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# SOCIAL PROTECTION PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMS

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## INTRODUCTION

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PROGRAM

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This work is part of the **Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA)**, a set of practical tools that help countries improve their social protection system by analyzing its strengths and weaknesses. Countries can apply ISPA tools periodically to track performance over time.

ISPA tools fall into 1 of 3 categories:



SYSTEM



PROGRAM



DELIVERY

The **Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA)** tools are the result of a multi-agency initiative that aims to put forth a unified set of definitions, assessment tools, and outcome metrics to provide systematic information for a country to assess its Social Protection system, schemes, programs, and implementation arrangements. Assessments are done with the goal of improving performance and analyzing trends over time. The ISPA tools are part of a free and publicly available platform, building on existing work by the United Nations system, the World Bank, bilateral donors, and other development agencies.

## Defining Social Protection:

Within the context of ISPA, **social protection** refers to the set of policies and programs aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout their lifecycles, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups. Social protection can be provided in cash or in-kind, through non-contributory schemes, providing universal, categorical, or poverty-targeted benefits such as social assistance, contributory schemes with social insurance being the most common form, and by building human capital, productive assets, and access to jobs.

## Why are public works programs important?

Public works programs are a key component of social protection systems and can contribute significantly to prevent or protect against poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion. There is a wide range and scope of policy choices and opportunities when developing a public works program. To maximize the effectiveness in reaching their objectives, it is important to assess the extent to which programs are concerned not only with the quantity of employment, but also with improving the quality of employment and labor practices. Also, there is need to assess how public works programs consider working conditions, if they adhere to labor legislation and minimum wages, if they include investments in human capital / skills development, and if they ensure a minimum level of quality of assets and services.

# About The Tool

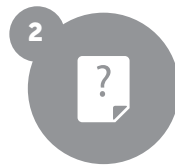
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The ISPA **Social Protection Public Works Programs** tool aims to assess the performance of one or more public works programs in a country and set out possible options for enhancement. The tool generates stylized information on the broader universe of public works programs available in a country, helping to determine how strong the public works program is from a systems perspective.

The assessment follows the standard ISPA framework:



"What Matters"  
Guidance Note



Questionnaire



Assessment  
Matrix



Country Report



Implementation  
Guidelines

*Outlines the process of application of  
an ISPA tool from start to completion.*

**The tool is not prescriptive and does not provide a specific implementation plan.** It is a diagnostic tool that should be applied by a team of professionals with expertise in the subject matter as an input to developing policy options and recommendations. This tool is not meant to do cross-country comparisons.



# ABOUT THE "WHAT MATTERS" GUIDANCE NOTE

The **"What Matters" Guidance Note** provides background for those wishing to carry out or commission a country or program assessment for one or more public works programs. The set of criteria described in the "What Matters" Guidance Note lays down the conceptual foundation for the assessment on the basis of good practices and illustrations from real world experiences.

The Guidance Note is divided into three sections:



**Concepts & Principles** outlines key definitions related to social protection and public works programs and core principles underpinning the tool.



**Methodology** provides an overview of how the individual components of the tool work together to build an assessment.



**Key Areas & Objectives** highlights and details the eight Key Areas that are used to assess key issues in public works program design:

- A. Targeting & Eligibility
- B. Nature of Benefits, Timing & Duration
- C. Asset Creation & Services
- D. Institutions, Coordination & Financing
- E. Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)
- F. Coherence & Integration Across Programs
- G. Skills & Employability
- H. Conditions of Work & Labor Practices

# What is the conceptual framework of this tool?

The benefits of public works programs are threefold:

1. They provide immediate income and support to participants in the form of wages or compensations such as cash and/or in-kind benefits, in return for their labor and co-responsibilities.
2. They are often meant to generate meaningful employment and enhance skills.
3. They create, maintain, or rehabilitate assets or infrastructure and/or provide services for communities and beyond.

In practice, it is necessary to prioritize and balance these three objectives as there may be trade-offs between each of these. The tool aims to clarify these trade offs and encourage conscious design choices as to which objectives are prioritized.

The tool's framework is based on the following principles:

## **1** COUNTRY, COMMUNITY & INDIVIDUAL OWNERSHIP

National ownership, participation of relevant stakeholders, and sensitivity to local contexts is key both to the design of public works programs and the application of this tool as a whole.

## **2** A SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE

Public works programs do not operate in isolation but are part of an overall social protection system. Public works programs can be an integral part of national Social Protection Systems.

## **3** IMPROVED COORDINATION & COLLABORATION

Through the holistic approach of simultaneously considering social protection, employment, and economic policies, the tool facilitates coordination and learning, and opens the door for future policy dialogue.

