

# INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

The what, why, and how of social protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.



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# Welcome

Click on the image below to watch the welcome video.



## What is P4SP?

Partnerships for Social Protection (P4SP) is a four year (2021-2025), AUD18 million Australian Government program that supports governments in Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste to strengthen their national social protection systems.

## Purpose of training

This training will give participants a basic understanding of:

- What is social protection;
- Why it is important to help address social and economic challenges;
- How social protection is being implemented in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

# What is Social Protection

This section of the training explains what social protection is.

**The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and P4SP define social protection as programs that address risk, vulnerability, inequality, and poverty through a system of transfers to people in cash or in kind (e.g. food or vouchers).**

But there is **no one agreed definition of social protection** – it **varies depending on the country or the organisation**. Let's look at some other examples:

**The Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board**, a global coordination mechanism for social protection, agreed that:

Social Protection is defined as the **set of policies and programs** aimed at preventing or **protecting all people** against **poverty, vulnerability, social exclusion** throughout their **lifecycles**, placing a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups. Social protection can be **provided in cash or in-kind**; through **non-contributory schemes**, such as **providing universal, categorical, or poverty- targeted** benefits such as **social assistance**; contributory schemes (commonly **social insurance**), and by **building human capital, productive assets, and access to jobs**.<sup>1</sup>

1. SPIAC-B. (2020). A Joint Statement on the Role of Social Protection in Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**Pacific countries** have different definitions of social protection too.

Here are some examples:



### **Nauru**

Social protection is defined as government transfers of income or services such as health care or education that are designed to reduce vulnerability and build resilience.<sup>2</sup>

### **Samoa**

Social protection is defined as a mix of policies and programs aimed at preventing and protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion, covering measures relating to lack of basic income, lack of access to healthcare and other basic services, insufficient family support (especially for children and adult dependents), including social security and support for protection against disaster, economic and social risk, such as unemployment, exclusion, sickness, disability and old age.<sup>3</sup>

### **Tonga**

Social protection can be defined as policies and programs that help individuals, families and societies to cope with risks and volatility, protect them from poverty and reduce inequality, assist them in accessing economic opportunity. Social protection achieves this by increasing individuals' resilience, equity and opportunity and through a modality of instruments, such as social assistance, social insurance, care services and labor market policies.<sup>4</sup>

2. Nauru Department of Finance. (2023, May 30). National Social Protection Strategy 2022-2032.

3. Ministry of Finance, Samoa. (2023) National Social Protection Policy Framework 2023.

4. Kingdom of Tonga. (2023). National Social Protection Policy (2023 - 2033).

## **Reflection**

In your own words, how would you describe social protection and what does it mean in your country?

To see how different organisations think about social protection, visit [socialprotection.org](http://socialprotection.org) by clicking here

[Learn More](#)

**Around the world**, and in the **Pacific**, most people agree that social protection **includes** at least **two core pillars - social assistance and social insurance**:



But wait, these definitions are all so confusing.

We agree! Many definitions are hard to understand, with a lot of technical words. Let's try to talk about it more simply...

Social protection is **money or other help that is given to a person often from the government**:

The **purpose of social protection** is to make sure that:



Everyone can receive the minimum amount of money that is needed to live.



People that earn money from a job are able to use what they need to live, and also save money to use in the future.

Here are some **examples of social protection**:



Money given to older people or people with a disability.



Money given to parents when they have a baby.



Money that workers save in their provident / superannuation fund for when they retire.

To learn about what different **social protection words mean**, socialprotection.org has a glossary

[Click Here](#)

A **strong social protection system** can help people to deal with things that happen at different stages of their life, and provides a safety net for those in need.

Click the image below to watch the video.

# Social Protection Systems

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Australian Aid 

## Reflection

How does your community help people who do not have enough money?

In the Pacific, there is a strong tradition of supporting each other. For example through churches, remittances or customary practices, such as the wantok system in countries in Melanesia and Fa'asamoa in Samoa.

