Delivery Project](#) in Brazil.

The project assessments do not take into account the quality of implementation or any changes to project design after BIC's initial document review. This analysis attempted to broadly gauge child protection measures in the COVID-19 emergency social protection response but is non-exhaustive and does not purport to be a full analysis of all the Bank's social protection work. This analysis is meant to serve as a snapshot of where the Bank is in terms of

<sup>13</sup> Criteria were determined based on best practices outlined by the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (ACPHA) for the protection of children in development settings and during the COVID-19 crisis. Source: Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (2020). [Social Protection and Child Protection: Working together to protect children from the impact of COVID-19 and beyond](#)

considering child protection in its COVID-19 response social protection projects.

## Findings

### OVERALL FINDINGS

The findings of this review suggest that the World Bank is taking a piecemeal approach to incorporating child protection in social protection COVID-19 response projects.

Looking across the assessed COVID-19 social protection projects, most projects included at least some child protection components. This is a promising finding. However, the research found that there does not appear to be a no concerted approach to child protection systems strengthening through social protection projects. Although the Bank has taken encouraging steps, it appears that incorporating child protection components into social protection projects was done in an ad hoc manner. A number of projects that scored well on each component (See Annex 2) did in fact take a more comprehensive approach to child protection. The projects that included the most components in order were:

1. [Lebanon Emergency Crisis Response Social Safety Net Project](#) (Lebanon Social Safety Net Project)
2. [Republic of Congo Lisungi Emergency COVID-19 Response Project](#) (Republic of Congo COVID-19 Response Project)
3. [Nigeria COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus Program](#) (Nigeria COVID-19 Recovery Program)
4. [West Bank Emergency Social Protection COVID-19 Response Project](#) (West Bank COVID-19 Social Protection Project)
5. [Additional Financing for COVID-19 Response under the Madagascar Social Safety Net Project](#) (Madagascar Social Safety Net COVID-19 AF)
6. [Ukraine Second Additional Financing for COVID-19 Response under Social Safety Nets Modernization Project](#) (Ukraine Social Safety Net Project Second AF)
7. [Pandemic Response Effectiveness in Pakistan](#)
8. [Sri Lanka COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project Additional Financing](#) (Sri Lanka COVID-19 Response Project AF)

## Promising Practice: HOLISTIC PROJECT DESIGN



The Lebanon Social Safety Net Project was the **highest scoring project among the 55 reviewed**. The project as a whole stands out as a promising practice on how the Bank can design broader social protection projects that simultaneously include children in the country's social safety net and contribute to capacity building that will strengthen the borrower's child protection system, even after the Bank project concludes. The project scored highest on child protection because it considers children as stakeholders; plans to engage child-focused civil society organizations (CSOs) in stakeholder engagement, service delivery, systems strengthening, and the GBV grievance redress mechanism (GRM); **disaggregates project data and indicators by gender and age; and brings together a number of relevant child protection line ministries** (Presidency of the Council of Ministers (PCM), the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). Additionally, the cash plus components of the project were structured in a way to provide an entry point for child protection concerns and survivor resources, for example.

Particularly noteworthy was the **child-friendly design of the GRM and inclusion of child-focused CSOs in services delivery and child protection systems strengthening**. The Project Appraisal Document (PAD) indicates that social workers at local social development centers as well as teachers and school staff will be essential in receiving complaints and feedback from beneficiaries and will report the grievances. These people are trusted adults with whom children are likely more comfortable disclosing sensitive information. Further, training on handling SEA/H and GBV related grievances will be conducted for all staff, especially targeting social workers. In addition, several grievance uptake channels are available that are accessible to children, including feedback boxes at schools and social development centers. Regarding service delivery and systems strengthening, under component three a needs assessment will be completed and an outreach manual will be developed to train social workers and CSO partners to increase and enhance the systematic outreach to the most marginalized and at risk. These are all positive components and serve as a promising practice.

Despite the robust child protection considerations included in the Lebanon Social Safety Net Project, overall, the Bank falls short in prioritizing child protection systems strengthening through its COVID-19 social protection lending. The highest scoring projects did take a more comprehensive approach to child protection, but greater scrutiny of the data, even for these higher scoring projects, reveals that many of the projects that received a positive ("yes") categorization for a specific criterion had some sort of caveat attached to it. For instance, if a project hired a GBV/SEA/H specialist, it received a positive categorization for hiring child protection service delivery providers since the training and mitigation measures such a specialist provides would enhance child protection. However, compared to a project that includes provisions to hire more social workers and case managers, building the capacity of

the government's child welfare system, the project which only hired the GBV specialist does not have the same impact on strengthening child protection systems. While every project may not require this specific provision, a social protection project should include some effort to strengthen service delivery for children so that they are not excluded from the social protection system.

The main takeaway from comparing the data across the five different categories is that the Bank's current approach to child protection in social protection programs lacks a coordinated strategy. When comparing criteria met for different categories, correlation was extremely weak, suggesting that the Bank has not developed a holistic approach to child protection. This means that even where a project is strong on one criteria, it may not be as effective due

to weaknesses in other areas. For example, a project that provides funding for child protection services may fall short if meaningful stakeholder engagement is not conducted to assess beneficiary needs, or if a lack of coordination between implementing agencies results in gaps in coverage.

While about half of all projects included child protection as a consideration, the remainder did little to identify and address the needs of children in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are a few positive aspects to COVID-19 social protection projects that, when implemented effectively, could help strengthen child protection in project-affected communities. Some of these examples are included in the “Promising Practices” callout boxes throughout this paper. Projects such as the Lebanon Social Safety Net Project and the other seven highest scoring projects listed above (see [Annex 2](#)), that were designed with children as a main beneficiary demonstrate how to break the mold and go above and beyond in designing programs that strengthen child protection systems. While the aforementioned projects stood out for best practices, many of the others only included piecemeal elements of child protection in their design.



## OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bank can take the following actions to immediately help strengthen project components around child protection in its COVID-19 social protection lending:

- 1. Build on promising practices identified in this research and other projects that feature strong child protection elements, and seek to replicate these best practices in current and future projects, encouraging greater institutional learning.**
- 2. Develop a coordinated child protection strategy within social protection projects based on best practices and provide Bank staff with appropriate technical guidance and adequate resources on how to implement this child protection strategy.**
- 3. Recognize child protection as a core element of social protection so that social protection projects mainstream components to strengthen child protection systems.**
- 4. Assess project design and implementation of child protection criteria, including (1) service delivery; (2) multisectoral collaboration; (3) child-friendliness; (4) stakeholder engagement; and (5) data collection and disaggregation.**
- 5. Where strong child protection components exist, such as the Lebanon Social Safety Net Project (see case study), deliver on them in implementation.**

The Bank’s social protection unit should prioritize the protection of children in social protection projects, and seek to develop technical guidance and best practices for integrating child protection. There are real opportunities to build on existing good practices, utilize available tools and guidance,<sup>14</sup> and work collaboratively with civil society and country governments to strengthen child protection systems through social protection projects.

A strategic and coordinated approach to integrating child protection into social protection projects

<sup>14</sup> This includes, but is not limited to, recommendations, jurisprudence, and general comments of the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#); [UNICEF](#) research and guidelines; child protection mainstreaming resources developed by the [Global Protection Cluster](#); and [technical guidance and materials](#) drafted by the [Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) (including lessons learned from [case studies](#)). Special consideration must be given to the differentiated needs of boys and girls, for which [mainstreaming a gender perspective](#) (UNICEF) in child protection systems is essential.



