Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA)
External Results tracking study (2013-2018)

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Contents

ACRONYMS

ABND	Assessment-Based National Dialogue (ILO)
ASiST	Advisory Service in Social Transfers (EC)
ASPIRE	Atlas of Social Protection: Indicators of Resilience and Equity (World Bank)
BMZ	German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
BTCA	Better Than Cash Alliance
CaLP	The Cash Learning Partnership
CAR	Central African Republic
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poor
CGD	Center for Global Development
CODI	Core Diagnostic Instrument
CT	Coordination Team (ISPA)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Australia)
DFID	UK Aid/Department for International Development
DP	Development Partner
EC	European Commission (ISPA)
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL)
EG	Executive Group
EPRI	Economic Policy Research Institute
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIN	Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
FSN	Food Security and Nutrition
GCSPF	Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICT	ISPA Coordination Team
ID	Identification
ID4D	Identification for Development Tool (World Bank)

ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPC-IG	International Policy Center for Inclusive Growth
ISPA	Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessments
ISSA	International Social Security Association
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
RF	Results Framework
SACT	Social Assistance Cash Transfers
SCF	Save the Children
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIS	Social Information Systems
SP	Social Protection
SPARCS	Social Protection Assessment of Results and Country Systems (World Bank)
SPF	Social Protection Floor
SPIAC-B	Social Protection Inter Agency Cooperation Board
SPPOT	Social Protection Policy Options Tool
SRSP	Shock Responsive Social Protection
SSPTW	Security Programs Throughout the World (SSA)
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSI	Social Security Inquiry (ILO)
TTL	Technical Team Leader
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

UNRISD   United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

WBG   World Bank Group

WFP   World Food Programme

WG   Working Group

WHO   World Health Organisation (WHO)

Acknowledgements

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This review provides an independent assessment to track the results of the tools developed under Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA), a multiagency initiative commissioned in 2012 by SPIAC-B 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*' (ISPA, 2016).

The review provides a critical retrospective of both the successes and failures of the ISPA initiative at the aggregate level and the lessons that can be learned from this in order to suggest what needs to be improved in the design, implementation arrangements and management for the continuation of the initiative in a changing context.

The study was based on research carried out between May and October 2019 using a mixed methods approach including document review, website review, a mass survey, retrospective analysis of a 2017 survey, case studies and key informant interviews with over fifty informants drawn from national governments, bi- and multi-lateral Development Partners staff in Head Quarters and at country level, NGOs and consultants involved in tool management, development and application.   The research aimed to gather evidence on the usefulness of ISPA tools for partner countries and Development Partners, along with areas for improvement of ISPA tools and processes in order to inform improved capacity building for policy coherence and coordination of social protection-related activities. The focus is on the performance of the four tools which have been finalised to date under the initiative; the Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI), the Public Works Program tool, the Identification Systems tool and the Social Protection Payments tool, and two tools which have been piloted and are nearing finalization; the Food Security and Nutrition and Social Protection Policy Options tools.

Summary of Performance

In terms of the three core ISPA objectives the review finds that:

> ➢ ISPA assessments do successfully provide a thorough analysis of the country's social protection systems, programs and delivery mechanisms,
> ➢ Most ISPA assessments provide entry points on how to improve and strengthen social protection, and
> ➢ Most assessments do not provide lessons for other countries to learn from about how to analyze and develop their social protection system as few country reports have been shared

However, there was little evidence that applications had yet had a significant impact in terms of the initiatives systems development and coordination objectives at country level in terms of supporting countries in building coherent social protection systems and delivery structures that respond to the needs of the population, ensuring complementarity between social protection interventions and coordination across sectors, providing a platform for collaboration across agencies, or helping to craft a common vision for social protection systems.

Key achievements

The initiative has had many significant success; four tools have been developed, piloted and finalized, two have been piloted and are currently in the process of finalization and 47 applications have been completed or are nearing completion. In addition the tools are highly praised as comprehensive reference materials that have been widely used as sources or templates in a wide variety of contexts, although this has not been formally captured. Overall the review has found that the ISPA tools are highly commended as well structured, comprehensive and

institutionally credible - due to their multi-agency endorsement - analysis instruments and while they are not fully applied in most instances they were highly valued as reference and didactic tools. As such ISPA is a fully functioning initiative which has successfully met its goal in terms of the production of a series of tools which are high quality, excellent reference materials. The process adopted to produce the tools was also successful inasmuch as it entailed high levels of participation and brought Development Partners together, promoting interagency collaboration in pursuit of improved SP systems.

In addition to the practical achievements of the production of the tools, and the associated challenges outlined above, the review also identified the importance of ISPA in terms of the meta-objective of improved interagency collaboration and aid effectiveness, which was widely noted as symbolically, if not yet practically, significant, particularly by senior Development Partner informants. The fact that the initiative is a vehicle to bring together and create a dialogue between the two most influential agencies working on social protection (the World Bank Group and the ILO) was for smaller Development Partners, a key reason for supporting the initiative, and was perceived to be at least as important as the development of the tools themselves. The initiative was identified as crucial in terms of establishing and promoting this interagency dialogue at headquarters level, even though it was clear that this had not yet fully penetrated though the two key institutions and had not yet resulted in significant operational changes at country level.

Challenges

While in these terms ISPA has been a successful initiative, this review has identified a series of challenges with the tools themselves (the complexity of the tools in particular was found to inhibit take up and limit government participation), and also with the processes of tool development, dissemination, application and follow up at country and interagency level, which have limited the impact of the exercise in terms of its potential contribution to social protection systems development at national level, and aid effectiveness and coordination more widely.

