SPACE

Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19: Expert Advice

Key considerations for monitoring shock-responsive social assistance: A guiding framework

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Executive summary

Shock-responsive social protection (SRSP) operates in contexts where rapid on-set disasters mean needs for assistance are acute and urgent. Monitoring and identifying problems in programme design and delivery are therefore critical. However, there is limited existing guidance on how to monitor shock-responsive social protection in these contexts.

This Brief aims to help fill this gap. It does not provide a blueprint for developing monitoring indicators, but it presents a guiding framework with key questions and key issues to consider when monitoring SRSP to understand how the intervention contributes to broader crisis response.

The guiding framework includes the key domains of coverage and effectiveness, adequacy, timeliness, predictability, cost efficiency, equity and inclusion, accountability and sustainability.

The key principles underpinning the monitoring framework include:

- Approaching monitoring is not just a data collection and reporting exercise, but rather a process of regular or ongoing analysis.
- Disaggregating data by sex, age and disability at a minimum, and asking gender and inclusion-specific questions.
- Coordinating across sectors, and drawing on other sources of data is essential, including from other humanitarian and development actors responding to the crisis.

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Introduction

COVID-19 has resulted in the rapid introduction of new and adapted social protection programmes to deal with the impacts of the crisis. Although the global scale of this is new, before the pandemic social protection had already been used to respond to a broad range of crises or covariate shocks – a trend that is likely to continue.

Guidance exists for monitoring the normal functioning of social protection (Annex 1), but there are new challenges in monitoring shock-responsive social protection (SRSP):

- The pressure for urgent speed of decision-making and action when responding to rapid on-set disasters often leaves little time for functions that may be considered secondary, such as monitoring. At the same time, monitoring can become logistically more difficult, e.g. if communication and access to people are disrupted or because the shock affected remote or marginalised populations.
- Demands for reporting and accountability for donors are increased in humanitarian contexts. This increases the pressure to focus monitoring more narrowly on those dimensions necessary for accountability to donors. These dimensions exclude many others that are critical for management and learning.
- Time pressures can lead to indicators being chosen quickly for the sake of completing a log frame. This can lead to the choice of indicators which are not helpful: for example, counting the 'number of meetings held' or the 'number of people trained' (both found as indicators in a review of current monitoring of SRSP) will rarely help anyone to make informed decisions on programme functioning.
- There is still no widely agreed definition for SRSP, meaning there is limited comparability and compatibility in how different agencies monitor SRSP.

These challenges occur just when programme monitoring becomes even more important. When needs for assistance are more acute and more urgent, identifying problems and challenges become more critical. Monitoring should be the process by which managers can identify challenges with programme design and implementation, and changes in the external situation to which the programme must respond.

Monitoring needs to be approached not just as a data collection and reporting exercise, but rather as a process of regular or ongoing analysis – a process for which information is required and thus has to be collected. In crisis contexts, this analysis acquires a heightened role, because managers may be required to make swift decisions based on evaluating trade-offs, and to make constant programme adjustments to best meet changing needs.

This Brief aims to offer those responsible for designing monitoring systems and those working on monitoring, an approach that will help make monitoring more useful for both management and wider learning. It sets in a guiding framework some of the main questions which managers will need to ask themselves throughout the life of their SRSP programme to ensure it is being well implemented, that there is a reasonable expectation that it will meet its objectives and that its objectives remain relevant to people's needs. The guiding questions in this framework go beyond simply counting outputs (e.g. how many people received assistance, how much money was paid out) and consider issues including accountability; gender equality and inclusion; and the adequacy of the assistance given. This Brief also suggests some of the information which will be needed to answer those questions and where that information may come from. However, no standard advice can be given on exactly how or how often this information should be collected since this will vary across countries, crisis contexts and programmes.

A few caveats apply to the Brief and should be noted:

- Social protection and SRSP both encompass a wide spectrum of possible interventions, including subsidised health care and support for education, tax exemptions, labour law protection and the direct payment of benefits (usually cash). There will be differences in how to monitor each of these different interventions, which a short Brief cannot cover exhaustively. This Brief, therefore, focuses on non-contributory social assistance (cash, food or other in-kind benefits). It remains relevant for other kinds of SRSP interventions, though additional monitoring questions and indicators may be needed to cover their specific outputs or intended outcomes.
- The key considerations in this Brief are primarily aimed at those managing SRSP programmes – including national government departments responsible for social protection, international

development agencies, NGOs. It is intended to support monitoring for SRSP, and it is assumed that those using it are already familiar with the basic skills of monitoring. The Brief will not therefore discuss techniques of data collection (e.g. triangulation, group facilitation, the importance of data protection) and will not cover aspects of monitoring that are important but are common to the monitoring of any project (e.g. staff performance, cost control, workplans). It should not be used as a blueprint for data collection, because it does not cover everything; it does not offer a list of ready-to-use indicators, because these will depend on the programme and its circumstances. It will also not go into questions about which indicators are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable and action-oriented, Relevant, and Time-bound); CREAM (Clear, Relevant, Economic, Adequate, Monitorable); SPICED (Subjective, Participatory, Interpreted and communicable, Cross-checked and compared, Empowering, Diverse and disaggregated), although these principles may be important.

- This Brief focuses on monitoring aspects of the shock-responsive components of social assistance, i.e. rapid scale-up in coverage, or programme adaptation to respond to a rapid on-set crisis. It does not include monitoring considerations of the routine social assistance programme underpinning the shock-response.
- The Brief does not focus on evaluation. This is less critical for enhancing SRSP in the short term and it cannot be covered in a short Brief.

The ultimate objective of this paper is to provide SRSP managers with a comprehensive framework and guiding questions to consider to make more informed decisions about their projects from a wide range of angles and to support efforts to harmonise monitoring approaches to SRSP to advance learning in the sector.