## Comparative Case Study:

### HOW IS A SOCIAL PROTECTION PROJECT IN GUINEA IMPLEMENTING CHILD PROTECTION?

The Guinea NAFA Program Support Project was designed to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and economic impacts of quarantine measures. While this project was not one of the 55 analyzed in the research for this report, [BIC monitored](#) this project with a partner on the ground to assess the inclusion of beneficiaries and children into the wider process, as well as any child protection elements that came up in the course of implementation. BIC's local partner, Monde des Enfants (MDE), found that beneficiaries were unaware of project benefits available to them, some benefits were delayed, stakeholders had not been adequately engaged in design and consultative phases, and child protection services were not a key consideration in the design and implementation of the project. The findings indicate gaps in information gathering that can leave children vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and abuse.

The project documents specifically called for consultations with children and civil society organizations (CSOs) working in child protection. However, MDE had not been included in these consultations, nor were they able to identify any child protection CSOs that had been invited to such consultations. The stakeholder engagement plan for the project stipulates that, "In addition to specific consultations with vulnerable groups and women, the project will partner with UN agencies, NGOs and others to engage children and adolescents to understand their concerns, fears and needs."<sup>15</sup> Information on child protection issues (abuse, exploitation, violence, neglect) was not being collected as part of the beneficiary data.

To remedy this, the Bank and implementing agency should increase consultations and awareness-raising activities with beneficiaries as well as civil society organizations working in child protection, expand coverage to reach all eligible beneficiaries, and include child protection services or linkages to existing services through the program.



Photo credit: Mondes des Enfants, Guinea Nafa project community. March 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) - [Emergency Response and Nafa Program Support Project](#) - P168777 (English), Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group, p.16.

is needed if these programs are to help those children most vulnerable to violence, exploitation, neglect, and abuse. This would also further the impact of social protection projects on poverty alleviation, livelihood development, and bolstering of community resilience in line with the Bank's commitment to "building back better"<sup>16</sup> in COVID-19 recovery.

To accompany a child protection approach and strategy, in the short-term, the Bank should take the following steps in the immediate term:

- With the current Social Protection and Labor strategy expiring at the end of 2022, the Bank should develop a new one to begin in 2023 that includes how social protection projects will prioritize child protection and how the Global Practice will work to strengthen child protection systems;
- Include child protection NGOs and CSOs in stakeholder engagement plans for all new social protection projects;
- Connect teams working on projects with promising practices with teams designing new social protection projects so that these practices can be replicated; and
- Build child protection assessment criteria into supervision and monitoring of existing and future projects.

In the medium-term, the Bank should work collaboratively with borrowers, child protection NGOs and CSOs, and to do the following:

- Develop a Good Practice Note on child protection in social protection projects;
- Provide training for headquarters and country-office staff in the social protection global practice on using social protection projects to strengthen child protection systems;
- Support borrowers to scale up child protection initiatives and strengthen national level child protection systems through future social protection projects. This is especially important in emergency and Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) contexts where child protection risks are higher and borrower response capacities are diminished; and
- Request that IEG address child protection components in any upcoming reviews of the

Bank's social protection portfolio and/or the Bank's COVID-19 response.

In the long-term, to change the arc of the child protection story for the world's most marginalized children, and make strides towards ending extreme poverty, the Bank should:

- Shift social protection investments to address structural child protection concerns and gaps to better achieve the goals of the Social Protection and Jobs Unit while scaling up Borrower capacities;
- Assess a country's child protection system as part of the Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) review; and
- Identify and clearly spell out child protection priorities based on SCD to help strengthen child protection systems in updated Country Partnership Frameworks (CPF).

In addition to building up both headquarters and project-level child protection capacity through ongoing sensitization and training, when additional child protection expertise is beneficial or required, project teams should make a point to consult with relevant experts, both within the Bank and in civil society and academia. Child protection expertise can inform the design of social protection systems to protect children; and, social protection information management systems can help reach recipients at scale, identify vulnerable children and families, and support their referral to additional services. Research from the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action finds the integration of child protection and social protection can dramatically improve outcomes for children.<sup>17</sup>

We urge the Bank to step up and help change the trajectory of COVID-19's impact on the world's most marginalized children. Social protection projects are one of the Bank's best avenues to improve outcomes for children and their families in societies undergoing crisis. Incorporating a concerted approach to strengthening child protection systems into social protection projects, can help the Bank meet its stated goal of "helping families escape poverty, mitigate and manage risks and improve resilience and opportunity."<sup>18</sup>

17 Graham Goulder, R. et al. [Child Protection and Social Protection: Working Together to Protect Children from the impact of COVID-19 and beyond](#). The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. 30 Nov, 2020.

18 Rutkowski, Grosh. "Is there a best way to target social assistance?" World Bank. Accessed June 21, 2022.. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/there-best-way-target-social-assistance>

16 World Bank Group. "Building Back Better: Achieving Resilience through Stronger, Faster, and More Inclusive Post-Disaster Reconstruction". Accessed June 21, 2022. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29867?show=full>.

## Thematic Findings and Recommendations

This section includes findings and recommendations for the COVID-19 social protection projects assessed on five main thematic criteria for the inclusion of child protection components: (1) service delivery; (2) multisectoral cooperation; (3) child-friendliness; (4) stakeholder engagement; and (5) data collection, disaggregation, and monitoring.

### 1. Service Delivery

Child protection services, such as psychosocial support for survivors of SEA/H and VAC, support for shelters for unhoused families and/or GBV/SEA/H survivors, child labor prevention programs, and cash transfers with entry points for child protection, among others, provide the foundation for a comprehensive child protection system. While many countries have existing child protection systems, these systems often have numerous gaps and the stress placed on those systems by COVID-19 necessitates additional

resources. Social protection projects should include components to strengthen child protection systems wherever possible to support children and reduce poverty and inequality.

#### FINDINGS

##### Hiring child protection service delivery providers

- » **38 percent of projects** (21 projects) included provisions for hiring child protection service delivery providers.

As children's access to crucial services has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and its ensuing lockdowns, more of the Bank's social protection COVID-19 response projects should have hired child protection service delivery providers to mitigate this disruption. Families bearing high economic and health impacts may not have the ability to provide the necessary level of care to maintain a child's wellbeing. In this context, child protection service delivery providers are essential to support a child's primary care system (families) or link child-headed households to services and protect children before

#### Promising Practice:

#### SERVICE PROVISION IN BRAZIL AND IRAQ



The The Brazil Salvador Social Multi-Sector Service Delivery Project (see Brazil A in Annex 2) and the Iraq Emergency Operation for Development Project are positive examples of strengthening child protection systems through the hiring of service providers.

In Brazil the Bank is working with the City of Salvador's Municipal Secretariat of Social Promotion to strengthen the city's social assistance network by expanding effective coverage and improving services. **A key program of focus is a face-to-face social work service offered to families in vulnerable situations.** These services encompass home visits to monitor sources of vulnerability or intra-familial problems, referral of specific family members to appropriate interventions, if warranted, and linkages to other available services and programs. **The project will finance the recruitment and assignment of qualified professionals such as psychologists and social workers to improve capacity.**

The Iraq Emergency Operation for Development Project includes provisions for the training and hiring of service delivery providers as a subcomponent of the project. Under component nine, **the project will recruit and train 300 women to serve as school community liaisons** to provide schooling and psychosocial support to students as well as other children in the community. The component will also **finance support for more inclusive participation of community members in recreational and cultural school activities.** Together, these two actions help to address the trauma children have faced due to the protracted humanitarian crisis in Iraq, which has been further compounded by the pandemic.

harm is done. Without these support services, Bank projects provide incomplete social protection for children.