A key challenge is that the focus of the initiative to date has been the administration of tool production, and the same attention has not been paid to ensuring that the initiative is supported with strategic leaadership that promotes awareness, dissemination, incentives for utilization and institutional buy in, strategic linkages with emerging initiatives, or adaptation in a changing external context. As a result, tools have not been used as much as expected and also not through the recommended participatory interagency processes. Similarly, the curation of the tools after their production - in terms of ongoing tool management, monitoring usage, updating, ensuring continued relevance - has not been a priority focus, again compromising potential impact.

Conclusion

The implication of these findings is that there is an opportunity to consider the future goals and role of the initiative and the strategy required to achieve them. There is a need to ensure the continued value added and cost effectiveness of the initiative and avoid the institutional inertia of continued tool production without first considering how existing ISPA material might most effectively be managed to contribute better to social protection systems development, as part of an iterative and ongoing process which revisits the content and structure of the tools. There is also a need to revisit the process of tool development and application modalities and to improve dissemination and communication, as well as promoting incentives for usage.

In light of the findings of this ISPA review and the changing institutional and developmental context, it is now appropriate to review the goals of the initiative, to explore the demand for existing and future tools, to revisit the issues to be covered, and to link the initiative with emerging debates which are becoming central to the social protection discourse, particularly shock responsive social protection, the emerging humanitarian-social protection nexus and climate change.

In summary, the review has indicated that significant investment by the Development Partners, led by the World Bank Group and ILO, has resulted in the establishment of several key resources and a credible ISPA brand over the last five years, but there is now a need to consolidate this achievement by revisiting and updating the initiative's vision and *modus operandi* if it is to retain its relevance. The initiative has great potential which has not yet been fully realized, and the challenge is now to shift from an administrative vision centered around the production of tools, to a strategic vision which builds on this achievement to promote the efficiency and effective of social protection systems development.

Recommendations

The review makes a series of detailed recommendations around key themes including both practical issues relating to the tool development process, tool design and curation, implementation and dissemination, and also more conceptual strategic recommendations relating to linkage with other initiatives, management and future priorities.

It is proposed that the following recommendations are prioritized in order to consolidate achievements to date and position ISPA for the future:

- ISPA EG to convene a membership meeting to appraise achievements and challenges to date based on the findings of this review

- Revisit the ISPA vision and goals in a changed institutional and developmental context, identifying membership demands for future direction and focus

- Agree future role and objectives of ISPA initiative

    o Consider whether ISPA should revise its output to focus on the production of reference documents and tools for adaptation rather than detailed tools given the pattern of usage found in the review

- Create an ISPA dissemination and operationalisation strategy and high level advisory group

- Initiate strategic collaboration with specialized agencies on:

    o Data (technical dialogue on the potential to integrate ISPA with SSI, ASPIRE and the SDG data initiative, and for ISPA to contribute to the creation and/or harmonisation of basic social protection data)

    o Shock Responsive Social Protection and the humanitarian-social protection nexus, and

    o Climate change and social protection

- Convene curation discussions with Working Group leads to assess need for review and update of existing tools, including resourcing.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Objectives of the Review

The main purpose of this review is to provide an independent assessment to track the results of the tools developed under Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA), a multiagency 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*' (ISPA, 2016).[1] The focus of the study is to provide a critical retrospective of both the successes and failures of the ISPA initiative at the aggregate level and thereby on the lessons learnt: what works well, what does not, and what needs to be improved in the design, implementation arrangements, and the Results Framework (RF) for the continuation of the initiative.

The study gathers evidence on the usefulness of ISPA tools for partner countries and supporting Development Partners, along with areas for improvement of ISPA tools and processes. It aims to provide the basis for improved capacity building for policy coherence and coordination of social protection-related activities.

The focus is on:

- understanding of the process of development and application of ISPA tools
- shedding light on the effects that their application is having in the development/improvement/reform of social protection policies and programs in countries, and understand to what extent results of applications were useful for the policy process in respective countries
- identifying the effect of ISPA on promoting coordination among ISPA agencies and country-SP agencies/ministries
- identifying the challenges faced in the application of the tools
- suggesting improvements on tool design and process of application
- suggesting if/how further tool development and participatory application process could be adapted to emphasize country ownership, national dialogue and increased use of assessment results.

Introduction to ISPA

The Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA) tools are the result of a multiagency initiative that aims to put provide 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 within a country, but do not allow for comparison across countries. The ISPA tools are part of a free and publicly available platform, and build on existing work by the United Nations system, the World Bank Group, bilateral donors, and other development agencies. 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

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[1] The TOR for the review are included in Appendix 1.

social assistance, contributory schemes with social insurance being the most common form, and by building human capital, productive assets, and access to jobs.[2]

ISPA Governance Structure

The ISPA governance structure has three components, an Executive Group, a Coordination Team, and individual tool Working Groups, see figure 1.