## Mythbuster Activity



There are lots of myths and perceptions related to social protection that you may have heard before. Here is one example.

If the Government gives people money, it will ruin traditional support systems. True or False?

**False!**

Good social protection does not replace or harm community supports and cultural practices - it complements them and helps vulnerable people to also contribute and support others.

This is particularly important when disasters hit and lots of people are impacted - when everyone is struggling, it is hard for people to support each other.

## Learn more

If you want to **learn more** about what social protection is, here are some **online training courses** that you can **enrol in for free**.



Click the buttons to access these courses.



[What is Social Protection? An Introduction](#)



[Social Protection Primer Course](#)

# Why is social protection important?

Now we will look at the impacts of social protection and how it can help people throughout their life, including in times of disasters.

Social protection **helps** individuals and families to **look after themselves** and **protect themselves from poverty**. We all have times in our lives when it is harder to work and to have enough money.

Click the image below to watch the video to learn more about how social protection supports people at different stages of their lives.



Regular, predictable social protection **helps us throughout our life**.



Pay for the things we need like food and power



Access services like health and education



Save money



Start a business



Contribute to our family and community

## Did you know?

Global **evidence shows** that **good** social protection programs **can help improve** social outcomes.



Childrens' health, nutrution and growth



Childrens' education (including girls' education)



Gender equality



Social inclusion for other vulnerable populations



Disability inclusion

Read about how old age benefits can support older women in the Pacific<sup>5</sup>

[Click here](#)

Read more about how social protection impacts people with disability in the Pacific<sup>6</sup>

[Click here](#)

To learn more about the impacts of social protection, read this 2016 global evidence review, “Cash Transfers: what does the evidence say?”, written by the Overseas Development Institute.<sup>7</sup>

[Learn more](#)



5. Satriana, S., & Attenborough, J. (2023, May 2). Old age pensions in the Pacific: benefits for women. Devpolicy Blog from the Development Policy Centre.

6. Partnerships for Social Protection. (2022, December 16). Disability-inclusive social protection. Partnerships for Social Protection.

7. Bastagli, F., Hagen-Zanker, J., & Sturge, G. (2016, July 16). Cash transfers: what does the evidence say? Overseas Development Institute.

## Did you know?

Social protection **helps people to recover** from big shocks and disasters.

**Giving people money** during a disaster **means** that:



People can keep buying food and things they need



People who work can still go to work



People are less likely to resort to negative strategies like selling assets to get money

Many countries have **used social protection** like **cash transfers to respond to disasters** such as COVID-19, tropical cyclones, and volcanic eruptions.

Learn about social protection responses to COVID-19 in the Pacific and Timor-Leste<sup>8</sup>

[Click here](#)

8. Beazley, R., Gorman, H., Satriana, S., & Attenborough, J. (2021). SPACE Social protection responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Pacific: A tipping point for the sector? SPACE

The **Pacific** faces ongoing shocks and disasters. **Climate change** is adding to the region's risk level

Social protection systems can be **used to help people** manage **climate change** and other **risks**, including helping them to **prepare, respond** and **recover** from shocks.

Social protection can also **help communities** and **boost local economies**.

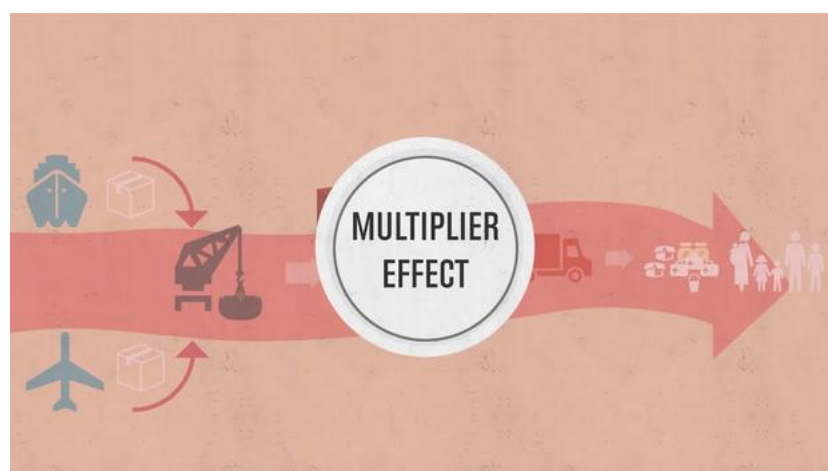
[Click the image below to watch the video to learn about how social protection can help communities and make local economies grow.](#)