A guiding framework for monitoring shock-responsive social assistance

Monitoring has both *inward*-facing objectives (improving design and implementation, supporting decision-making) and *outward*-facing objectives (ensuring accountability). To meet these objectives in monitoring shock-responsive social assistance, managers will need to consider:

1. Activities and effectiveness of the routine social protection programme which reduce household vulnerability to shocks over the longer term, usually one of the core objectives of social protection programming.
2. Activities and effectiveness of the social protection responses to a shock. The response may include adding new programme components, the adaptation of existing components or expanding their coverage.
3. The coordination, integration and/or harmonisation of social protection, humanitarian and DRM actors and interventions to prepare for, respond to and facilitate recovery.

There is well-developed literature on monitoring – and evaluating – routine social protection (relating to #1 above - see references in Annex 1). There is currently less focus on the specific shock-responsive components (#2 and #3), which are the focus of this Brief.

Although the actual choice of the best monitoring indicators will depend on the specific shock response, the kinds of questions that managers need to ask themselves are more general. This Brief looks at these more general questions, from which specific indicators can then be developed, according to the context.

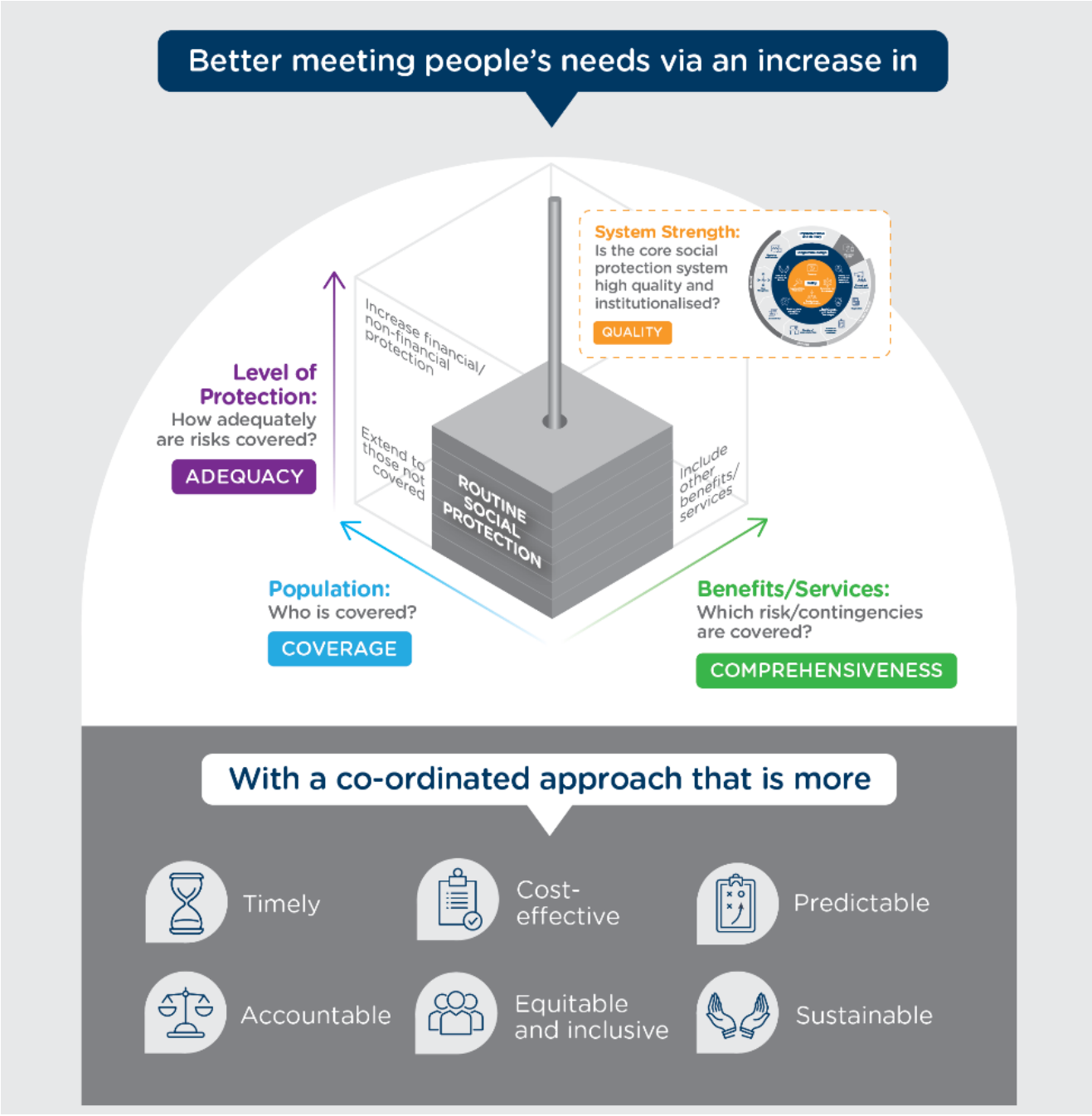
Managers are only responsible for the performance of the programmes which they manage but they can be responsible for ensuring that they look beyond their intervention and consider how it fits in with other assistance initiatives. The performance of a SRSP intervention thus needs to be analysed regarding the outcomes for the shock-affected population to which it contributes, as well as with reference to the functioning of the social protection system itself.

Figure 1 illustrates key dimensions for analysing shock-responsive social protection interventions. It provides a useful framework for organising thinking around the monitoring of SRSP. The dimensions in which a social protection shock response should be monitored are:

- **Coverage:** is the programme reaching all those whom it needs to reach?

- **Adequacy:** does the assistance meet people's needs? Is the programme meeting its objectives?
- **Comprehensiveness:** are the combined assistance efforts, including the programme, meeting the range of people's needs?
- **System strength:** is the core social protection functioning well through the crisis?
- **Timeliness:** is support delivered when most needed?
- **Cost-effectiveness:** is the programme making the best use of resources?
- **Predictability:** can people rely on the assistance?
- **Accountability:** is everyone's voice, including the voices of affected people, heard in the design and management of the programme? Are humanitarian principles being respected?
- **Equity and Inclusion:** does the programme meet the needs of different people fairly?
- **Sustainability:** will the programme's benefits continue after its lifetime?