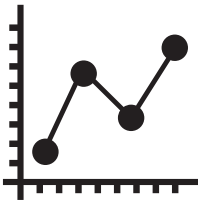
## **4** FLEXIBILITY

For the tool to be useful, it should be rapid, rigorous & user friendly, while being adaptable to the specific context of each country.



## ABOUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The **Questionnaire** is designed to collect quantitative and qualitative information on public work programs. Its structure and content correspond to the 'What Matters' Guidance Note.



## ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT

The **Assessment Matrix** helps to organize the findings from the Questionnaire. It uses a four point scale. The assessment approach helps to identify public works programs that may benefit from strengthening or are in line with good practices, as well as ensuring that trade-offs between criteria are explicit to policy makers.

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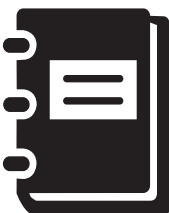
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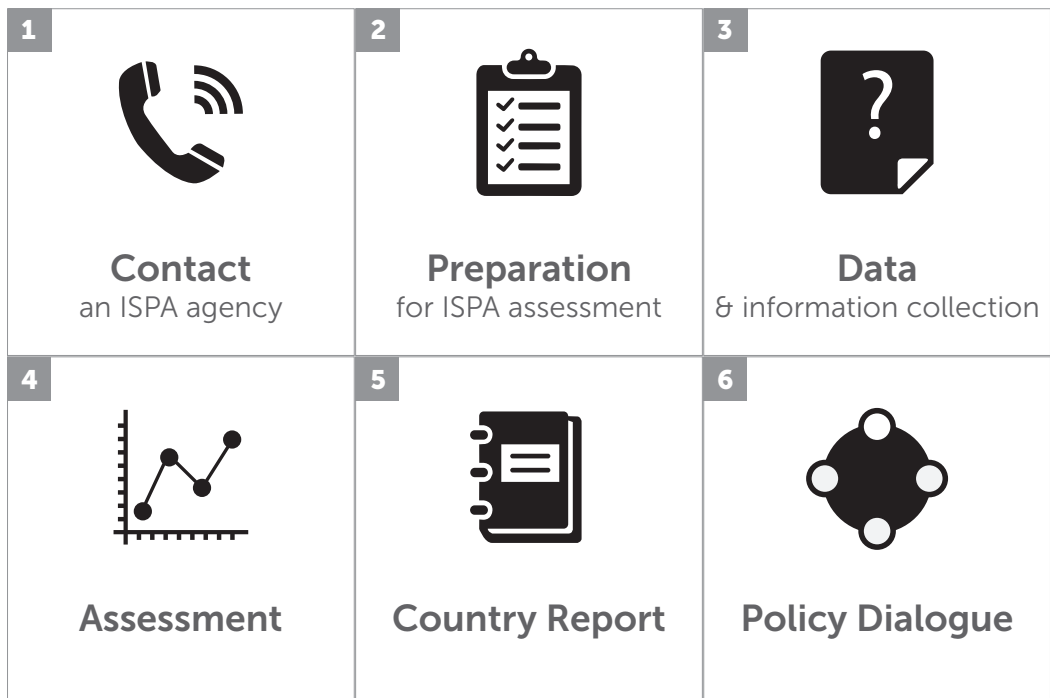
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## ABOUT THE COUNTRY REPORT

The main deliverable is the **Country Report**. This document presents the findings, highlights strengths and weaknesses in relation to good practice, summarizes the complex landscape of policies and institutions, and serves as the common starting point for future dialogue between stakeholders.

# HOW ARE ISPA TOOLS APPLIED?



The assessment is done with data gathered through both desk research and information provided by stakeholders in the field. The time required for the application of the public works tool will vary depending on the complexity and comprehensiveness of the programs being evaluated & the availability of relevant data. Focus on one or more programs will require more time for the application of the tool.

# WHY USE ISPA?



## Countries:

ISPA supports the building of cohesive social protection systems



## Governments:

ISPA provides consistent, reliable & technically sound evidence on improving the effectiveness & efficiency of a social protection system



## International partners:

ISPA helps to coordinate advice & resources & facilitates the sharing of information and good practices



## Households experience:

- Better access to goods & services
- Improved adequacy of social protection benefits
- More coordinated & integrated provision of government benefits & services

# HOW TO GET STARTED?

Countries looking to develop and improve their social protection systems should approach the relevant in-country development partners and request support to complete an ISPA assessment.

Countries can also contact the ISPA Coordination Team:



[info@ispatools.org](mailto:info@ispatools.org)



[www.ispatools.org](http://www.ispatools.org)