## Did you know?

In some countries, there is **evidence** that for **every dollar invested** in **social protection**, **more than a dollar** is made **from local markets** – this is what we call the '**multiplier effect**'.

[Click the image below to watch this short video to learn about the 'multiplier effect'.](#)



## Reflection

Reflecting on what you have read so far, how else might social protection support people to deal with climate change related shocks?

## Mythbuster Activity



There are lots of myths and perceptions related to social protection that you may have heard before. Here is one example.

You might hear people say that social protection will make people lazy. Do you think this is True or False?

**True!**

Actually, there is no systematic evidence of cash transfers making people lazy. To learn more, you can read this paper on "Debunking the Stereotype of the Lazy Welfare Recipient: Evidence from Cash Transfer Programs."

[Read now](#)

## Reflection

Let's think about cash transfers. How do you think they support and promote resilience in the Pacific Islands and Timor-Leste?

# What does social protection in the Pacific and Timor-Leste look like?

Finally, let's look at **how governments across the Pacific and Timor- Leste invest in social protection**, and how these systems have developed

## Did you know?



Some people think that formal social protection systems are quite new in the Pacific. So let's see if that is true, or just a myth....

## Reflection

Does **social protection exist** in your country?

Do you think your country has any of the following in place?

- Child Benefit
- Disability Benefit
- Unemployment Benefit
- Old Age Benefit
- Provident Fund
- Maternity Protection
- Sickness Benefits
- Benefits for poor families

Around the Pacific, **countries are increasingly investing** in social protection.

- Although it is different in each country, most countries are **already spending money** on social protection.
- Simple **life cycle schemes**, such as **social pensions supporting the elderly** are common.
- **Poverty-targeted schemes** are less common.

To learn more about social protection in the Pacific, click on the image below.

# Social Protection in the Pacific

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Australian  
Aid 

Countries have usually started by **setting up contributory schemes** such as **provident funds**, but in the last 20 years many countries have **introduced tax-financed social protection programs**.

Click the image below to find out how countries have transitioned from contributory schemes to tax-financed social protection programs over the last 20 years.

# Timeline of Social Protection in the Pacific

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Check out the updated Database of social protection expenditure in Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste.<sup>9</sup>

[Learn more](#)

9. Partnerships for Social Protection. (2023, February 28). Database of social protection expenditure om Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste. Partnerships for Social Protection.

## MANY PACIFIC COUNTRIES HAVE USED SOCIAL PROTECTION TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS

- The **provident funds** and **various social assistance schemes** (social pensions and disability benefits) have been **used to cushion the impact** of tropical cyclones (including in Fiji and Tonga).



- During the COVID-19 pandemic, countries **used social protection** to cushion the **impacts of the pandemic**.
- The pandemic **showed the importance of strong ongoing social protection systems**: countries with existing social protection systems could **use them to respond quickly**.