### Provision of psychosocial social support for children

- » **64 percent of projects** (35 projects) included psychosocial support for children, either generally or specifically to address SEA/H or VAC issues.
- » Of these 35 projects, **77 percent** (27 projects) indicated psychosocial support would be provided for survivors of SEA/H or GBV either through direct project interventions focused on addressing GBV, referrals from trained first responders/health workers, or through self-reporting done via the GRM.
- » **Only 23 percent** of the 35 projects (8 projects) indicated psychosocial support would be provided for children more broadly.

While the inclusion of some form of psychosocial support in a majority of projects is a positive step, the inconsistency across projects suggests that design teams at the Bank and within country governments do not prioritize or have clear guidance on integrating the provision of psychosocial support for children into projects. It is concerning that not every project would provide linkages to psychosocial support for victims of SEA/H or VAC, who self-reported via the GRM. This is a simple provision the Bank can include into projects to help increase access to psychosocial

support across projects.

### Integration of CSOs into child protection service delivery

- » **Only 18 percent** (10 projects) of the 55 projects integrated civil society into child protection service delivery efforts and only two projects explicitly included child rights organizations in child protection systems strengthening.

Considering the existing connections CSOs and NGOs have with local communities, and the vital role they play in delivering key child protection services in development contexts, these organizations are well positioned to identify children at risk of exclusion and adapt delivery mechanisms to the local context. With only ten projects clearly integrating CSOs/NGOs into service delivery efforts, Bank teams are not effectively utilizing such organizations within project design and plans for implementation. Even more concerning was the fact that only two projects explicitly included a child rights organization, representing a significant oversight by the majority of Bank teams.

Apart from the Lebanon Social Safety Nets Project, the only other positive example was the North Macedonia Emergency COVID-19 Response Project,<sup>19</sup> which stated that under the project UNICEF established a partnership with the Voices Against Violence CSO Network to operate a better parenting hotline to help parents during lockdowns.

<sup>19</sup> North Macedonia Emergency COVID-19 Response Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan, P15

## Promising Practice:

### CASH TRANSFERS IN LEBANON

The highest scoring project for service delivery was the Lebanon Emergency Crisis Response Social Safety Net Project. **This project includes a large component on the provision of social services as part of the cash transfer program.** The design also **includes psychosocial support for children** both generally and in instances of GBV/SEA/H. Subcomponent 3.2 of the project states the project will contract NGOs to support Lebanon's Ministry of Social Affairs in preparing a package of services, including psychosocial support and therapy case management for at-risk children, designed to meet the needs of poor and marginalized households. Additionally, **the GRM is equipped to refer child survivors of GBV/SEA/H to support services.** Students enrolled in the program who are absent from school will be visited by a social worker. In the event that a child does not show up for more than 2 months, they continue to receive benefits but will "trigger an intense follow-up by the social worker to support the child to return to school" [sic]. By including provisions for psychosocial support for children as a subcomponent of the project and establishing linkages between other components and child protection services, the project is positioned to reach, positively impact, and protect more children.



## Promising Practice:

### CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN



The Afghanistan COVID-19 REACH project provides **the strongest example of using child rights CSOs to assist in service delivery**. The PAD states NGO facilitating partners, including Aghan Khan, Oxfam, BRAC, and CARE, among others, will assist with the mobilization, verification of household lists, procurement, delivery, and monitoring of the relief support packages financed by Component One of the project.<sup>20</sup> **By using civil society facilitating partners, the project benefits from the relationships these organizations already have with local communities**, helping the project to reach people at risk of exclusion.

<sup>20</sup> [Project Appraisal Document \(PAD\)](#) - COVID-19 Relief Effort for Afghan Communities and Households (REACH) Project (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group, p. 15.

#### Child protection measures in cash transfer programs

- » Of the 24 projects that included a cash-plus program, **100 percent** had a potential entry point for child protection concerns.

This is a positive initial step, but unfortunately few were well designed. A frequent missed opportunity among the cash-plus projects was utilizing COVID-19 awareness campaigns to share important information on available services for children and risks related to VAC/SEA/H. Of the 24 cash-plus projects, only four<sup>21</sup> met all four cash-plus criteria.<sup>22</sup> While there was significant variation in the design of the 24 projects, the overall dearth of child protection elements points towards a lack of consideration for child protection in the design of cash-plus programs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Prioritize children as project beneficiaries in social protection projects**

Services are more likely to be utilized if children are taken into consideration as beneficiaries and access to those services is designed in a child-friendly manner. By including these elements in design and implementing them in a comprehensive and

<sup>21</sup> Fiji Social Protection COVID-19 Response and System Development Project; Lebanon Emergency Crisis Response Social Safety Net Project; Tajikistan Emergency COVID-19 Project; and Ukraine COVID-19 Social Safety Nets Project (see Annex 2).

<sup>22</sup> Of the 24 projects with a cash-plus program: 38 percent (10 projects) had an education linkage and included child protection information; 35 percent (9 projects) included a capacity building component for child protection services at the community level; and, 35 percent (9 projects) had linkages to refer survivors to services in the event of suspected or disclosed cases of VAC.

integrated manner, it will contribute towards projects reaching more children and a deeper strengthening of the systems that protect them.

- **Integrate child protection into wider cash-plus programs**

World Bank social protection interventions, such as cash transfer programs, livelihood support, training, etc. can provide critical pathways for children to avoid or escape violence, abuse, exploitation. Child protection services should be integrated into wider cash-plus programs, as violence, abuse, and exploitation in childhood make it more difficult for individuals to escape poverty over the course of their lives.<sup>23</sup>

Delivery of child protection services is a direct way to prevent and respond to child SEA/H, VAC, GBV, and neglect. If left unaddressed, these issues can have a detrimental effect on children lasting a lifetime,<sup>24</sup> and have devastating downstream impacts for productivity, education, health, and general wellbeing. While a preventative approach is the most effective, responding to cases is equally important in contributing towards the protection of children. Future cash-plus projects should establish linkages to refer either disclosed or suspected cases of SEA/H or VAC to appropriate authorities.

- **Directly support child protection service provision.**

<sup>23</sup> Jack P. Shonkoff and Andrew S. Garner, “The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress (Technical Report),” *Pediatric Clinical Practice Guidelines & Policies*, March 2013, pp. 922-922, [https://doi.org/10.1542/9781581108224-the19\\_sub01](https://doi.org/10.1542/9781581108224-the19_sub01).

<sup>24</sup> Jack P. Shonkoff and Andrew S. Garner, “The Lifelong Effects of Early Childhood Adversity and Toxic Stress (Technical Report),” *Pediatric Clinical Practice Guidelines & Policies*, March 2013, pp. 922-922, [https://doi.org/10.1542/9781581108224-the19\\_sub01](https://doi.org/10.1542/9781581108224-the19_sub01).

Projects that directly finance or provide technical support to child protection services and systems are a straightforward approach to improving child protection outcomes. By preventing VAC, SEA/H, and neglect where possible, and responding to cases where it is not, these systems allow children to live productive, healthy lives. Child protection services have massive downstream benefits for children's development, as violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect have detrimental impacts on children, including their ability to rise out of poverty.

In emergency contexts, psychosocial support can have a lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of children, especially for those experiencing SEA/H or VAC. Psychosocial support for children, and especially child survivors of SEA/H and VAC, should be provided by social protection projects for the general population as well as children accessing GRMs.

Another opportunity to strengthen child protection project components is through the integration of child protection information into larger awareness raising campaigns and educational components. Projects can utilize behavioral change and risk communication components to also raise awareness around the unique risks children face due to COVID-19 and connect them with available child protection services.

