

Towards evidence-based and participatory policy-making in Myanmar

ILO - WFP - World Bank collaboration to support the expansion of social protection



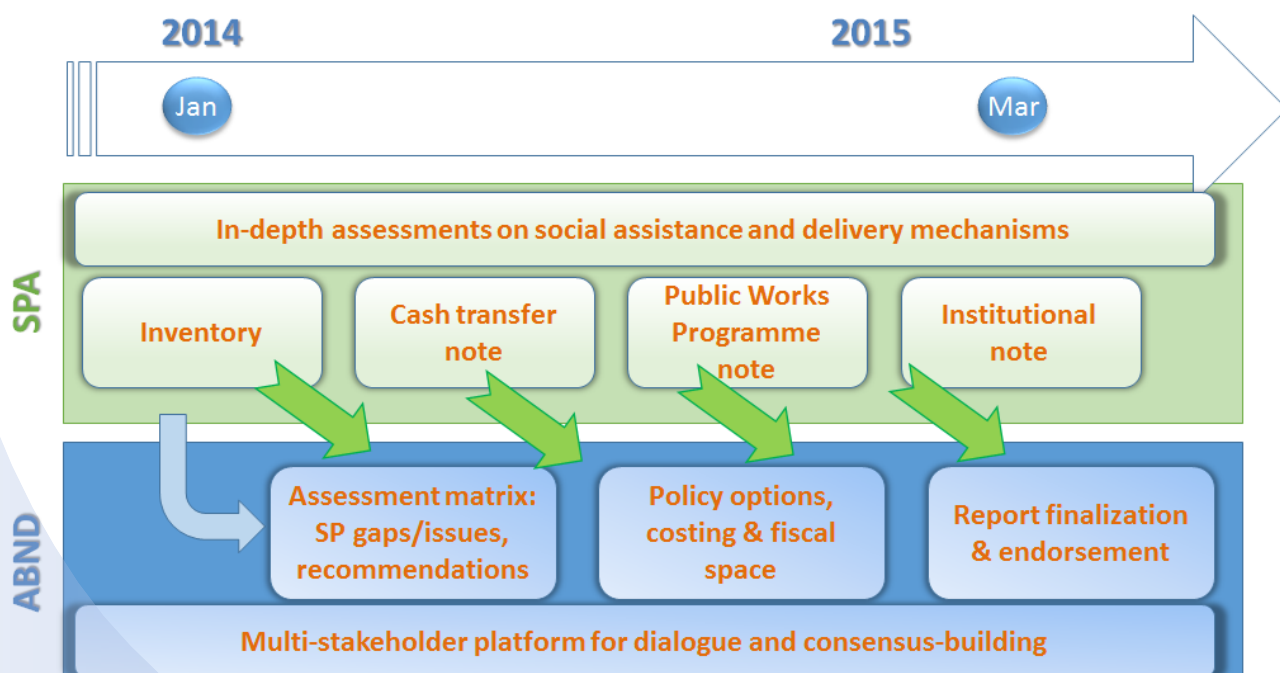
Social protection: a national priority

Extending social protection has become a priority in Myanmar and is a core element of the country's poverty reduction framework¹. In his Presidential address at the National Social Protection Conference held in June 2012, President U Thein Sein called for an inclusive and comprehensive social protection system, providing access to health care and income security for all, and for the establishment of a "national high-level institution" mandated to guide and coordinate a broad range of national social protection initiatives in conformity with national development priorities. In this context, the implementation of the Rural Development Strategic Framework (RDSF), the discussions on Universal Health Coverage (UHC), and the consultation and drafting of the Social Protection Strategic Plan (SPSP) offered platforms to promote institutional engagement around the extension of social protection and introduce participatory evidence-based policy-making processes.



ILO-WFP-World Bank joint process

In this context, the ILO, WFP and the World Bank² combined the United Nations' social protection Assessment-Based National Dialogue (ABND) and the World Bank Social Protection Assessment (SPA). The objective was to avoid duplication of work and join forces to provide the Myanmar policy making process with the most needed evidence on social protection through a participatory and inclusive process articulated around the life-cycle approach to social protection.