Figure 1. Objectives of shock-responsive social protection



Source: SPACE 2021

These dimensions are a way of organising analysis and questioning, not separate monitoring exercises. The same information may be used to answer very different questions, e.g. knowing how many people are benefiting from assistance is needed to understand both coverage and cost-effectiveness.

This Brief takes each dimension in turn[1] and considers:

- The questions that need to be answered.
- Additional considerations on the questions and monitoring issues at hand.
- Some suggestions on the information and analytical approach needed to answer these questions, and where this information may be found.

Coverage and comprehensiveness

Shock-responsive social protection needs to ensure that a large population affected by a shock receive the assistance that they need. SRSP is often not the only source of assistance after a shock, so it may not need to deliver assistance to everyone itself. Coverage is often thought of as the total number of people, or the percentage of affected people, being assisted by the project being monitored. However, also considering the combined coverage of all forms of assistance to people in need, to understand what gaps in coverage, if any, remain. This wider understanding of coverage can only be assessed with good coordination and information sharing with others.

Key questions:

- What is the programme coverage amongst the affected population?
- What proportion of people in need are receiving SRSP benefits from the programme?
- What proportion of the affected population are receiving adequate assistance from all sources combined?
- Who is excluded? And what are the reasons for the exclusion?
- What is the contribution of the programme to the overall crisis response?

Key considerations:

Calculations of assistance to the affected population will need to consider if other assistance programmes are offering broadly similar (or greater) assistance, or substantially different support than the SRSP. Where it is similar, calculations can be worked out as the affected population less those in receipt of other aid/welfare transfers. Where another assistance is less than the SRSP or substantially different, a monitoring policy decision will have to be taken on how to calculate this.

At different stages of implementation, managers will also want to analyse how well the intervention is functioning to reach people. This will require answering a different set of questions from those above, looking at the building blocks of the system. Questions to consider may include:

- In programme design, was adequate data available and used to inform targeting decisions?
- Were programme eligibility criteria amended (and in time) to reach a new shock-affected population?
- Are outreach and communications adequate to inform the eligible population about the programme? Including to effectively reach women and men, persons with disabilities?
- Do registration and enrolment processes enable simple, rapid and inclusive enrolment for new recipients?
- Were staff adequately equipped to scale up coverage, or was additional capacity brought in in a timely way?
- What coordination exists for responses? Has there been adequate agreement and practice between actors and systems, including for sharing systems?

[1] Note that comprehensiveness is addressed in both coverage and in adequacy; and system strength is not discussed here as this relates to the routine monitoring of the social protection programme / system.

Answering these questions will require information beyond that collected for the routine social protection programme monitoring indicators. For example, routine programme monitoring (in "normal" times) should capture the number of recipients reached. Assessing the proportion of the shock-affected population that the programme has reached requires information about the total number of people affected by the shock. In many countries, it may be impossible to combine data from different assistance programmes to determine how many people are being left out altogether, because of constraints on data sharing or incompatibility between registers.

It is necessary to disaggregate indicators by sex, age and disability at a minimum (see further guidance on strengthening gender measures and data in the Covid-19 era and integrating gender into implementation and monitoring and evaluation of cash transfer and public works programmes). Depending on the context, it may also be important to disaggregate by location, ethnicity, refugee/IDP status, including actively monitor the reasons for exclusion (e.g. due to discrimination, violence, insecurity, lack of access on the part of the programme). It may be useful to disaggregate household-level data into male, female-headed and child-headed households (where feasible and desirable).

Adequacy

Adequacy is the lens for looking at how well the response is meeting the needs created by the shock. For a shock response, monitoring should usually focus on the short-term needs created or exacerbated by the crisis rather than the indicators related to chronic poverty which may be used in a routine social protection programme.

Key questions:

- To what extent does the benefit contribute to individual/household needs created by the crisis?
- Are recipients satisfied with the support received by this project? By the overall combined assistance?

Key considerations:

Again, managers will also want to look at programme functioning through the lens of adequacy.

- In programme design, were decisions on transfer values and the types of benefit informed by adequate information? If not, was adequate information available?
- How has the programme adapted in the light of the impacts of the crisis, e.g. how have design changes been made (e.g. relaxing conditions, changing the value of the benefit)?
- How well are different actors sharing information on adequacy and collaborating to ensure that the combined response is adequate to meet people's needs?

Answering these questions requires different data and analytical approaches. For a social assistance transfer designed to help households meet basic needs, adequacy can be measured by comparing the value of the benefit and the total household income (including assistance) against a minimum threshold. This may variously be a Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), a national poverty line or a notional survival basket etc. It is much simpler to compare the value of the transfer against the threshold. Regular measuring of household income will usually be beyond the capacity of monitoring systems. However, it is worth periodically trying to assess household income for a small number of recipients, which can be done in a simplified way. This could be looking only at the previous 7 days' income or consumption (though ideally both together for triangulation, as in the Household Economy Analysis methodology). Other proxies can be used periodically with small samples to pick up on any worrying trends, for example using rapid mobile surveys to ask about dietary diversity. Other questions which can help pick up on any issues or trends in adequacy include asking people for their most pressing unmet need or about their use of the benefit – this can also pick up individual needs, rather than just at the household level (See Box 1 which highlights some innovations in collecting data and communicating with recipients through mobile innovations).

Again, information should be disaggregated by individual characteristics (e.g. sex, age, disability) and/or at the household level which takes into consideration different household characteristics (e.g. household

headship) and composition[2]. Consideration can be given to which household member is asked any monitoring questions. It is common to ask the entitlement holder, but it is useful to ask both men and women for their perspectives on unmet needs, perceptions of the adequacy of assistance and how it is used by all household members.