- **Work collaboratively with and leverage the expertise of local civil society.**

CSOs working in child protection can help more children and provide a higher standard of care if they are included in systems strengthening programs. In many countries where the Bank operates, services such as these are already provided either through the government or local civil society. Locally-based CSOs that provide services to children, such as community health centers, can also play a role in service delivery as part of social protection projects, if they have the relevant experience and capacity to do so, and can even be used as focal points for the implementation of the projects. By utilizing civil society infrastructure, projects can build upon existing relationships within project-affected communities in ways that will maximize coverage for beneficiaries. Projects can also strengthen existing child protection systems by providing capacity support to child rights CSOs responding to crises and shocks that have the potential to jeopardize the health and wellbeing of children and incorporate them into broader child protection system strengthening efforts.



## 2. Multisectoral Collaboration

Social protection is a broad category that cuts across multiple themes and sectors, and relies upon the government's ability to address these themes and sectors simultaneously. COVID-19 in particular has massive implications for public health, economic well-being, education, GBV, and child protection. Projects that include ministries that manage child protection in design and implementation phases are more likely to consider and address child protection concerns and link child protection to other project components, where appropriate.

Effective cross-sectoral and inter-ministerial coordination on projects enables the responsible implementing agencies to raise issues that they have encountered and harmonize their response to unexpected outcomes and consequences of a project. For example, if a project relies on schools to disseminate child protection information to children and their families, coordination between ministries could identify if certain children were not being reached and determine a way to resolve this issue. Robust mechanisms for inter-agency coordination and multisectoral collaboration lay the foundation for a strong child protection system.

### FINDINGS

- » **87 percent of projects** (48 projects) included multiple line ministries in project implementation.
- » **67 percent of projects** (37 projects) included a relevant child protection ministry in project implementation.
- » **49 percent of projects** (27 projects) included the ministry of education or schools as a component of project implementation.

- » **27 percent of projects** (15 projects) met all 3 criteria.

Although most projects included multiple line ministries, less than a third of the projects met all the criteria for multi-sectoral collaboration for child protection, indicating that there likely was not a concerted effort to engage these relevant ministries in project design and plans for implementation. It is important to note the variation in the comprehensiveness of cross-sectoral collaboration is best illuminated by qualitative data from the institutional arrangements section of a project’s PAD. The qualitative data suggests that projects which included multiple line ministries did so on an ad hoc basis. Collaboration appears to have resulted largely due to a combined health and education component of a social protection project rather than an integrated, systematic focus on fostering multisectoral collaboration with an aim to strengthen the child protection system.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, there is an urgent need for the Bank to promote and facilitate better inter-agency coordination in social protection projects. By including mechanisms for cross-sectoral collaboration and guidance to utilize these mechanisms, the Bank can reduce duplicative work, better identify gaps in implementation, and provide greater benefits to those who need them most, including children.

- **Promote effective multisectoral collaboration to strengthen child protection in project design and implementation.**

Improving service delivery will have greater coverage and more positive impacts on children if there are effective mechanisms for collaboration between implementing agencies, local and regional governments, and Bank task teams.

Given the range of sectors included in social protection programs, regular coordination between government ministries and agencies responsible for carrying out different interventions within a project contributes to their overall effectiveness. In an emergency response project monitored by BIC, the lack of communication and coordination between the implementing agency and local officials slowed the development of land acquisition and resettlement action plans, delaying the construction of needed emergency housing.<sup>25</sup> A lack of coordination can lead to even further gaps in identifying children that are at risk of violence, abuse, or exploitation or delays in access to child protection services. By working

<sup>25</sup> Sofia Dinn, “Central Sulawesi Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Project,” Bank Information Center (Bank Information Center, n.d.), <https://bankinformationcenter.org/en-us/project/how-can-the-world-bank-protect-children-while-responding/>.

### Promising Practice:

## MULTI SECTORAL COLLABORATION IN NIGERIA



The Nigeria COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus Program, which met all three multisectoral collaboration criteria, provides **an example of a strong inter-agency coordination mechanism**. The project has a three-tier formal structure at the federal level consisting of a steering committee made up of representatives of involved line ministries, a technical committee, and the support unit responsible for the day-to-day management of the project. **The PAD outlines a clear plan for coordination between these three federal tiers down through state level delivery platforms**, including the organization of peer learning and experience sharing opportunities.

together to identify needs, gaps, and duplicative work in social protection programs, government ministries can improve the project's overall effectiveness and contribute more towards improving child protection.

The Bank should also conduct assessments of project design, with an eye towards including as many relevant agencies as is reasonable. Including these ministries, as well as harmonizing their roles and responsibilities with other ministries, can help move the needle on child protection in these projects. Since the scope of social protection projects may vary, creating comprehensive structures for coordination should be a key consideration in project design.

- **Establish inter-agency coordination mechanisms in social protection projects.**

Coordination mechanisms will help harmonize project efforts in social protection projects and address cross-cutting issues in project implementation. There should be regular convenings of representatives from each ministry as well as representatives from local, regional, and national government, including ministries tasked with child protection. In addition to regular convenings, civil servants responsible for implementing projects at each level (local, regional, and national) should have open lines of communication with their counterparts at other implementing agencies.

- **Create linkages between project implementing ministries and other government entities.**

Links should be established between the ministries

responsible for the project and the governments of the regions and municipalities where the project will be taking place. Real-time information should be shared, and regular meetings can provide a venue for the resolution of issues that are brought to the attention of the Bank and the ministries. The Bank should participate in these regular meetings and facilitate communication between the implementing agencies and provide technical assistance to implementers.

### 3. Child-Friendliness

Child-friendly project components enable children to understand and access project benefits as well as obtain redress if they are harmed by the project. Child-friendliness, in the context of this research, is determined by the accessibility of project mechanisms to children benefiting from or being impacted by a social protection project. While "child-friendly" project components include a number of aspects, such as consultations with children (see Stakeholder Engagement), this section focuses on child accessibility of project information and grievance redress mechanisms (GRM).

#### FINDINGS

##### Child-friendly GRM

- » **Only 20 percent of projects** (11 projects) included a child-friendly GRM.

#### Promising Practice:

#### A CHILD PROTECTION MINISTRY COORDINATION IN INDONESIA

The Indonesia Additional Financing for Indonesia Social Assistance Reform Program involves relevant line ministries collaborating and harmonizing policy as part of the National Coordination Team. While the Ministry of Social Affairs is the main project implementer, **representatives from 13 ministries form the National Coordination team**, including the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education. The policies this coordination team creates are then operationalized by a Technical Coordination Team of director-level officers from the 13 ministries that work with equivalent Technical Coordination Teams set up at the provincial, district, and sub-district level to implement the project across the country. In addition to this intra-governmental coordination mechanism, **the project documents also clearly outlined the specific roles each ministry will play in project implementation**. This is encouraging as in past emergency response projects, such as the [Indonesia Central Sulawesi Rehabilitation and Reconstruction](#) project, coordination of emergency response measures between agencies has been a major hurdle to the progress of project implementation.

The 11 projects that featured a child-friendly GRM included critical measures, such as child protection protocol training for project workers and first responders, accessible locations and a variety of avenues for lodging grievances, the ability to submit anonymous or confidential complaints, and the utilization of community centers and social workers to serve as trusted adults to whom children can disclose cases of VAC or other protection related concerns. While other projects may have included one of these measures, a child-friendly GRM requires a combination of such measures to increase the GRM's accessibility to children and to allow children to feel safe and comfortable submitting a complaint.

### Referral pathway for child protection or VAC complaints

- » **69 percent of the projects** (38 projects) provided referral pathways in the GRM for VAC and other child protection complaints.

This is a promising finding. Of these projects, 33 offered a pathway for child protection complaints pertaining to SEA/H or GBV. Five projects<sup>26</sup> of note offered a pathway for both SEA/H/GBV/VAC and other child protection-related complaints. Particularly noteworthy were the projects in Brazil, Cabo Verde, and Ecuador; with any disclosure of a child protection-related complaint, the design of the GRMs for these projects calls for the involvement of the country's child protection ministry to carry out an investigation and provide redress.