Figure 1: Governance Structure of ISPA

Source: https://ispatools.org/about-ispa/
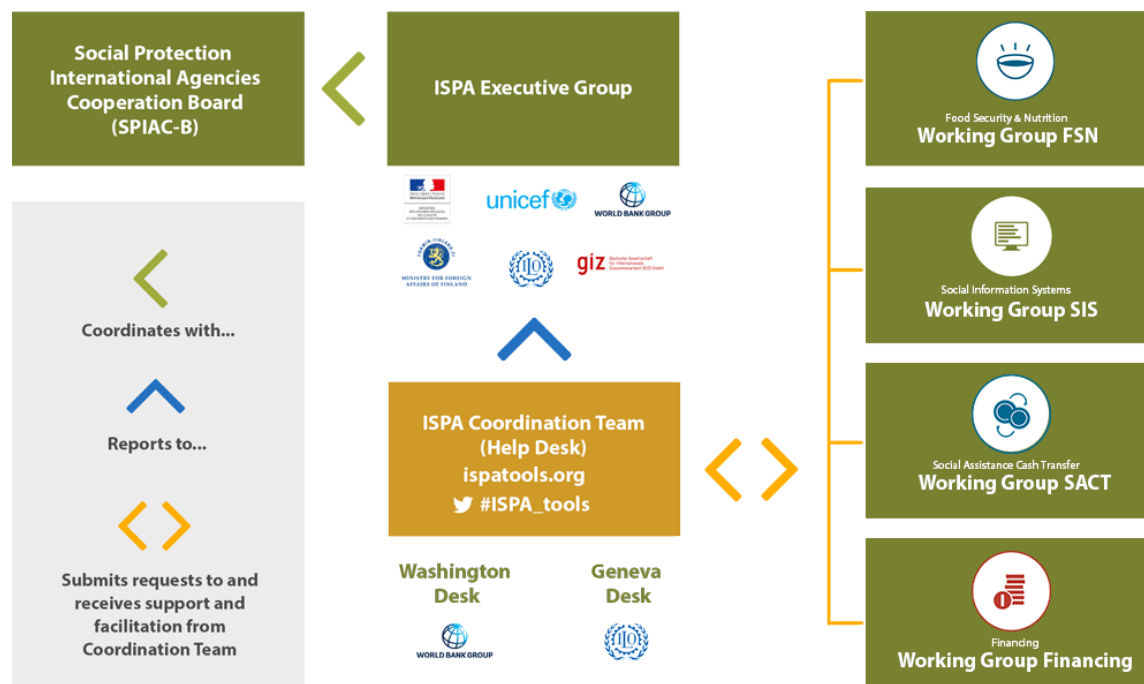
The ISPA Executive Group (EG) makes strategic decisions on all aspects of the ISPA initiative. Its membership is drawn from among SPIAC-B agencies and is constituted of those agencies that contribute financially to the initiative; the World Bank Group, ILO, EC, GIZ, UNICEF, France and EC/Finland (on a shared seat basis). The initiative is supported by the ISPA Coordination Team (ICT) which is accountable to the Executive Group. The ICT is co-located within the ILO and World Bank and consists of one staff member from each organization who works on a part time basis. The ICT facilitates the development, dissemination and application of the ISPA tools by supporting tool-specific Working Groups (WG) as well as promoting standardization across the tools and taking recommendations from the ISPA Working Groups to the EG. The Working Groups are responsible for developing the tools, with one agency taking a lead role for each, and are composed of staff from ISPA member agencies together with staff from specialized agencies working on the tool subject.

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[2] http://ispatools.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/CODIBrochureBW.pdf

Funding

ISPA does not have a fixed budget but is funded with cash and in-kind contributions from various agencies. The annual budget is prepared by the ICT based in the estimated contributions of various partners. Sources of ISPA funding for 2019 are set out in figure 2 and the associated indicative work plan in figure 3.

*Figure 2: ISPA-Sources of Funding 2019 (%)*
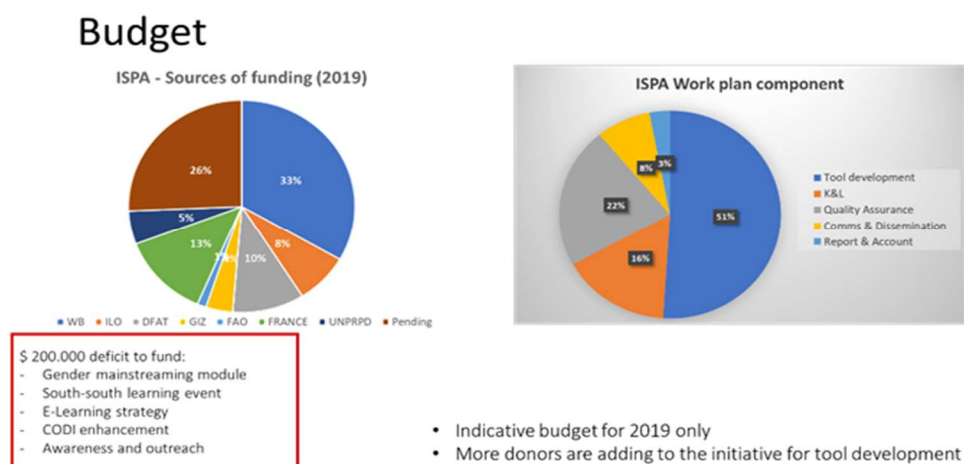
Source: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---nylo/documents/genericdocument/wcms_671585.pdf