## THE PACIFIC MODEL SHOWS HOW TO GRADUALLY STRENGTHEN SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS OVER TIME BY:

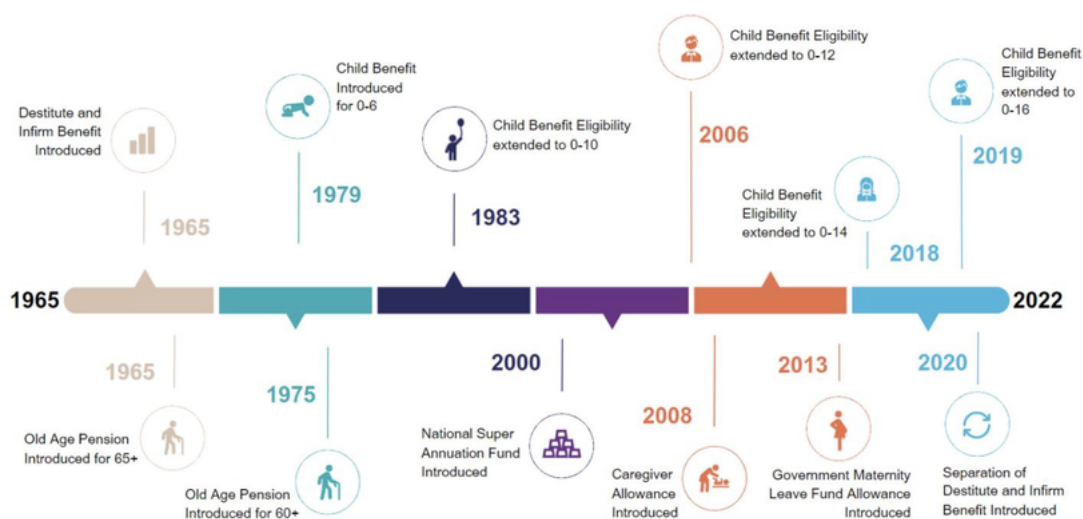
- Increasing how many people **are eligible**, for example **lowering the age** when people **can receive old age benefits**.
- Increasing benefit levels, which is **important to keep up with the cost of living** and **helps people better take care of themselves**.
- Setting different **benefit levels within a scheme** – for example, in some countries the **severity of a person’s disability** impacts how much they receive.
- Introducing **new schemes**.

Click the button below to learn more about how countries in the Pacific and Timor-Leste are financing social protection.<sup>10</sup>

[Learn more](#)

10. Knox-Vydmanov, C, Soni, N, Satriana, S & Attenborough, J. (2023, February). From historical trends to investment pathways: Social protection expenditure in Pacific Island Countries and Timor-Leste. Partnerships for Social Protection

The **Cook Islands** social protection system is a good example of **how these strategies can be used**. Over time, **new schemes have been added** and existing schemes **have been expanded** to **include more people**.





## THE COOK ISLANDS SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

Benefit levels have also **increased**. The real value of the old age benefit for people 70 years and over **grew 120%** between **2000 and 2021**. There is also a **lower benefit level** for people **60-69 years**, compared to those **70 years and over**.

## More Resources

To explore further information on social protection, check out these resources.



[Watch Now](#)

UNESCAP policy series on inclusive social protection systems. Complete the following self-paced online training from UNESCAP that covers:

- Designing and Implementing Inclusive Social Protection Systems
- Towards Universal Social Protection for Children
- Protecting Men and Women of Working Age
- Extending Social Protection for Older Persons
- Looking at the Impact of Social Protection Schemes
- <https://spot.unescap.org/e-learning>

Watch these short videos on SP from UNESCAP:

- [Why we need SP](#)
- [How to design inclusive SP systems](#)
- [How to implement inclusive SP systems](#)
- [How to finance inclusive SP](#)

Read the UNESCAP policy papers:

[Read now](#)



socialprotection.org

Explore the socialprotection.org website

[Explore now](#)



Complete the Social Protection Primer course from IDS

[Access Course](#)



You can also contact us at the P4SP website

[Contact P4SP](#)

## Thank you

We hope you have enjoyed this self-guided learning opportunity.

For more information about Partnerships for Social Protection, or other training opportunities, please visit the P4SP website for details

[Visit the P4SP website.](#)