<sup>26</sup> Brazil Income Support for Vulnerable Groups affected by COVID-19; Cabo Verde Additional Financing for COVID-19 Response to the Social Inclusion Project; Ecuador Risk Mitigation and Emergency Recovery Project; Ukraine Social Safety Net Project Second AF; and West Bank Emergency Social Protection COVID-19 Response Project.

### Accessibility of project information and materials

- » **67 percent of projects** (37 projects) include materials in a language that is accessible to children.

The SEPs for six projects specifically state that project materials and information campaigns will be child-friendly (Georgia Emergency COVID-19 Response Project; Kosovo Emergency COVID-19 Response Project; Mongolia Emergency Relief and Employment Support Project; North Macedonia Emergency COVID-19 Response Project; Sri Lanka COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project AF; and Uganda COVID-19 Emergency Education Response Project). The SEPs for these projects also plan to engage children and their parents by providing “parents with skills to handle their own anxieties and help manage those in their children.” This component did not go into detail as to how this psychosocial support would be provided.

Other projects<sup>27</sup> did not explicitly state project materials and information would be child-friendly; however, the information disclosure plans outlined in the SEPs are in line with child-friendly practices. For those projects, materials will include clear messages, simple language, easy-to understand graphics and illustrations, subtitles, sign language, and would be disseminated via mass media, social media, text message, community centers, places of worship, and through community leaders.

<sup>27</sup> Afghanistan COVID-19 REACH Project; Cote d'Ivoire COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Project; Fiji Social Protection COVID-19 Response and System Development Project; Guinea COVID-19 preparedness and response project; Nigeria COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus Program Project; and Uzbekistan Emergency COVID-19 Response Project.

### Promising Practice:

### SETTING UP A CHILD-FRIENDLY GRM IN THE MALDIVES



The GRM set up for the Maldives COVID-19 Emergency Income Support Project provides a good example of the steps the Bank can take to establish a child-friendly GRM. For example, **all project workers as well as first responders are trained on GBV prevention and child protection protocols** so that they can respond to disclosures in a compassionate and non-judgemental manner and help refer the child to the necessary support services. Further, recognizing that not all may be able to submit a grievance via telephone, email, online form, or access the GRM focal points at the various Island Councils, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) indicates Island Council workers will do home visits during which complaints can be disclosed. Additionally, **project documents indicate a communication campaign on the heightened risk of child abuse and sexual and GBV** will include information of how cases of abuse can be disclosed and where support services can be accessed, thereby helping children to be more aware of available resources and the GRM.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Design and implement projects in a child-friendly manner.**

In social protection projects designed to address child protection, children's ability to interface with service providers is imperative. If children are excluded from benefits that reduce their vulnerability to violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect, the consequences can be devastating. While social protection programs do not involve the same level of risk to children as infrastructure projects, codes of conduct for project staff and accessible grievance mechanisms minimize any risks that exist. Children, especially those in child-headed households, may not fully understand how to interact with World Bank programs, and risk exclusion. If children are unable to access needed child protection services due to a lack of understanding or information, they will be deprived of resources that enable them to survive and recover from abuse, exploitation, violence, and neglect.

- **Set up child-friendly GRMs**

GRMs should be designed in a child-friendly manner, not only for social protection projects but in any Bank project where children face risks as a result of project implementation. Future projects should build on the promising practice found in the Brazil, Cabo Verde, and Ecuador projects to include the national child protection ministry in the GRM mechanism. Beyond providing additional support to survivors and communities, child protection ministries can benefit from the capacity building done to set up the GRM and the monitoring and evaluation carried out by project teams to track complaint resolution.



- **Make materials available and accessible to children**

Project materials should be provided in local

languages with the use of simple, easy-to-understand materials that make use of a variety of media including text, pictures, radio and videos. Measures to provide child-friendly language in local dialects should become a standard in social protection projects. Such materials should be available at places where children can access them. By disseminating project information in local languages in a child-friendly manner, projects will enable children and their families to better understand what benefits they are entitled to and how to best access those resources.

In future projects, the Bank should include provisions for child-friendly information campaigns, building on the promising practice in the Georgia, Kosovo, Mongolia, North Macedonia, Sri Lanka, and Uganda projects, which include provisions for child-friendly communications materials and the engagement of children and their families about their experiences. These measures increase the likelihood of beneficiaries understanding and accessing services or benefits, which can improve the reach and positive impacts of a project.

## 4. Stakeholder Engagement

Consultations with children help reveal contextual issues and potential gaps in the implementation of social protection programs. For example, they might demonstrate that children's access to project-funded services is hampered by a lack of available transportation to the service delivery center. Consultations with children, women, family members, and/or other caregivers who tend to be responsible for child rearing in these projects can be the difference between a comprehensive implementation and one that fails to adequately protect children.

CSOs working on child rights and child protection generally have an understanding of local contexts, experience engaging with the communities on child protection issues, and typically have established trust and working relationships with community members. Given that discussions around child protection can cover sensitive topics, consulting with child rights CSOs can give implementers insight into issues that may be more difficult to address in a general consultative session, such as child SEA/H. Per the Bank's environmental and social framework, project staff and implementers must conduct consultations with civil society and other stakeholders early and often during the project cycle. Child-focused CSOs can

also help facilitate direct consultation with children around projects and provide an environment where children feel safe expressing themselves.

## FINDINGS

### Consultations accessible to women and/or children

- » **84 percent of projects** (46 projects) included measures in stakeholder engagement plans that were accessible to women and/or children.

Although this is an encouraging number of projects, further analysis reveals, only 24 projects called for the inclusion of both women and children in consultations, 17 projects engaged only women, and five projects did not have plans for consultation meetings with any project beneficiaries, only dissemination of project information. These five projects met the criterion as the information dissemination strategies and COVID-19 sensitization measures were tailored to reach women and children specifically and provided hotlines and other methods of communication for potential questions and concerns. However, it is important to note that there was no clear indication in the project documents that women and children had been engaged around the project's design and implementation in formal consultations either in person or via phone, email, or virtual platform.

### Child-friendly consultations

- » **Only 42 percent of projects** (23 projects) mention child-friendly consultations measures and a basic strategy to enable the participation of children in consultations.

It is concerning that less than half of the projects contained a basic plan to consult children. Largely, even among these 23 projects, project documents provide limited details on how to effectively and safely consult children. That being said, there were a handful of projects that indicated a positive step towards prioritizing child-friendly consultations. For example, to create a safe space for children to voice their concerns four projects<sup>28</sup> planned to partner with "UN agencies, NGOs, and others to engage children and adolescents to understand their concerns, fears, and needs." Another positive example can be seen in the Tajikistan Emergency COVID-19 Project preparation stage, in which a UNICEF Behavior Change Specialist engaged 78 children and adolescents in a Behavior

28 Guinea COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Project, Kosovo Emergency COVID-19 Response Project, North Macedonia COVID-19 Response Project, and Sri Lanka COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project AF.

Rapid Assessment that was used to shape the project's design.<sup>29</sup> In this project, the SEP also stated that family doctors will conduct home visits during the project implementation stage to consult with pregnant women, infants, and children in a safe and comfortable setting.

### Engagement with child rights CSOs

- » **Only 47 percent of projects** (26 projects) indicated plans to engage with child rights CSOs.

Of these projects, 11 expressly indicated that child rights CSOs would be included in consultations, while 15 included consultation plans with CSOs working in areas relating to GBV, SEA/H, or women's rights. Two projects, Lebanon Emergency Response Social Safety Net Project and Pakistan Pandemic Response Effectiveness, stood out as particularly strong examples of child rights CSO engagement as their SEPs mentioned the specific CSOs that the project would engage in consultations.