Figure 3: 2019 Indicative Workplan

1. Tool Development	2. Knowledge and Learning	3. Quality Assurance	4. Communication
• Complete SPPOT tool (ILO) • Complete FSN tool (FAO) • Initiate technical work for SACT tool (WBG) • Continue technical work SIS tool and initiate piloting (WBG) • Initiate technical work of SP Financing tool (ILO)	**E-learning** • Develop e-learning content • Explore opportunities of dissemination through socialprotection.org and TRANSFORM • Webinars series in collaboration with socialprotecion.org (need of active contribution from partner agencies) • Suggestion for a stand alone ISPA Forum meeting **Face to face:** • Promote active dissemination within partner agencies.	**ISPA review** **Compliance with QA protocols** **HELP DESK SESSIONS** -Individual one-to-one sessions with country teams to provide guidance on tools application **Enhancement of CODI?**	• Draw more people to the site and the tools via collaboration with socialprotection.org • Systematic dissemination of social media

Source: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---nylo/documents/genericdocument/wcms_671585.pdf

Vision

Application of the ISPA tools is intended to be conducted at the request of the government and involve most prominent national representatives of stakeholders, including the relevant government ministries and agencies, social partners, civil society organizations, national social protection practitioners, and/or academic experts. During the application process government teams may choose to work together with partner international agencies

and other external advisers (as needed).[3] ISPA tools are meant to identify strengths and weaknesses of social protection systems, programs or implementation arrangements and enable governments to identify a set of entry level reform options based on the features of the country's SP system, fiscal and political realities, and global best practices. https://ispatools.org/.

Box 1: The Story of ISPA

Around the world, Governments are recognizing the importance of social protection systems in fighting poverty, securing the well-being of the population and in fostering economic and social development. Yet, many countries are only starting to build coherent social protection systems and significant coverage gaps exist: it is estimated that three out of four people around the world do not have access to sufficient social protection.

Countries wanting to strengthen their social protection systems often seek technical advice on how to design and implement social protection policies. However, advice on social protection is often fragmented and contradictory across the international community. In 2012, the Social Protection Inter Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) was created and embarked in the development of ISPA tools in response to the need for more harmonized, coherent and coordinated approaches both at international and national levels. The tools aim to assess and improve social protection systems, programs and delivery mechanisms.

ISPA tools;

support countries in building coherent social protection systems and delivery structures that respond to the needs of the population,

ensure complementarity between SP interventions and coordination across sectors,

provide a platform for collaboration across agencies

help craft a common vision for SP systems

ISPA tools have been developed by the world's leading social protection specialists from more than 20 international organizations and Development Partners, with strong partnership from Governments. Each tool has gone through a rigorous development and approval process for this purpose. ISPA tools are applied in countries around the world, facilitating dialogue and enabling countries to learn from each other.

Source: https://ispatools.org/about-ispa/

Overview of Tools
The ISPA tools are a set of practical tools that are intended to help countries improve their social protection system by analyzing its strengths and weaknesses and offering options for further action, see figure 4.

Figure 4: How does ISPA Help

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[3] Per ICT direct communication

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

Household Members

Experience

Better access to goods & services, improved adequacy of social protection benefits, and more coordinated & integrated

provision of government benefits & services

Source: https://ispatools.org/

The Tools

The tools fall into three categories: System, which assesses the overall social protection system and policies in a country; Program, which offers deeper analysis of different types of social protection programs and branches; and Delivery, which provides an in-depth analysis of different implementation aspects of social protection programs.

Originally, the ISPA EG had agreed on the development of a constellation of 24 tools covering the entire spectrum of designing and implementing coherent social protection systems by 2021, see figure 5.

Figure 5: The Planned ISPA Constellation (for completion by 2021)

