



Adaptive Social Protection in Crisis Response

How the World Bank Supports Adaptive Social Protection in Crisis Response



This evaluation assesses the World Bank's support in making social protection systems more adaptive and responsive to shocks, with a focus on social assistance programs, during FY 2012–22.

Findings

More work is needed to address sudden-onset shocks.



The World Bank made significant knowledge and financing contributions to make social protection systems more adaptive to shocks—with a substantial increase in lending and a focus on low-income and fragile countries.



While these efforts have led to improved social protection systems, countries often fell short in delivering adequate shock response during crisis.



Countries struggled to quickly add nonbeneficiaries during crises, sometimes reaching less than 10 percent of those affected.



Systems performed better in slow-onset shocks than in sudden-onset shocks.

Recommendations

- ▶ **Strengthen social protection systems' regular functions so they are equipped to respond effectively during times of crisis,** supported by predictable financing mechanisms grounded in national disaster risk financing strategies.

Institutional fragmentation significantly hinders the effectiveness of adaptive social protection systems.



Challenges include overlapping mandates and weak coordination across government agencies, among partners, and within the World Bank Group.

- ▶ **Strengthen coordination** between government agencies overseeing social protection and disaster risk management, improve partnerships with humanitarian agencies, and enhance internal collaboration within the World Bank for shock response.

Key program outcomes related to shock responses are inconsistently measured.



The World Bank has not set explicit targets for adaptive social protection. Projects very rarely measured beneficiary outcomes such as accuracy of targeting, adequacy of benefits, and timeliness of benefits.

- ▶ **Enhance monitoring and evaluation** of social protection systems' responses to shocks and use the insights to guide future investments that help the World Bank meet its goal of reaching 500 million people by 2030.

Methodology

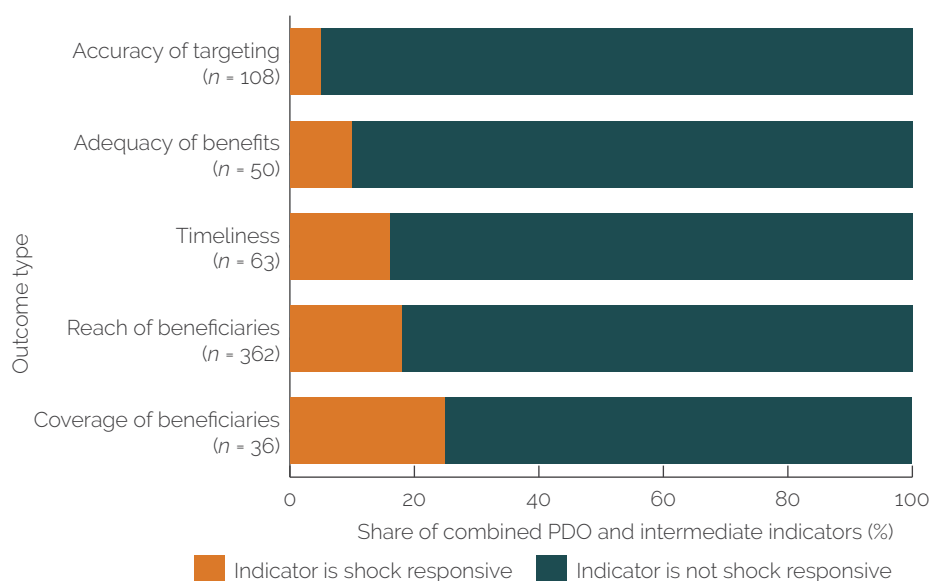
The evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach, including a portfolio review of 202 projects and country case studies (6 field-based and 5 desk-based), interviews with key global and World Bank stakeholders, a deep dive on the Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program, and a country-level analysis of responses to COVID-19.

Measuring the Effectiveness of Adaptive Social Protection Systems

Systems' response is evaluated based on the following dimensions:

- ▶ **Benefits adequacy:** The extent to which social protection programs meet the basic needs of beneficiaries and help them avoid negative coping strategies; depends on the value, duration of transfers, and the nature of shock.
- ▶ **Coverage:** The proportion of people in need who are effectively supported.
- ▶ **Reach:** The number of program beneficiaries.
- ▶ **Targeting accuracy:** The extent to which benefits or services reach the intended eligible population, minimizing errors of exclusion and inclusion.
- ▶ **Timeliness:** A response is considered timely when it ensures that beneficiaries receive support promptly, especially after major shocks.

Project Indicators Rarely Measured the Performance of Social Protection Systems in Shocks



Source: Independent Evaluation Group portfolio review.

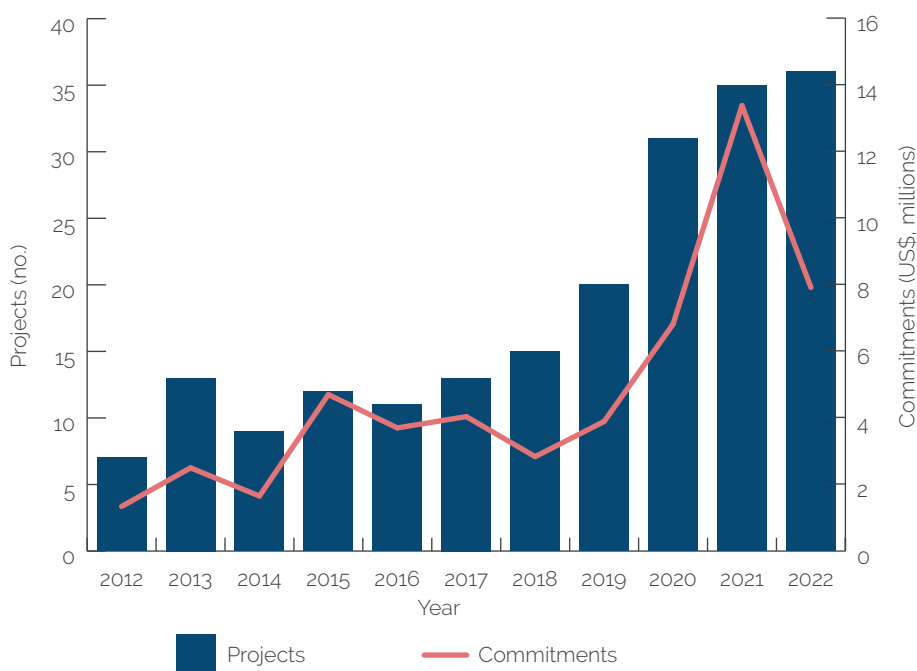
Note: The evaluation team coded indicators as shock responsive if their definition referred to ex post responses to any type of shock or emergency. PDO = project development objective.

Performance of World Bank–Supported Social Protection

Although the World Bank contributed to making social protection systems more adaptive to crises by increasing lending, the following factors limited their performance during shocks:

- ▶ **Limited financing:** Despite the World Bank's effective use of fast-disbursing emergency instruments, the lack of prearranged funding mechanisms and slow payment processes delayed payments to beneficiaries.
- ▶ **Limited political commitment:** Cash transfers for the poor households tend to have less political backing than other in-kind assistance (food) or targeted subsidies (food, fuel, energy).
- ▶ **Institutional shortcomings:** Insufficient coordination within government agencies; among governments, humanitarian organizations, and development partners; and within Bank Group institutions hindered performance.

The World Bank Sharply Expanded Its Social Protection Lending



Source: Independent Evaluation Group portfolio review.

Note: The graph includes the evaluation portfolio, the selection of which is described in appendix A of the report.