Due to restricted civic space in some countries, it may not be possible for the Bank to name which CSOs it engaged with in project design or will engage with during implementation. That being said, the overall lack of language around involving CSOs in consultations must be resolved if the Bank is to meet both the letter and spirit of [Environmental and Social Standard Ten: Stakeholder Engagement](#) (ESS10). Where children are beneficiaries or will be impacted by project activities, local CSOs working with children should be included in any stakeholder engagement activities.

29 Mandeville, Kate. [Stakeholder Engagement Plan](#) (SEP) - Tajikistan Emergency COVID-19 Project - P173765 (English), Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group, p.6.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Include children, young people, women, and child rights organizations in Stakeholder Engagement processes**

The goal of social protection projects is to protect those members of society most vulnerable to instability and catastrophic shocks. Accordingly, those people should be included in the design of the interventions made on their behalf. Projects should adopt a strategy to hold child-friendly consultations based on international best practices as well as sensitization campaigns. The lack of separate consultations for women in some projects is unacceptable and must be remedied as soon as possible in existing and future social protection projects.

Conducting consultations early and often with women and children impacted by the project, as well as child-focused CSOs, is necessary for project implementers to better identify beneficiary needs and receive feedback throughout the project cycle. Carrying out consultations in alignment with ESS

10 can improve child protection systems because projects will be able to better identify the specific needs, concerns, and/or abuses children are facing with the institutions they interact with, and adopt project scopes accordingly to better meet the needs of children and their communities.

While the Bank does not have internal guidelines for holding consultations with children, information and guidance on best practices are publicly available, and should be utilized to hold consultations with children in projects that will directly impact them. The promising practices from the projects detailed in this section as well as the Sint Maarten comparative case study (see above) demonstrate that stakeholder engagement with children is possible, if those designing the project give it due consideration.

### Comparative Case Study:



### CHILD-FRIENDLY CONSULTATIONS IN SINT MAARTEN

The [Sint Maarten Child Resilience and Protection Project](#) being implemented by UNICEF Netherland may not be a COVID-19 social protection project and was not reviewed as such. However, as this project is focused on recovery and resilience, has a strong social protection component, and is entirely focused on meeting the needs of children, it can serve as a helpful comparative case study for child protection considerations in social protection projects. For example, the [SEP for the Sint Maarten project succeeds in defining what child-friendly consultations are and provides guidelines for engaging and holding consultations with children](#) in a manner consistent with the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2009 General Comment No.12: The Right of the Child to be Heard. Page 21 of the SEP explicitly states that:

- » Children will be asked to participate in consultations.
- » Children will be informed in a child-friendly manner on how and why they are asked to participate.
- » Children will be addressed in a way that reflects their abilities and interests.
- » A safe space will be created where children can freely express their views.
- » Children will be informed how their feedback has influenced the activity.
- » The group of children participating will be diverse and include children with disabilities.

These guidelines are then further expounded upon in Appendix 7 of the SEP. The presence of UNICEF as the primary project implementer is a fundamental reason the SEP provides guidance meeting the highest level of international best practice for child-friendly consultations, the Bank should aim to replicate this practice across all social protection projects.

## 5. Data Collection, Disaggregation, and Monitoring

World Bank COVID-19 social protection projects are designed to benefit the “poor and vulnerable,” including children. Therefore, data collection and disaggregation are crucial for the real-time assessment of project impacts as well as the post-project evaluations of program effectiveness. The challenges children face affect them differently at different ages and inform the context in which children receive services. Disaggregating data by age and gender and employing third-party monitoring can help project implementers understand how effective programs are and if all targeted children are receiving project benefits and child protection services.

## FINDINGS

### Data Disaggregation

- » **Only 26 percent of the projects** (14 projects) are designed to disaggregate data by age.
- » **76 percent of the projects** (42 projects) are designed to disaggregate data by gender.
- » **Only 26 percent of the projects** (14 projects) are designed to disaggregate data by both age and gender.

Overall, the lack of age-disaggregated data is concerning. The 14 projects that disaggregated data by age also disaggregated data by gender and five projects further noted that this data would be used to address gender and age disparities in the provision of project benefits. For example, the PAD for the India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health

### Promising Practice:



### ENGAGING WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN GHANA AND CAMEROON

The SEP for the Ghana COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response project outlines key characteristics, language needs, the preferred medium of engagement, and specific measures to meet the needs of each stakeholder group. **For women, girls, and female heads of households, the SEP states that engagement activities need to be held at accessible locations in their communities, not on market days or evenings which would challenge their participation, and that consultation facilitators need to hold gender sensitive meetings in the local language.** Further, for Kayayei, women and teenage girls who have moved from rural communities to urban areas in search of work, the SEP specifies separate consultations to enable their inclusion. Concerning children, the SEP states focus group meetings, audio-visuals, TV, and radio are the best medium to notify and engage children. More generally, **the SEP details strategies to engage with organizations of marginalized groups and CSOs** and NGOs working with those groups.

The Cameroon COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Project is an example of a project that included robust measures to engage women but lacked accessible consultations for children. **The PAD indicates the project will actively involve women “in every stage of the planning, consultation, and implementation process,” and consultations will be held “in spaces where women can express themselves, in groups of all women, facilitated by women project workers.”**<sup>30</sup> These measures are on par with best practices for meaningfully engaging with women and will allow women to raise concerns around their children in relation to the project. Yet, with the exception of engaging girls around the risks of GBV and SEA/H, the project documents do not indicate plans to include children in consultations.

<sup>30</sup> [Project Appraisal Document](#) - Cameroon COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Project (English), Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, p. 18.

Systems Preparedness Project states, “Data related to the COVID-19 outbreak and the implementation of the emergency response will be disaggregated by sex, age, disability, and social group (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) to understand the differences in exposure and treatment and to develop differential preventive measures in response.”<sup>31</sup> The Income Support for Vulnerable Groups affected by COVID-19 project in Brazil was also notable in that its project indicators were broken down by age, gender, and vulnerable group (Indigenous, Quilombolas, or other.) This indicates that for these projects, the project teams were cognizant of the risk of gender, age, and marginalized group disparities in project implementation, and have taken the first step in reducing that risk.

### Third-party monitoring

- » **25 percent of projects** (14 projects) include a third-party monitoring mechanism.
- » **Only one** project specified that it would engage civil society as a third-party monitor.
- » **No projects** mentioned working with a child-focused CSO to monitor project implementation.

The vast majority of projects failed to include third-party monitoring of any kind. The project in Nigeria is the only project that specified the project would engage CSOs as third-party monitors to “validate results achieved by the program to hold implementing agencies responsible to the highest degree using social accountability mechanisms.”<sup>32</sup> The other 13 projects either stated that they would utilize a third-party monitoring firm or did not clarify which type of entity (i.e., contracted firm, CSO, etc.) would carry out third-party monitoring.



31 [Project Appraisal Document](#) - India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness (English), Washington D.C. : World Bank Group, p. 28.

32 [Stakeholder Engagement Plan](#) (SEP) - Nigeria: COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus - P174114 (English). Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group, p. 22.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **At a minimum, disaggregate data by age and gender.**

Data collection and disaggregation is crucial for the real-time assessment of project impacts as well as the post-project evaluations of program effectiveness. Given that projects can have gender- and age-disparate impacts on children as well as adults,<sup>33</sup> disaggregated data is critical to elucidate any gaps in the project design, understand a project’s differentiated impacts, and identify how best to incorporate child protection measures in the design of future projects. For social protection projects targeting children or with child-specific project components, this is especially important to demonstrate whether the projects are adequately benefiting and protecting children of different age groups and genders.