Source: https://ispatools.org/
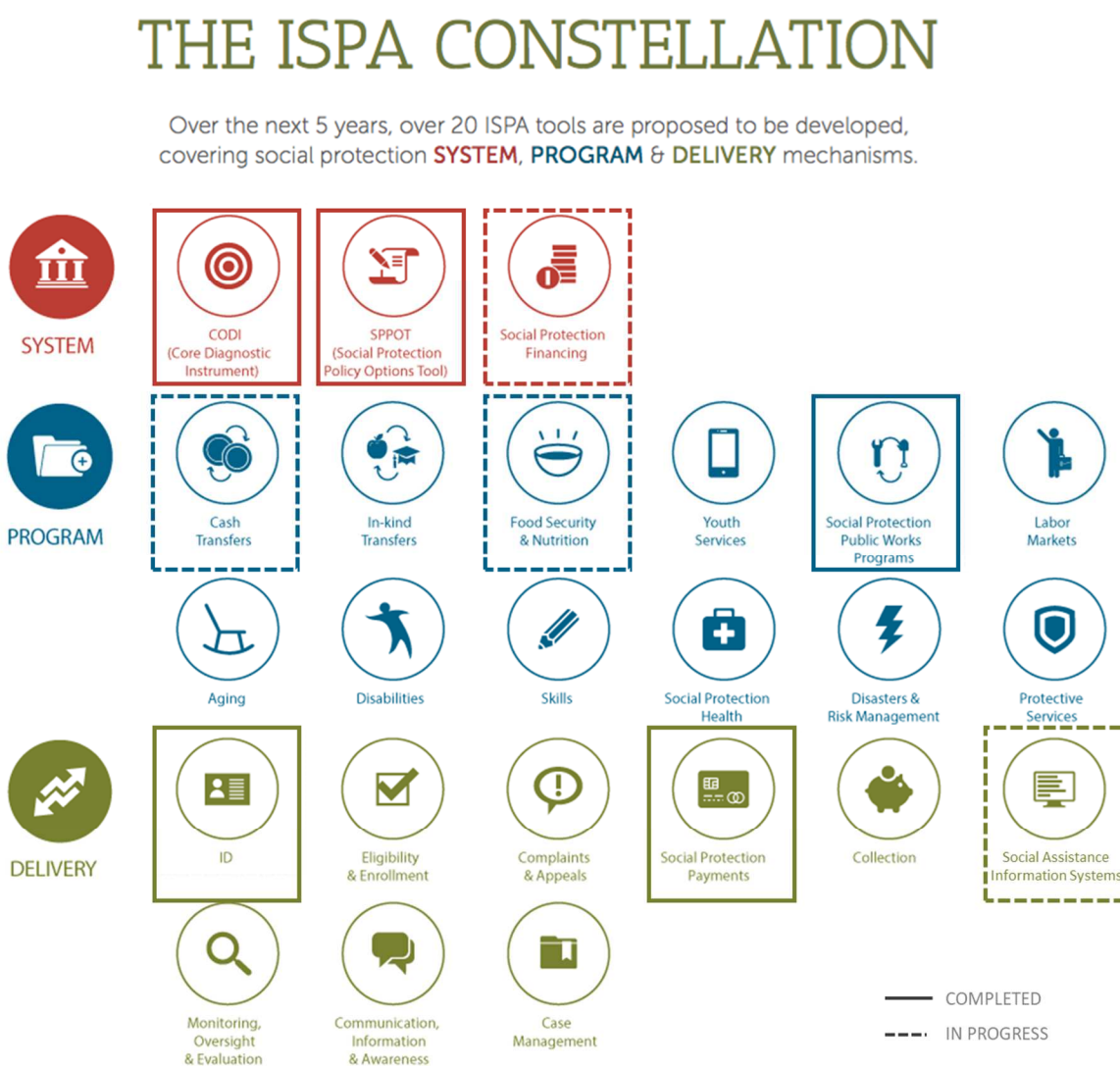
Four ISPA tools have been through the full process of development, piloting, revision and publication and are now completed: the Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI), the Public Works Program tool, the Identification Systems tool and the Social Protection Payments tool, and a further five are in the process of development. The Food Security and Nutrition and Social Protection Policy Options tools are nearing finalization (led by the FAO and ILO, respectively) having been successfully piloted, and three tools are in the process of development; Social Information Systems and Social Assistance Cash Transfers (both led by the World Bank Group) and Social Protection Financing (led by the ILO).

It was originally planned to include all nine ILO contingencies in the constellation, but this decision has since been revisited. Development of the Health tool has been put on hold due to the adequacy of existing tools in this area, and the planned Disability tool has been reconfigured and is currently under development as a cross cutting module providing a set of questions which can be used to mainstream disability into the existing tools, rather than

operating as a stand-alone tool. The Disability module will address the performance of disability-specific schemes as well as creating access to mainstream social protection for those with disabilities, and a similar module on gender is currently under development.

Each tool has a lead agency, usually one with significant expertise in the area. This lead agency takes responsibility for the development, country level piloting and finalization of each tool, committing the necessary staff and financial resources to ensure the tool development process is completed, with support from a working group of agencies with special interest and experience on the tool focus issue. The ICT participates in the process of tool development and provides support and guidance throughout, ensuring consistency across the tools and promoting in country buy-in. The organizations which contributed to the development of each of the completed tools and those under development are set out in Appendix 2.

Tool Content

Each tool follows a common structure with four components:

- What Matters Guidance Note
- Data Collection Framework
- Overview of Findings, and
- Country Report Outline

The *What Matters Guidance Note* lays the technical foundation for assessment, provides good practices from international experience, provides instructions to gather information and describes how the assessment is organized. The note also defines and justifies the agreed performance criteria against which activity in the area of each tool is reviewed. For example, the CODI tool has ten performance criteria: Inclusiveness, Adequacy, Appropriateness, Respect for Rights & Dignity, Governance & Institutional Capacity, Financial & Fiscal Sustainability, Coherence & Integration, Responsiveness, Cost effectiveness and Incentive compatibility.

The *Data Collection Framework* provides a systematic structure to gather the qualitative and quantitative information required.

The *Overview of Findings* assesses against the set criteria for each tool. Not all tools use the same criteria as this depends on the nature of their content but the definition of criteria is aligned across the tools to ensure consistency.

The overview of findings guides an analysis of performance against the selected criteria. ISPA tools recommend the presentation of findings in a summary matrix which gives each a 'score' for each criterion on a four point scale ranging from latent, emerging, moderate and advanced, according to the following definitions:

Latent: Significant attention needs to be paid to this dimension

Emerging: This dimension requires vigilance. Elements for effective performance are in place but gaps and constraints persist.

Moderate: Satisfactory performance, with most of the elements showing effective and efficient parameters.

Advanced: Highly satisfactory practice, with broad-based success in the examined elements.

While all the tools contain a matrix to summarize performance findings, the use of this matrix during country applications is optional.

The *Country Report Outline,* presents the findings, highlights strengths and weaknesses in relation to national goals and good international practice, summarizes the policy and institutional context and provides policy options to be used as a starting point for future dialogue between stakeholders. The development of recommendations is not formally part of the output, as it is recognized that different agencies may develop different recommendations in line with their own institutional mandates and priorities, but many governments request recommendations as part of the report.

Research Objectives

This review was guided by the five key research objectives set out in the TOR:[4]

- Review the process of tool development[5]
- Understand the application of the ISPA process in country and identify lessons learnt from implementation
- Identify outcomes and impacts
- Assess the usefulness of ISPA tools
- Suggest prioritised improvements on tools design and process of application

Detailed research questions were associated with each research objective, as set out in the table below.