It is also important to keep monitoring external data regularly, such as prices of basic necessities to know whether the transfer remains sufficient, and to obtain updates on the humanitarian situation from humanitarian colleagues (e.g. malnutrition rates, coping strategies, Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) thresholds). If there is reason to believe that the situation is worsening, it is important to consider future projections of need, otherwise it will not be possible to adapt on time. This may require intensifying monitoring around particular issues or in particular geographical areas.

Timeliness

The value of SRSP depends on its ability to deliver assistance in the time frame when people need extra support, before they start adopting distress strategies, which have longer-term adverse effects. A late response may result in unnecessary suffering, reduce its effectiveness in meeting needs and in some cases it may also reduce its cost-effectiveness.[3]

Assistance programmes often give a timetable for their *planned* delivery of assistance but do not always make clear by when benefits *need* to be given. Further, many shock responses are delivered months after the needs were evident from which the response was supposed to protect people (such delays, including for programmes responding to the economic impacts of COVID-19, raise questions about their justification as shock-response). SRSP ought to set out a clear commitment by when people will receive benefits and this should be justified by the objective. For example, support for shelter after an earthquake may need to be delivered within days, whereas it will usually be possible to delay much longer with a response to a shock that has exacerbated poverty. Timeliness can only be monitored against the *required* deadlines for delivery, and not just the plan. These should always be made explicit.

Key questions:

- When were the first payments received (and who received them), concerning the timing of the shock and needs?
- How do delays between the payment and the onset of urgent need vary by background characteristics (e.g. age, sex, disability, location etc.)?
- How quickly was the programme's system able to respond?

Key considerations:

The exact parameters assessed in monitoring timeliness will depend on the situation[4]. Where shock-response involves horizontal expansion (i.e. new caseload), this may or may not involve new household registration. New payments may be made to households already on a register, though classed as ineligible for previous social protection payments; or to households whose details had never been collected and registered.

As a programme is setting up, a manager will want to understand how the different programme processes are contributing to timeliness to know where to make any adjustments. This involves knowing the time taken by, and any possible contribution to delays caused by, individual processes such as needs assessment, agreeing targeting criteria, collecting household data, enrolment, setting up payment processes, setting up feedback mechanisms, etc. It may be enough simply to monitor the completion of each of these stages against the workplan and a Gantt chart showing that it is still possible for people to receive benefits when needed (see above). In some cases, it may be useful to identify milestones within

[2] For example, in response to Covid-19, Brazil's Auxilio Emergencial paid a higher value to single-headed households ((Alfers and Bastagli, 2021) and Togo's Novissi scheme paid 20% more to women based on evidence that a higher share of their expenditure goes towards the household's needs (Lowe et al., 2021).
[3] See for example Tanner et al Chapter 4.
[4] For example, see SPACE (2021) Drivers of Timely and Large-Scale Cash Responses to COVID-19: what does the data say?

these processes, e.g. the completion of registration in different geographical zones, to ensure that delays can be quickly identified in time for corrective action to be taken.

Indicators relating to timeliness should also be disaggregated as discussed above so that problems only affecting particular population groups can be identified rapidly.

A variety of data needs and sources are required to give a full picture of timeliness. The most important indicator of timeliness relates to the timing of the receipt of payments. The payment date can usually be used as a proxy for the receipt date, as long as no long delays are anticipated in people being able to collect money. A programme data management system should be able to give information in real-time on payment dates. The system should also be able to disaggregate this data in real-time.

Managers will want to compare payment dates against two standards:

- Is the pace of payments matching the plan?
- Is the payment schedule matching needs?

The impacts of a crisis rarely unfold as expected and needs change. Assistance may become more urgent or less urgent. Keeping an eye on timeliness concerning needs as well as to the original plan allows for adaptation in implementation.

It will often not be necessary for the SRSP to collect its own data on the changing needs over time. This information should be sought from other sources (e.g. humanitarian agencies, other Government departments).

Process monitoring, as described above, will often only be important before first payments are made. However, if any delays with payments are subsequently noted, further monitoring of the processes behind payments may be triggered.

Box 1. Innovations in using mobile technology for data collection and monitoring

Mobile technology is increasingly being used in new and innovative ways to collect data to inform humanitarian and social protection programming. Several of these mechanisms can also usefully be applied to shock-responsive social protection interventions where access to, and use of, technology is equitable among the targeted population.

A number of examples show the potential for using mobile technology to identify or verify potential programme recipients. For example, in several countries in the Sahel, GeoPoll gathers information directly from communities via voice call surveys conducted via mobile phones , combined with data from anonymised Call Detail Records (CDR) which can model indicators of poverty. This enables the collection of granular and timely food security data which can be used to improve the responsiveness of humanitarian programmes. Programmes could also use these data for targeting the need for anticipatory resilience activities.

Flowminder's FlowKit allows for the automated analysis of Mobile Network Operator Call Detail Records (CDR), which can provide a picture of rapid mobility patterns. An analysis of the mobility data has the potential to allow humanitarian response agencies to identify where they need to provide assistance, or send teams to register and support people on the move or following a disaster. This has been trialled in Ghana, with Vodafone Ghana partnering with Flowminder and the Ghana Statistical Service.

In Togo, GiveDirectly worked with the Government of Togo to deliver cash to the poorest people in the country, using a mix of machine learning, satellite imagery, and mobile phone data.

Another example is the use of voice signature for biometric verification of mobile money enabled cash assistance being used in Sool and Sanaag regions of Somaliland by GSMA, Telesom and CARE. This uses remote verification of cash recipients using Voice ID, reducing the need for in person verification, resulting in significant time and cost savings, and increased transparency. This approach is leading to much higher confidence in money reaching the correct recipient as a notably greater proportion of households are verified. There is also the potential to include a number of survey questions during the verification stage, which would lead to nearly census coverage of programme households.

Mobile technology can also be used to facilitate communication between aid recipients and programme implementers. For example, Solidarites' WhatsApp bot service is an automated messaging platform to support two-way communication between communities and the organisation. It works like a traditional automated voicemail service but using WhatsApp. In Lebanon, this is being used as this channel is the most convenient, used by both host and refugee populations. It allows end-users to 'talk' directly with service providers – for instance, they can request information or assistance and identify if they are eligible for support.