Disaggregated data also gives civil society and other third-party monitors the ability to verify anecdotal evidence and conduct more informed advocacy with the Bank and implementers. For example, if school-age children were targeted for a cash transfer based on attendance and female children above the age of 12 have lower retention rates for the program, the underlying issue can more easily be identified and addressed by the project team. Designing a social protection project without disaggregated data collection on children risks the possibility that crucial information will be missed and that children will suffer as a result. The Bank should build on the promising inclusion of gender-disaggregated data examples in the landscape analysis and include collection of data disaggregated by gender and age group as part of future social protection projects.

- **Utilize and strengthen third-party monitoring for child protection**

Third-party monitoring should be an integral component of any future social protection program, to assess and strengthen both safeguards compliance and project effectiveness. By utilizing third-party monitoring for environmental and social compliance in project implementation, projects can also better mitigate their own potential negative impact on children. By connecting with civil society organizations with deep connections in beneficiary communities, the Bank has the ability to establish a line of communication with the community and

33 Jared Kalow and Megan O’Donnell, “To Leave No One behind, Data Disaggregation Needs to Catch Up,” Center For Global Development (Center For Global Development, January 19, 2017), <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/leave-no-one-behind-data-disaggregation-needs-catch>.

to receive early notification of negative project related impacts or gaps in project related services. Additionally, engaging directly with child-focused CSOs and having them engage closely with projects can help strengthen support systems for project beneficiaries and the institutions that comprise the child protection system.

## Conclusion

Overall, the landscape analysis of 55 World Bank COVID-19 social protection projects revealed the Bank takes an inconsistent approach when considering child protection in social protection COVID-19 projects.

Social protection projects that design services targeting the needs of children, promote coordination between implementing agencies, consult with civil society and beneficiaries, including children, that are accessible to child beneficiaries, and collect disaggregated data on results can have a massive positive impact on generations of children, if implemented correctly. Protecting children from all forms of violence will also have a massively positive developmental benefit, enhancing the Bank's ability to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity.

As the Bank strives to help countries build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to strengthen social protection and safety nets need to place children at the center or risk leaving an entire generation behind. To do this effectively, the Bank must take a long-term approach to a short-term response. This will take political will, technical expertise, and coordination at local, national, and headquarters levels in both project design and implementation. That being said, there are a number of promising practices identified in this research that can serve as building blocks for a more coordinated approach to child protection.

We urge the Bank to step up to help change the trajectory of the COVID-19 story for the world's most marginalized children by developing a coordinated strategy for child protection in its social protection projects. Taking a coordinated approach could be catalytic, as social protection projects are the best avenue to improve child protection systems in crisis, and if utilized properly, can help create a post-COVID-19 world that protects children and gives them the chance to thrive, increasing their ability to contribute to economic development.

# Annex 1

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## Questionnaire

### **Rubric: Child Protection Social Protection Questions**

- **Relevant background information concerning the project**
  - \* **Is the project currently active?**
  - \* **What sectors does this project cover? (i.e., education, agriculture, infrastructure, etc.)**
  - \* **Is this project categorized as high-risk for environmental and social risks?**
  
- **Service Delivery**
  - \* **Qualitative questions:**
    - » Is there a cash-plus component to this project? If so, are any of the components structured in such a way that they provide an entry point for child protection concerns? If there is an education linkage, is child protection information included, where appropriate?
    - » Is there a capacity building component for child protection services at the community level?
    - » Are there linkages to refer survivors to services in the event of suspected or disclosed cases of VAC?
    - » Do project documents stipulate how psychosocial support will be provided for child survivors? For children more generally?
    - » Are training measures being planned to educate project workers on child protection and reporting?
  - \* **Quantitative questions (delivers a score out of 9):**
    1. Will provisions for the hiring of child protection service delivery providers be included? (Y/N)
    2. Is psychosocial support being provided for child survivors? For children more generally? (Y/N)
    3. Are child rights organizations being included in systems strengthening? (Y/N)
    4. Are child rights organizations included in service delivery? (Y/N)
    5. Is this a cash plus project? (Y/N)
    6. Are any of the Cash Plus components structured in such a way that they provide an entry point for child protection concerns? (Y/N)
    7. If there is an education linkage in Cash Plus, is child protection information included, where appropriate? (Y/N)
    8. Is there a capacity building component for child protection services at the community level? (Y/N)
    9. Are there linkages to refer survivors to services in the event of suspected or disclosed cases of VAC? (Y/N)
  
- **Multisectoral Collaboration**
  - \* **Qualitative questions:**
    - » Which government ministries are involved in the project? How are they working together, if at all?
    - » How do project documents convey whether or not this project is building government capacity

for child protection system strengthening?

- » Do project documents indicate that schools will be engaged?
  - ◇ If yes, in what ways are schools being engaged?
  - ◇ Are there plans for schools to be used as focal points for social programs?

**\* Quantitative questions (delivers a score out of 3):**

1. Does this project include multiple line ministries? (Y/N)
2. Is a Relevant Child Protection Ministry Involved? (Y/N)
3. Are schools being engaged in this project? (Y/N)

**• Child-friendliness**

**\* Qualitative questions:**

- » Do project documents call for consultations that will be accessible to women and children? Do documents describe the manner in which consultations will be culturally and sensitively appropriate for everyone participating?
- » Do project documents include measures to develop child-friendly GRMs?
  - ◇ Is there a separate referral pathway in the GRM for child protection, VAC complaints? A child-specific pathway?
  - ◇ Does the GRM provide for some form of appeal?
  - ◇ Can complaints be filed confidentially or anonymously?

**\* Quantitative questions (delivers a score out of 3):**

- » Is the GRM child-friendly? (Y/N)
- » Is there a separate referral pathway in the GRM for child protection, VAC complaints? A child-specific pathway? (Y/N)
- » Are project materials being made available in language that is accessible to children? (Y/N)

**• Stakeholder Engagement**

**\* Qualitative questions:**

- » How well do project documents indicate stakeholder engagement around child protection?
  - ◇ Do project documents indicate that child protection is an element of this project?
  - ◇ Are children engaged in stakeholder groups in a child-friendly manner?
  - ◇ Are specific marginalized groups explicitly referenced as stakeholders?
- » Do project documents call for consultations with child rights-focused NGOs and CSOs.
- » Do project documents include provisions in the project for the hiring of child protection service delivery providers?
- » Do project documents indicate if and how project materials will be made available in language that is accessible to children?
- » Do the project documents indicate whether or not there will be a third-party monitoring mechanism in place for environmental and social compliance?
- » How do project documents include measures for civil society engagement, specifically organizations working in the child rights space? Will civil society be included in consultations, systems strengthening efforts, or service delivery?

**\* Quantitative questions (delivers a score out of 3):**

- » Are children engaged in stakeholder groups in a child-friendly manner? (Y/N)

- » Are consultations being held in a way that women and children can participate? (Y/N)
- » Civil society: Are child rights orgs being included in consultations? (Y/N)

- **Data collection, disaggregation, and monitoring**

- \* **Qualitative questions:**

- » How do project documents propose plans for data disaggregation? Will data be disaggregated by age? Will data be disaggregated by gender?
    - » How is monitoring for the project proposed to take place? Are there plans for a third-party monitoring mechanism to be put into place to monitor environmental and social compliance?