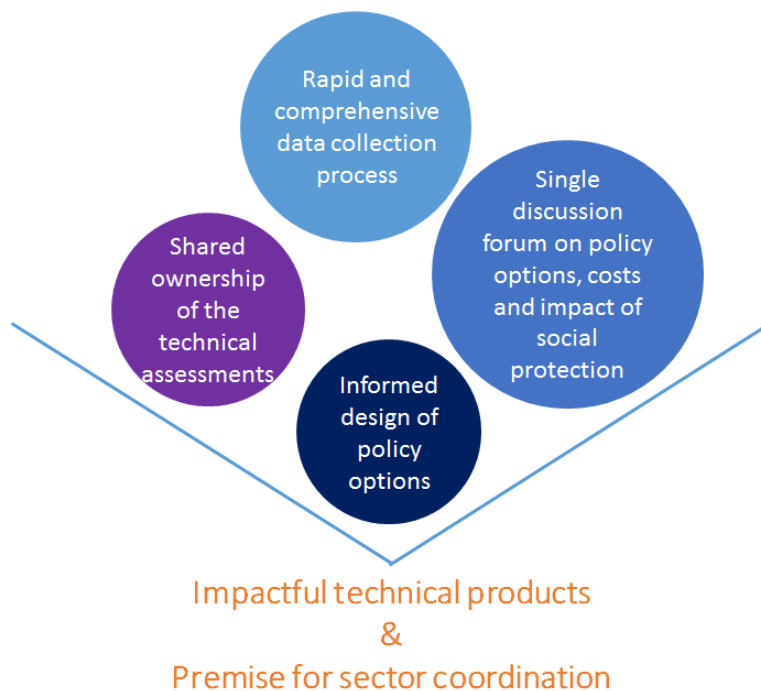


¹Framework for Economic and Social Reform

²A large number of agencies participated in this process. For the SPA, UNOPS-LIFT, Save the Children, HelpAge International and ActionAid, IOM, and several UN agencies and NGOs provided inputs and operational lessons to the process. A comprehensive list of ABND participating agencies is available at: <http://myanmar.social-protection.org>

Combined efforts for enhanced impact

The combination of methodologies towards a consolidated work plan allowed the organizations to share the burden of data collection and avoid fatigue among key stakeholders. The fact that the collected information was both comprehensive and widely shared through the ABND platform avoided discrepancies in the figures used by various stakeholders. A consensual baseline for monitoring progress in terms of social protection coverage was set as a result.



The national dialogue of the ABND offered a platform to discuss the results of the SPA, hence fostering shared ownership of the various technical assessments. Likewise, the SPA assessment of existing practices informed the second step of the ABND where policy options to close coverage gaps are designed.

Conducting both processes in a combined fashion allowed an open discussion on the variety and pros and cons of various policy options organized across the life cycle approach of the social protection floor. Creating a single forum for knowledge-exchange addressed stakeholders' time constraint and built a premise for sector coordination.

Salient features of the collaboration

The ILO, the WFP and the World Bank collaborated in order to conduct joint or complementary activities.

- ⇒ **Joint activities:** the initial screening of main social protection programmes (government –led or not) was conducted by the SPA inventory and then complemented in more detail with the assessment matrix of the ABND, particularly on government programs. Hence, data collection was facilitated by both agencies in a complementary manner and relevant qualitative and quantitative data was shared in order to feed the social protection inventory (SPA), the assessment matrix and the Rapid Assessment Protocol (RAP) costing tool (ABND).
- ⇒ **Complementary activities:** the World Bank conducted an in-depth assessment of existing delivery mechanisms for social protection in Myanmar, facilitated by WFP and UNOPS-LIFT and their NGO implementing partners. The delivery assessment informed the national dialogue when tailoring policy options whose costs would be evaluated with the ILO RAP costing tool. Collecting information from non-government programs in the SPA fostered active technical inputs from these organizations during the national dialogue workshops of the ABND process.

Both types of activities implied regular coordination meetings and co-facilitation of multi-stakeholder workshops.

A replicable experience

The collaboration between the ILO, the WFP and the World Bank on social protection in Myanmar has the potential to inform the development of integrated methodology, sequencing and knowledge-sharing among SPIAC-B agencies.

SPIAC-B

The Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board is a lean inter-agency coordination mechanism co-led by the ILO and the World Bank and composed of representatives of international organizations and bilateral institutions. It aims at enhancing global coordination and advocacy on social protection issues and to coordinate international cooperation in country demand-driven actions. The establishment of the Board responds to a request from the G20 Development Working Group.

- ⇒ **Methodology:** A number of steps were defined jointly and can be easily adapted to each national context. The Myanmar experience illustrates that both tools are complementary and flexible to adapt to each national context (i.e. the fact-finding and sharing process under the ABND and SPA were adapted to a context where social protection remains mainly NGO-led and emergency-related, in order to build partnerships and consensus towards a necessary transition to sustainable government-led social protection in a post-conflict setting).
- ⇒ **Sequencing:** Activities were conducted over 18 months and sequenced in a coherent manner which can be a starting point for a number of countries wishing to extend social protection policies based on evidence.
- ⇒ **Knowledge sharing:** Lessons learned from the Myanmar experience were shared at national level through specific events and globally through a dedicated workspace (<http://myanmar.social-protection.org>).
- ⇒ **Policy outcomes:** Inputs and processes facilitated the development of the SPSP and continue to inform the implementation of the RDSF and discussions on UHC. Greater rigor in evaluating the fiscal implications of social protection priorities and improved inter-ministerial coordination remain challenges for which the ABND and the SPA can be used as a basis for further discussions, analysis and decisions.



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