Box 1. Innovations in using mobile technology for data collection and monitoring (cont.)

Viamo uses mobile technologies (interactive voice response (IVR), SMS, USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data)) to communicate with and get feedback from end-users. This can potentially enable fully remote assessments and training for shock-responsive social protection.

Real-time feedback is collected by the Kuja Kuja platform. Kuja Kuja staff take a tablet into communities being served and ask two simple questions about the assistance they received, in general (not about a specific service):

- Were you satisfied with the service?
- Do you have any ideas to improve?

Suggestions and feedback are inputted into an online dashboard. This is an effective way of putting people's voices at the centre, and collecting real-time feedback on shock-responsive social protection programmes, for the benefit of service providers, policy makers and cash recipients. As it is unprompted, feedback is really 'top of mind'.

Further resources:

- Human centred design approach to understanding the end user perspectives on what enhanced or frustrated their experiences of the cash programme: User Journeys in Burundi.
- The Connectivity, Needs and Usage Assessment (CoNUA) Toolkit provides the tools to help users understand mobile phone access, usage, preferences and digital skills amongst populations of concern.
- GSMA Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation Fund: Grantee Map.

Source: GSMA

Predictability

Predictability of payments is important not only in relation to how far payments are made according to the schedule predicted by a plan, but also how recipients understand and can rely on a schedule of payments. Managers need to know whether payments are being received according to schedule and, if not, what needs to be done about it in real-time.

The monitoring of progress towards people's first payments has been discussed above under *timeliness*.

This section therefore only needs to discuss the monitoring of the reliability or predictability of subsequent payments.

Key questions:

- Are payments delivered according to the schedule?
- Do programme recipients understand the planned schedule?

Key considerations:

As discussed above (***timeliness***), once initial payments are made, it is usually not necessary to continue to monitor the processes behind the making of payments. Monitoring the payment schedules is enough to allow the rapid identification of problems which can then be investigated.

Two types of data are required to understand timeliness in relation to the schedule, and the recipient's understanding of the schedule. The payment schedule is the main data to indicate the regularity of payments. Managers can use this to see:

- The absolute number of recipients receiving their payments according to schedule (or within an acceptable delay).
- The proportion of recipients receiving their payments according to schedule.

It is more useful here to think in terms of the number of recipients (often households) rather than beneficiaries (i.e. total number of individuals across the households).

These can usefully be disaggregated, as previously discussed. Additional disaggregation may be made by differences in payment transfer mechanisms.

Understanding recipients' understanding of the schedule requires a qualitative approach to understand their perceptions. This can be done simply and periodically with a small sample of programme recipients. Attention should also be given to the feedback being received (see ***Accountability***).

Cost-efficiency

Cost-efficiency is a critical dimension for evaluation, but it plays a limited role in monitoring *analysis*, since a manager may not be able to do much in real-time to mitigate cost-inefficiencies**.** These may need correction for future shock-responsive social protection. However, to evaluate cost-efficiency after a programme, evaluators will rely on monitoring data having been collected.

Key questions:

- What is the total cost to transfer ratio (TCTR)?

Key considerations and data:

The most important indicator of cost-efficiency is a calculation of the % of funds that are received by recipients. This can be calculated as the total cost to transfer ratio (TCTR)[5]. This is composed of two elements: data showing the total value of transfers as received by recipients; data showing the full cost of the shock-response. Where the shock-response is an additional component of a social protection system, this is the full additional cost of the shock-response.

The total transfer value should be accessible from data already collected, i.e. the payment schedule and information on the number of recipients, the number of transfers to each recipient and the value of each transfer. If the SRSP includes vertical expansion (i.e. an increase in the regular value of social protection benefits), then only the additional value above the normal benefits should be considered.

Ideally, the project should present information about the *net* transfer value, i.e. the payment made less the necessary costs for recipients of accessing the transfer. It will not be possible to collect this information systematically, but some semi-quantitative estimation can be made by periodically asking a small sample of recipients about their costs, including travel costs to distribution points, time costs (for which an estimate can be made of the opportunity cost) and any other costs, e.g. if childcare is needed when going to collect a transfer. Care should be taken to sample from different population groups to arrive at an estimate for the overall recipient population. (See also: ***effectiveness***.)

The total cost of the shock response includes the transfer payments made plus all the costs related to the shock response. This should include any ongoing costs of maintaining the shock-responsiveness of the system. In practice, it is rarely easy to allocate staff time costs or other expenses to a particular activity (eg the SR or regular SP work). However, systems can be set up to be transparent and explicit about full project costs, which allow for some record-keeping of the allocation of costs, including staff time against work that is specifically for the SR (e.g. any new or expanded tasks to respond to the shock). Such systems should not become a burden. It is better to have something simple which gives a rough indication of how time is spent than imposing a time-consuming system on overworked staff. Exact calculations of cost-efficiency are less important than having some understanding of cost-efficiency.

Where a shock-responsive capacity is new, the additional costs of first establishing the shock-responsive capacity do not need to be included, though it is not always easy in practice to distinguish these clearly As long as costs are kept transparently, it will be possible to recategorise them as needed in the future.

Where alternative strategies are possible for different processes, it may be useful to understand the cost-efficiency of different components of the shock-response social protection system. For example, if different registration or enrolment processes are being used, it may be useful to know how many people were added to a registry for what cost by each methodology. (Care must be taken to interpret data correctly, for example, some parts of a country may be more expensive to work in than others.) Again, it is easy to overburden staff with data collection for its own sake. It is worth deciding what information will be useful, how precise the information needs to be useful, and then designing the simplest possible system that meets those requirements.

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[5] See White et al., (2013) "Guidance on measuring and maximising value for money in social transfer programmes – second edition. Toolkit and explanatory text".