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[4] While cost effectiveness questions were raised by several informants, this review does not consider the cost effectiveness or value for money of the initiative.

[5] Reviewing the process of tool development was not explicitly requested in TOR, but was added to the research objectives during initial discussion with the ISPA Coordination Team.

Table 1: Research Objectives and Associated Questions

Research Objective	Issues to Explore
Review the process of tool development	How are the tools developed?
	How effective was the process?
	What are recommendations for improving the process?
Understand the application of the ISPA process in country	Who initiated the process of application?
	Who implemented the application?
	Who participated in the process and in what way?
Identify lessons learnt from implementation	What worked well?
	Identify challenges faced in the application of the tools
Identify outcomes and impacts	Change in social protection policies/legislation, financing/budget allocations policy processes and programs (design and implementation) at country level
	Communication, M&E, programming, delivery modalities
	Coordination/harmonisation among ISPA agencies at i)country, ii) region and iii) HQ
	Coordination within the social protection sector at country level and at program level
	Coordination between ISPA agencies and governments at country level
Usefulness of ISPA tools	Usefulness of ISPA tools for partner countries
	Usefulness of ISPA tools for DPs
Suggest prioritised improvements on tools design and process of application - what needs to be improved in the design, implementation arrangements, and communication and the Results Framework (RF) (tools and processes)	How to refine the design of the tools and the implementations arrangements
	How to create, generate, and disseminate knowledge from the ISPA experience both externally with countries and internally within the agencies.
	How to link the work of ISPA with other initiatives
	How to use ISPA to promote the SDGs/2030 Agenda in collaboration with other DPs, focus on UN and support progress towards SDG goal 1.3 (Social Protection Systems development) and indicator 1.3.1

This review addresses each of these questions in turn.

Methodology

The key questions to be explored in the review were identified through discussion of the TOR with the ISPA Coordination Team, and then a methodology was designed to elicit insights into these issues. This entailed a mixed methods approach combining:

> Review of the ISPA website
>
> Review of the ISPA tools
>
> Design and implementation of an e-survey
>
> Review of ISPA application reports
>
> Implementation of ten country level tool application case studies
>
> In depth key informant interviews

Details of the research approach, detailing which approaches were used for which research questions are set out in Appendix 3.

Report Analysis

Twenty two of the completed ISPA application reports were reviewed to identify the key learning points relating to the tools, the application process and outcomes.[6] These reports were sourced and supplied by the ICT for analysis, as only three reports are publically available on the ISPA site.

Review of ISPA Web Site and Tools

The online material for each of the four tools available on the ISPA website (CODI, Public Works, Payments and ID) was reviewed, including the tools and associated documents, and site usage was noted, based on trends in web traffic and tool downloads.   Data on site usage was supplied by the ICT.

Electronic survey

An electronic survey asking about ISPA tool awareness, usage and general perceptions among personnel working on social protection within key development agencies was implemented during May and June 2019 by the ICT using the Survey Monkey platform. This approach was adopted at the request of the ICT. The survey was sent to 1191 recipients on the ILO and World Bank Group internal social protection distribution lists, together with the ISPA and SPIAC-B distribution lists. The sample was not representative of the ISPA group (there was a much greater concentration of World Bank Group and ILO staff than members of other ISPA agencies) or the wider social protection community, but did enable a large number of potential tool users to be approached. The response rate was 8% (99 responses), with 47 of the 99 respondents having been directly involved in an ISPA application.

The distribution of the respondents is shown in figure 6 below by institution type. Eighty percent of the respondents were from bi- and multilateral development agencies, 50% from the ILO and World Bank Group.

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[6] The reports consulted are listed in Appendix 4

Figure 6: Survey Respondents by Institution
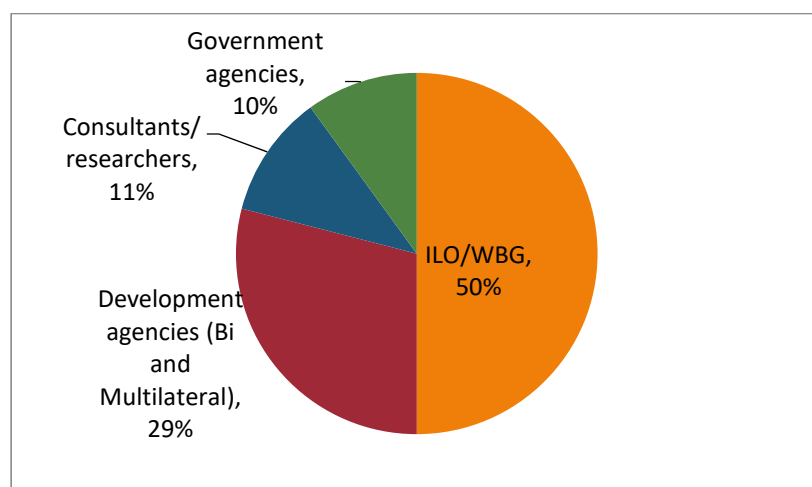
Source: ICT

The results of a previous Survey Monkey about ISPA mainstreaming and dissemination, implemented by the ISPA Coordination Team in 2017, were also reviewed.[7]

Case Studies

Ten case studies of ISPA tool applications at country level were carried out as part of the review. These studies involved the implementation of semi-structured interviews with those involved in the application of the tools in each country. The case studies were selected from among 32 completed pilot and full applications using the criteria of regional representation and a diversity of lead implementing agencies. The number of applications sampled for each tool reflected the frequency of application of each tool, as indicated in table 3 below.