- \* **Quantitative questions (delivers a score out of 3):**

- 1. Is data disaggregated by age? (Y/N)
    - 2. Is data disaggregated by gender? (Y/N)
    - 3. Will there be a third-party monitoring mechanism in place for environmental and social compliance? (Y/N)

## Annex 2

Table : Child Protection Scores by Category

Country	Project Name	Service Delivery Score (0-9)	Multisectoral Collaboration Score (0-3)	Child Friendliness Score (0-3)	Stakeholder Engagement Score (0-3)	Data and Monitoring Score (0-3)	Total Score (0-22)
Afghanistan	<a href="#">COVID-19 Relief Effort for Afghan Communities and Households (REACH)</a>	3	2	2	2	2	12
Bolivia	<a href="#">COVID-19 Crisis Emergency Social Safety Nets Project</a>	0	2	1	1	1	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<a href="#">Bosnia and Herzegovina Emergency COVID-19 Project</a>	1	3	2	2	0	9
Brazil (A)	<a href="#">Salvador Social Multi-Sector Service Delivery Project</a>	1	3	0	1	1	7
Brazil (B)	<a href="#">Income Support for Vulnerable Groups affected by COVID-19 in Brazil</a>	3	2	2	1	2	11
Burkina Faso	<a href="#">COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Project</a>	1	1	2	1	2	8
Cabo Verde	<a href="#">Additional Financing for COVID-19 Response to the Social Inclusion Project</a>	3	2	2	0	1	9
Cambodia	<a href="#">Additional Financing for Health Equity and Quality Improvement Project (H-EQIP)</a>	0	1	0	0	2	3
Cameroon	<a href="#">COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Project</a>	5	1	2	2	0	11
Central African Republic	<a href="#">AF for COVID-19 Response under the Service Delivery and Support to Communities Affected by Displacement Project</a>	5	1	1	1	1	10

Country	Project Name	Service Delivery Score (0-9)	Multisectoral Collaboration Score (0-3)	Child Friendliness Score (0-3)	Stakeholder Engagement Score (0-3)	Data and Monitoring Score (0-3)	Total Score (0-22)
Chad	<a href="#">COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Project</a>	2	2	2	0	0	7
Côte d'Ivoire	<a href="#">COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response</a>	0	2	2	1	1	6
Croatia	<a href="#">Earthquake Recovery and Public Health Preparedness Project</a>	2	2	1	3	2	11
Ecuador	<a href="#">Risk Mitigation and Emergency Recovery Project</a>	1	2	2	1	0	7
Ethiopia	<a href="#">Urban Productive Safety Net and Jobs Project</a>	3	3	0	1	2	10
Fiji	<a href="#">Fiji Social Protection COVID-19 Response and System Development Project</a>	6	2	2	2	1	14
Georgia	<a href="#">Emergency COVID-19 Response Project</a>	1	3	3	3	2	13
Ghana	<a href="#">Emergency COVID-19 Response Project</a>	2	3	2	3	2	13
Guinea	<a href="#">Guinea COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Project</a>	0	1	2	3	0	6
Guinea-Bissau	<a href="#">Guinea-Bissau Emergency Food Security Project</a>	1	0	2	1	1	6
India	<a href="#">India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project</a>	1	2	0	0	2	6

Country	Project Name	Service Delivery Score (0-9)	Multisectoral Collaboration Score (0-3)	Child Friendliness Score (0-3)	Stakeholder Engagement Score (0-3)	Data and Monitoring Score (0-3)	Total Score (0-22)
Indonesia	<a href="#">Additional Financing for Indonesia Social Assistance Reform Program</a>	4	2	0	2	2	11
Iraq	<a href="#">Emergency Operation for Development REPAREDNProject</a>	2	2	1	2	3	11
Jordan (A)	<a href="#">Third Municipal Services &amp; Social Resilience AF</a>	0	2	0	2	0	4
Jordan (B)	<a href="#">Jordan Emergency Cash Transfer COVID-19 Response Project</a>	0	0	1	2	1	5
Kosovo	<a href="#">Emergency COVID-19 Response Project</a>	4	3	3	2	0	13
Kyrgyz Republic (A)	<a href="#">Social Protection Emergency Response and Delivery Systems Project</a>	2	2	1	1	1	7
Kyrgyz Republic (B)	<a href="#">Enhancing Resilience in Kyrgyzstan Project</a>	0	3	1	1	1	6
Lebanon	<a href="#">Lebanon Emergency Crisis Response Social Safety Net Project</a>	9	3	3	3	3	22
Madagascar	<a href="#">Additional Financing for COVID-19 Response under the Madagascar Social Safety Net Project</a>	7	2	0	3	2	15
Maldives	<a href="#">COVID-19 Emergency Income Support Project</a>	1	2	3	2	0	9
Mali	<a href="#">COVID-19 Emergency Response Project</a>	5	3	2	2	0	12

Country	Project Name	Service Delivery Score (0-9)	Multisectoral Collaboration Score (0-3)	Child Friendliness Score (0-3)	Stakeholder Engagement Score (0-3)	Data and Monitoring Score (0-3)	Total Score (0-22)
Moldova	<a href="#">Emergency COVID-19 Response Project</a>	0	2	0	1	1	4
Mongolia (A)	<a href="#">Employment Support Project</a>	0	2	0	1	1	4
Mongolia (B)	<a href="#">Emergency Relief and Employment Support Project</a>	0	2	1	1	1	5
Morocco	<a href="#">Morocco COVID-19 Social Protection Emergency Response Project</a>	2	1	1	1	1	7
Mozambique	<a href="#">Cyclone Idai &amp; Kenneth Emergency Recovery and Resilience Project</a>	5	2	1	2	2	13
Nigeria	<a href="#">Nigeria: COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (PForR)</a>	6	3	2	3	2	17
North Macedonia	<a href="#">North Macedonia Emergency COVID-19 Response Project</a>	2	3	2	2	1	11
Pakistan (A)	<a href="#">FATA Temporarily Displaced Persons Emergency Recovery Project</a>	4	2	2	2	2	13
Pakistan (B)	<a href="#">Pandemic Response Effectiveness in Pakistan</a>	2	3	2	3	3	14
Philippines	<a href="#">Beneficiary FIRST Social Protection Project</a>	2	2	2	0	2	9
Republic of Congo	<a href="#">Republic Of Congo Lisungi Emergency COVID-19 Response Project</a>	7	2	2	3	3	18
Senegal	<a href="#">COVID-19 Response Project</a>	1	3	2	1	0	7

Country	Project Name	Service Delivery Score (0-9)	Multisectoral Collaboration Score (0-3)	Child Friendliness Score (0-3)	Stakeholder Engagement Score (0-3)	Data and Monitoring Score (0-3)	Total Score (0-22)
Sri Lanka	<a href="#">Sri Lanka COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project AF</a>	2	3	3	3	2	14
Sudan	<a href="#">Family Support Project</a>	6	2	2	1	1	13
Tajikistan	<a href="#">Emergency COVID-19 Project</a>	6	2	1	3	0	12
Tunisia	<a href="#">Tunisia COVID-19 Social Protection Emergency Response Support Project</a>	3	2	2	3	1	12
Turkey	<a href="#">Safe Schooling and Distance Education Project</a>	1	2	1	2	1	8
Uganda	<a href="#">COVID-19 Emergency Education Response Project</a>	2	2	3	3	1	12
Ukraine	<a href="#">Second Additional Financing for COVID-19 Response under Social Safety Nets Modernization Project</a>	7	2	3	1	1	15
Uzbekistan	<a href="#">Uzbekistan Emergency COVID-19 Response Project</a>	0	2	2	2	0	6
West Bank and Gaza	<a href="#">West Bank Emergency Social Protection COVID-19 Response Project</a>	7	3	2	3	1	17
Yemen (A)	<a href="#">Emergency Crisis Response Project - Fifth Additional Financing</a>	1	0	1	1	3	7
Yemen (B)	<a href="#">Yemen Social Protection Enhancement and COVID-19 Response Project</a>	3	0	2	2	2	10