Cost-efficiency is not everything. Hard to reach populations can also be expensive to reach; horizontal expansion will probably be more expensive than vertical expansion. A manager needs to assess trade-offs between cost-efficiency and equity and inclusion (see below), and coverage.

Equity and Inclusion

Shock-responsive social protection needs to meet specific requirements across the diversity of those in need. A focus on equity and inclusion takes account of gender, age, disability and other relevant social identities (e.g. ethnicity, religion, livelihood group, or citizenship status). Monitoring equity and inclusion means understanding equity and inclusion issues across all the other SRSP dimensions (coverage, adequacy, timeliness etc). Mention has already been made of the importance of disaggregating data under these dimensions. However, further questions are needed to capture changes in gender and power relations which cannot be measured by simply comparing programme experiences by sex, age, disability etc. Rather, gender and inclusion-specific questions and indicators are also necessary.

Key questions:

- Has the response met the different needs of at-risk sub-groups created or exacerbated by the crisis?
- Has the response supported or undermined gender equality and inclusion? For example, has the programme changed intra-family or community relations?
- Who makes decisions on how to spend the benefit, and who benefits from the spending?
- What are the reasons for exclusion from the programme? Does anyone have difficulties in accessing the benefit (including in both enrolments and in receiving benefits)? Are there any safety challenges?
- What are people's perceptions of equity and inclusion in the targeting criteria?
- What are recipients' experiences of treatment within the programme, relating to dignity, respect and discrimination?
- Are there experiences of sexual abuse and harassment experienced while trying to access benefits, or from programme implementers? (See Box 2 on the importance of partnering with trained researchers to collect sensitive data)
- Are communities and local actors involved in the response? Are they adequately remunerated?

Key considerations:

Identifying gaps in coverage of certain groups is just one part of understanding how the programme has met gender equality and inclusion needs. As the programme is being set up, it is also important to assess the building blocks or processes being put in place from a gender and inclusion dimension. This involves looking at the skills, resources and systems in place in the shock-responsive component to facilitate equity and inclusion, including:

- Funding budgeted and disbursed specifically on gender equality and inclusion activities.
- Staff skills and attitudes on equality, inclusion, conflict sensitivity.
- Knowledge of gender equality and inclusion provisions in programme design and implementation of implementing staff.
- Ensuring safeguarding standards are in place to ensure a zero-tolerance environment for implementing staff for sexual abuse and exploitation, including monitoring of complaints, investigations and appropriate disciplinary actions.
- Existence of gender equality and inclusion analysis (before the crisis, impacts of the crisis and real-time data) to inform programme design and implementation.
- Coordination mechanisms in place (e.g. regular meetings and communication) between gender and inclusion experts/organisations, social protection, humanitarian.
- Connection of social protection recipients to relevant services (e.g. psychosocial services, access to justice, protection services).
- Engagement of community members or local actors in planning, design or delivery of the programme.

Many of these questions will not need continuous monitoring after an initial assessment has been made.

Investing in qualitative data collection and analysis is critical to understand gender equality and inclusion outcomes. It is an effective way to monitor how the benefit responds to the needs of individuals by talking to the end-user recipients (see Box 1). This also helps to track whether the programme is resulting in any unintended negative effects for at-risk subgroups.

The guiding questions (above) could be posed periodically to a small selection of recipients representing the diversity of programme recipients regularly (women, men, different age groups, persons with disabilities, different locations etc), e.g. through post-distribution monitoring, data collection during programme contact points (e.g. registration, payments etc) and staff and stakeholder assessments can be used to assess the institutional gender equality and inclusion capacities and processes. Coordination and information sharing with other organisations is also critical. UN Women and UNHCR, research institutes, NGOs, CSOs and member-based organisations may also collect disaggregated on the impacts of crises, including real-time data and longitudinal data sets.

Box 2: Monitoring GBV, sexual abuse or harassment

GBV prevalence monitoring requires trained enumerators and should only be done if participant safety can be ensured, services and referrals are available to respondents disclosing GBV and if subsequent data is actionable (if it will directly address the future risks of GBV for programme participants).

Programmes should aim to capture, monitor and address any unintended protection issues that arise in the programme in a way that protects survivors from additional risk and harm and with the support of GBV specialists with knowledge of the context. Example lines of inquiry include:

- Perceptions and reports of GBV or SEA
- Perceptions and reports of early, forced, or child marriage
- Perceptions and reports of harmful and exploitative child labour, including exposure to hazards

Further resources include:

- Gender-Based Violence Monitoring and Mitigation within Non-GBV Focused Sectoral Programming (Bloom et al. 2014)
- Post-distribution Monitoring (PDM) Module: Adapting CBIs to Mitigate GBV Risks (WRC 2018)
- WHO Ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies (WHO, 2007)

Source: SPACE (2020: 17)

Accountability

Accountability means that programmes support and enable people's voices to be heard in the design and management of the programme, for example through grievance redress mechanisms (GRM), complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFM) or other feedback mechanisms (community committees, community scorecards etc). Even in routine social protection programmes, accountability mechanisms are often weak. However, when social protection programmes are adapting programme design or implementation, including changing eligibility criteria, people must be able to raise complaints or appeal exclusion from the programme. In a crisis certain risks may also be heightened, e.g. corruption, abuse or violence against women. Institutionalising safeguarding processes and mechanisms to report and monitor abuse or violence are therefore also needed. Access to complaints and feedback mechanisms however, is not enough: complaints must also be dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner, and responses were given to those raising complaints or questions (including referral systems in place).

Key questions:

- Do programme recipients and communities know and understand information about the programme and specifically about the programme adaptation due to the shock or crisis?
- Is information communicated to intended recipients and communities in a clear and accessible way?

- Are feedback, complaints and appeals mechanisms in place? Are recipients and communities aware of, and able to use them comfortably?
- Are complaints addressed and communicated in an adequate, appropriate and timely way?