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[7] The 'ISPA agency self-monitoring survey on ISPA tool mainstreaming and dissemination' had only 37 respondents, of whom 10 were from the World Bank Group, and 16 the ILO. Overall sixty percent of respondents were from headquarters and 46% from an agency that had applied an ISPA tool (nine had applied CODI, 13 the PWP tool, one the ID tool and four the Payments tool).

Table 2: Country Application Case Studies

Tool	Total Applications	Sample size	Case Study Applications
CODI	18	3	The Gambia Zimbabwe The Philippines
Payments	18	3	Tanzania Myanmar Jamaica
PWP	4	1	Tanzania
ID	2	1	Peru
SPPOT	2	1	Togo
FSN	2	1	Paraguay

It was planned to interview six representatives for each case study, including government staff, the implementing agency, other development agencies and civil society agencies working in the sector, and, where the application was carried out by external actors, the national and/or international consultants who led the application. These informants were identified with advice from the ICT and the lead implementing agency.

The number of informants finally identified for each application ranged between four and 10. Out of 50 invited informants, 30 responded positively and of these 27 were interviewed during June and July 2019. Unfortunately national government staff only responded to the invitation to participate in four of the 10 case studies (Paraguay, Zimbabwe, The Gambia, and Tanzania). Two thirds of the respondents for the country application interviews were development agency staff (either task team leaders (TTL) in country, or headquarters staff who participated in the application), and of these two thirds were World Bank Group staff, with the remainder from the ILO, FAO and GIZ. Six international consultants who applied the tools were also interviewed. The institutional origin of the case study respondents is illustrated in figure 7.

A semi-structured interview framework was developed for use with the key informants in the application case studies and the key informants which explored the key review questions using an open-ended format. The interviews were conducted by telephone and took between 45 minutes and one hour. The interviews were recorded for research purposes, but in order to promote frank disclosure the informants were assured that no responses would be attributed and all findings would be anonymised in the final report.

Key Informant Interviews
Key informant interviews were planned with members of all the agencies participating in the ISPA initiative and the development and application of the tools, as well as other major institutions working in the social protection sector. Interviews were conducted with representatives from the World Bank Group, the ILO, UNICEF, the EC, FAO, WFP the Finnish Government, DFID and GIZ, as well as the social protection knowledge-sharing platform socialprotection.org and the international think tank Overseas Development Institute (ODI) as well as with other agencies that are not ISPA Partners but are key actors in the sector, namely; the consultancy Oxford

Policy Management (OPM), the EuropeAid initiative Advisory Service in Social Transfers (ASiST)[8], and the global partnership of humanitarian actors engaged in cash transfers Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP). ISSA (the International Social Security Association)[9] was also invited to participate given its mandate to bring together agencies working on social security provision, but no response was received.   The same semi structured research framework used for the case study informants was used also for the key informants.

Table 3: Key Informant Interview Participants (non case study)

Agency	Invitees	Interviewees
World Bank Group	9	7
ILO	10	9
UNICEF	2	1
EC	2	2
FAO	2	2
WFP	3	1
Finnish Government	1	1
DFID	2	1
GIZ	3	3
ISSA	1	0
Other actors	5	5
Total	**40**	**32**

In total 32 key informant interviews were completed with Development Partners and other agencies, and 27 with case study informants, making a total of 54 individual interviews.[10]

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[8] Advisory Service in Social Transfers (ASiST) was launched in 2012 by EuropeAid to support countries and EC staff (in headquarters and delegations) in the use of social transfers as a response to food and nutrition insecurity.

[9] ISSA is the principal international institution mandated to bring together social security agencies, government departments and organizations. It was founded under the auspices of the ILO in and the ISSA Secretariat is been based at the ILO headquarters. https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_176109/lang--en/index.htm

[10] Some informants served a double function as case study and also Development Partner informants.

SECTION TWO: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings are set out below, grouped according to the key questions set out in the TOR, namely: tool development, tool application, outcomes, usefulness and recommended improvements in tool design and application, together with an overview of tool applications, globally.

ISPA Implementation to Date

Before the performance of the tool development and tool application processes are reviewed and outcomes assessed, a summary overview of ISPA too applications to date is presented.

The lead agency is identified for each application, and the term 'interagency' is used when more than one agency jointly led the assessment, based on advice from the KII and the ICT. Two applications are included in which use of the tool was not requested by an ISPA agency, but was applied spontaneously by consultants implementing a donor funded review contracted by an international NGO. There may be more instances of such spontaneous use of the tools, in full or in part, but no data is available on this.

Compiling this summary data was problematic as there is no definitive repository of data on ISPA tool applications and there are some inconsistencies between different ISPA branded outputs on completed and ongoing applications.[11] The main reason for this is that the ISPA tools are provided on a public source basis, and as such users are not obliged to log tool usage, country applications or share data or results. Given this constraint, the application information used in this report was compiled on the basis of data from the Coordination Team, which was used to construct the usage figures set out in tables 4-7 below. These tables may not capture all uses by ISPA member agencies, or spontaneous usage by non INGOs or consultants who have downloaded and used the tools, in full or in part, for sector reviews and as such may underestimate the extent of usage.