Key considerations and data:

Understanding the accountability of the shock-responsive social assistance components requires both quantitative and qualitative information. Some of this should be available from the monitoring system of the regular social protection system. This may include a system recording the number of complaints made, the type of complaint and who has made the complaint. Where possible, complaints should be disaggregated by both types and by the identity of the complainant (see above), so that monitoring can identify any emerging patterns.

Systems in place should be recording the responses and the response date for all complaints. They should also ensure that quality control systems are in place to ensure that complaints are dealt with adequately and to the satisfaction of the complainant. They should regularly check the proportion of complaints that are dealt with at an appropriate time. A qualitative assessment is needed to confirm this.

Regular qualitative monitoring may also be needed to identify people's understanding of the programme, their knowledge of and willingness to use the complaints and feedback mechanism. Simple indicators could be the proportion of people (disaggregated) who understand the shock response, who are satisfied with its functioning and who feel confident in the feedback system.

Special safeguards should be in place for complaints related to sensitive topics (including corruption and sexual abuse by programme staff) so that anonymity is maintained and the risk of any retaliation is avoided. Individuals should feel confident in this protection.

Sustainability

Shock responses are not meant to be durable. Their "sustainability" lies in their contribution to SP system-strengthening for the future. This might include improvements or expansion of social registries or humanitarian-SP coordination. Improvements may be to the shock responsiveness of the system or in its regular functioning.

The overall contribution of the SR to system strengthening is best judged through evaluation, rather than monitoring. The role of monitoring will be to inform management decision-making in the implementation of sets of activities specifically designed for system strengthening.

Conclusions

Many projects construct log-frames which they use as a basis for designating the monitoring indicators that they will use. However, there is not always a clear plan about how to collect the promised information; and often there is no compelling case for believing that the indicators are particularly useful. As mentioned above, for example, monitoring plans of SRSP programmes are regularly found to include indicators such as 'number of meetings held', 'number of people trained' and even 'number of reports written', none of which helps us understand the effectiveness of the intervention. Instead, a monitoring strategy needs to be developed primarily around the information needs of managers. What do they need to know to be able to manage their programme effectively, to adapt to changing circumstances and to correct any weaknesses?

In this Brief, we have provided a guiding framework for monitoring the effectiveness of shock-responsive programming and pointed out key considerations when monitoring SRSP and how the intervention contributes to part of a broader response to a crisis. We have highlighted that monitoring is a process of regular analysis, not just data collection, and that monitoring-as-analysis should not only rely on project-generated data but needs to look outside its own box and use information and analysis that is generated by others.

The monitoring plan for a shock response starts with the information requirements of the manager, i.e. the questions they will be asking themselves throughout the response. Because these questions will change over time, so should the monitoring system. In the design stage, it may be important to consider how far the shock

response should contribute to the longer-term strengthening of state social protection systems (e.g. how far to prioritise the longer-term impacts of the shock response or the speed of the response.) As the programme is being set up, managers will want to answer questions like whether payment systems were designed in a way that incorporated gender analysis. During the response, managers will pay more attention to the smooth running of the delivery of benefits, the functioning of the feedback system, and the intended and unintended effects of the programme on recipients.

The monitoring system can be designed to ensure that it can allow the managers to answer their questions across the key domains of coverage and effectiveness, adequacy, timeliness, predictability, cost efficiency, equity and inclusion, accountability and sustainability. However, each domain does not require different data sets (or even sets of indicators), rather the same information will be used to answer the different kinds of questions.

Collecting data always has a cost, especially in staff time, which is usually in short supply. Information should only be collected if there is a clear plan on how to use the information, and if it can be done safely and ethically. Programmes should avoid collecting too much information. It is usually enough to know that a process is working: only where a problem is identified will it be necessary to investigate in more depth, and then adapt the monitoring system to incorporate information about the specific problems being faced.

Annex 1: Useful guidance on monitoring the routine functioning of social protection

Grosh, M., del Ninno, C., Tesliuc, E., Ouerghi, A. (2008). For Protection and Promotion: The Design and Implementation of Effective Safety Nets. Washington, DC: World Bank. – M&E section 6 (2008).

Bonnet F., and Tessier, L. (2013) Mapping existing international social protection statistics and indicators that would contribute to the monitoring of social protection extension through social protection floors. ILO.

ILO (2014) Social protection floors in the Post-2015 Agenda: Targets and indicators. ILO Policy Brief.

Roelen, K. and Devereux, S. (2014) Evaluating Outside the Box: Mixing Methods in Analysing Social Protection Programmes. CDI Practice Paper.

Attah, R., Barca, V., MacAuslan, I., Pellerano, L., Ragno, L.P., Riemenschneider, N. and Simon, C. (2015) How to move beyond the impact evaluation trap? Challenges and solutions for the setting up of comprehensive M&E systems for Social Protection Programmes. OPM.

Bierbaum, M., Oppel, A., Tromp, S., Cichon, M. (2016) Social Protection Floor Index: Monitoring National Social Protection Policy Implementation. Maastricht Graduate School of Governance / UNU-MERIT, Friedrich- Ebert-Stiftung.

McCord, A., Holmes, R., Harman, L. (2017) Indicators to measure social protection performance: Implications for EC programming. EC, ODI.

OECD (2019) Lessons from the EU-SPS programme: Monitoring and evaluating social protection systems. EU Social Protection Systems Programme.

FAO (2018) Technical Guide 3 – Integrating gender into implementation and monitoring and evaluation of cash transfer and public works programmes. Rome.

CaLP Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of humanitarian responses.

ALNAP Monitoring and Evaluation.

Annex 2: Key questions, analysis and data sources at a glance

Theme	Key questions[6]	Key considerations (assessing the "building blocks" of SRSP)	Types of data sources
Coverage and comprehensiveness	What is the programme coverage amongst the affected population? What proportion of people in need are receiving SRSP benefits from the programme? What proportion of the affected population are receiving adequate assistance from all sources combined? Who is excluded? And what are the reasons for the exclusion? What is the contribution of the programme to the overall crisis response?	In programme design, was adequate data available and used to inform targeting decisions? Were programme eligibility criteria amended (and in time) to reach a new shock-affected population? Are outreach and communications adequate to inform the eligible population about the programme? Including to effectively reach women and men, persons with disabilities? Do registration and enrolment processes enable simple and rapid enrolment for new recipients? Were staff adequately equipped to scale up coverage, or was additional capacity brought in in a timely way? What coordination exists for responses? Has there been adequate agreement and practice between actors and systems, including for sharing systems?	Programme data (number of recipients) External data (number of people affected by shock) Data from other organisations (coverage of other interventions)
Adequacy	To what extent does the benefit contribute to individual/household needs created by the crisis? (Considering gender-specific needs, specific needs for persons with disability) Are recipients satisfied with the support received by this project? By the overall combined assistance?	In programme design, were decisions on transfer values and the types of benefit informed by adequate information? Were decisions informed by gender and inclusion assessments? If not, was adequate information available? How has the programme adapted in the light of the impacts of the crisis, e.g. how have design changes been made (e.g. relaxing conditions, changing the value of the benefit)? How well are different actors (across humanitarian, social	Programme data (level of transfer) Additional programme data (household income, unmet needs, use of benefit) External data (MEB, poverty line, prices of local food and goods)

[6] It is necessary to disaggregate indicators by sex, age and disability at a minimum. Depending on the context, it may also be important to disaggregate by location, ethnicity, refugee/IDP status, etc.

		protection, gender, disability and inclusion sectors) sharing information on adequacy and collaborating to ensure that the combined response is adequate to meet people's needs?	
Timeliness	When were the first payments received (and who received them), in relation to the timing of the shock and of needs? How do delays between the payment and the onset of urgent need vary by background characteristics (e.g. age, sex, disability, location etc.)? How quickly was the programme's system able to respond?	How long did it take for the programme to enrol new recipients? (Were they already on a register? Did new recipients' details have to be collected and registered?) How have the different programme processes or adjustments affected timeliness? (E.g. needs assessment, agreeing targeting criteria, collecting household data, enrolment, setting up payment processes, setting up feedback mechanisms)	Programme data (timing of receipt of payments) External data (changing needs over time – from humanitarian, government data sources)
Predictability	Are payments delivered according to the schedule? Do programme recipients understand the planned schedule?	What is the absolute number of recipients receiving their payments according to schedule (or within an acceptable delay)? What is the proportion of recipients receiving their payments according to schedule?	Programme data (payment schedule) Additional programme data (understanding recipients' perceptions of the schedule)
Cost efficiency	What is the total cost to transfer ratio (TCTR)?	What is the total value of transfers as received by recipients? What is the full cost of the shock-response? (total cost of the shock response includes the transfer payments made plus all the costs related to the shock-response.)	Programme data (the payment schedule and information on the number of recipients, the number of transfers to each recipient and the value of each transfer) Additional programme data on the *net* transfer value (semi-quantitative estimation can be made by periodically asking a small sample of recipients about their costs, including travel costs to distribution points, time costs (for which an estimate can be made of the opportunity cost) and any other costs, e.g. if childcare is needed

			when going to collect a transfer).
Equity and inclusion	Has the response met the different needs of at-risk sub-groups created or exacerbated by the crisis? Has the response supported or undermined gender equality and inclusion? For example, has the programme changed intra-family or community relations? Who makes decisions on how to spend the benefit, and who benefits from the spending? Does anyone have difficulties in accessing the benefit (including in both enrolments and in receiving benefits)? Are there any safety challenges? What are people's perceptions of equity and inclusion in the targeting criteria? What are recipients' experiences of treatment within the programme, relating to dignity, respect and discrimination? Are there experiences of sexual abuse and harassment experienced while trying to access benefits, or from programme implementers? (See Box 2) Are communities and local actors involved in the response? Are they adequately remunerated?	Funding budgeted and disbursed specifically on gender equality and inclusion activities Staff skills and attitudes on equality and inclusion Knowledge of gender equality and inclusion provisions in programme design and implementation of implementing staff Ensuring safeguarding standards are in place to ensure a zero-tolerance environment for implementing staff for sexual abuse and exploitation, including monitoring of complaints, investigations and appropriate disciplinary actions Existence of gender equality and inclusion analysis (before crisis, impacts of the crisis and real-time data) to inform programme design and implementation Coordination mechanisms in place (e.g. regular meetings and communication) between gender and inclusion experts/organisations, social protection, humanitarian Connection of social protection recipients to relevant services (e.g. psychosocial services, access to justice, protection services) Engagement of community members or local actors in planning, design or delivery of the programme	Additional programme data (through post-distribution monitoring, data collection during programme contact points (e.g. registration, payments etc) and staff and stakeholder assessments) External data (collected by other agencies – e.g. real-time impacts of the crisis, longitudinal data)
Accountability	Do programme recipients and communities know and understand information about the programme and specifically about the	Is programme adaptation understood by programme recipients and communities? Are	Programme data (number of complaints, type of complaint, response time)

	programme adaptation due to the shock or crisis? Is information communicated to intended recipients and communities in a clear and accessible way? Taking account of different ways to access information by sex, disability, location etc. Are feedback, complaints and appeals mechanisms in place? Are recipients and communities aware of, and able to use them comfortably? Are there differences in use by men, women, persons with disabilities? Are complaints addressed and communicated in an adequate, appropriate and timely way?	there differences by sex, disability etc.?	Additional programme data (to identify people's understanding of the programme, their knowledge of and willingness to use the complaints and feedback mechanism. Simple indicators could be the proportion of people (disaggregated) who understand the shock response, who are satisfied with its functioning and who feel confident in the feedback system) Specialised GBV and protection data collection and analysis (see Box 2).
Sustainability	The overall contribution of the SR to system strengthening is best judged through evaluation, rather than monitoring. The role of monitoring will be to inform management decision-making in the implementation of sets of activities specifically designed for system strengthening.		

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