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[11]See for example materials presented at the ISPA training event in Indonesia in March 2018 which report a set of completed and in progress applications which is not fully consistent with the information supplied by the ICT, reporting completed CODI applications also in Kurdistan, Oman and Myanmar (led by the World Bank) and 'in progress' applications which were not reported by the ICT http://ispatools.org/indonesia-training/public-works.pdf.

Table 4: Summary of ISPA Tool Applications (completed and underway) by County and Lead Agency (italics indicate applications in progress and parentheses indicate the lead agency)

Region	CODI	PWP	Payments	ID	SPPOT	FSN
Asia	Nepal (WB) Pakistan - Punjab (GIZ) Philippines (WB – initially interagency) Vietnam (GIZ – initially interagency) n=4		Indonesia (GIZ and WB) Myanmar (HELPAGE – spontaneous use) n=2			Cambodia (FAO) n=1
Africa	Central African Republic (WB) The Gambia (WB) Namibia (Finland) Nigeria (Save the Children – spontaneous use) Sudan (WB) Zimbabwe (UNICEF) n=6	Liberia (WB) Senegal (WB) Tanzania (Interagency) n=3	Angola (WB) Burundi (WB) Cabo Verde (WB) Cote d'Ivoire (WB) Ghana (WB) Lesotho (WB) Malawi (WB) Sao Tome e Principe (WB) Sudan (WB) Tanzania (Interagency) Zambia (WB) n=11		Senegal (ILO) Togo (ILO) n=2	
Latin America and the Caribbean	Belize (UNICEF/UNDP) Ecuador (WB) Guatemala (UNICEF/UNDP) n=3	El Salvador (WB) n=1	Dominica (WB) Grenada (WB) Jamaica (WB) Mexico (WB) St Vincent and Grenadines (WB) n=5	Peru (WB) n=1		Paraguay (FAO) n=1
E Europe	Uzbekistan (Interagency) n=1					
Mid East/North Africa	Iraq (WB) Kuwait (WB) Lebanon (UNICEF) Saudi Arabia (WB) n=4			Morocco (WB) n=1		Palestine – (FAO-) n=1

Source: ICT

In total there have been 32 completed applications of ISPA tools, and a further 15 are now nearing completion, making a total of 47. The overall frequency of tool applications is illustrated in figure 8 below;

Figure 7: Frequency of Tool Application
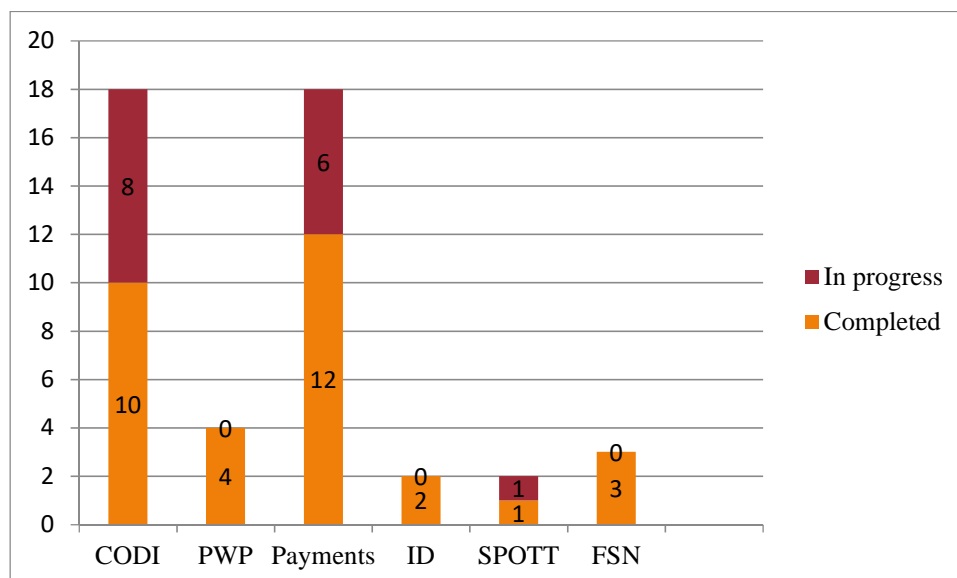
Of these CODI and Payments account for 18 each, significantly more than the other tools, with PWP accounting for four applications, FSN three and ID and SPPOT two each, see table 5.

Table 5: ISPA Application Summary Table

Tool	CODI	PWP	Payments	ID	SPPOT	FSN	Total
Completed	10	4	12	2	1	3	32
In progress	8	0	6	0	1	0	15
Total for each tool	18	4	18	2	2	3	47

The low application rate for FSN and SPPOT is due to the fact that they are still in their pilot phases, and the ID tool was only applied twice before a tool developed by the World Bank Group's 2018 *Guidelines for ID4D Diagnostics* was developed under the *Identification for Development* (ID4D) initiative.[12] Informants reported that

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[12] The World Bank Group's ID for Development (ID4D) initiative contributes to the development of robust and inclusive digital identification systems through analytics, assessments, and financing and conducts assessments of its identity ecosystem using the Guidelines for ID4D Diagnostics (published in 2018). ID4D has implemented over 30 country diagnostics facilitating engagement and dialogue within countries. The work of the ID4D Initiative is strategically guided by an Advisory Council which also promotes the vision of services and rights for all persons through robust, inclusive and responsible identification systems. The Advisory Council includes a World Bank Chief Executive Officer and a Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and it is funded through a Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), established with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2016

this newer tool, based on the ISPA ID tool, had superseded the ISPA tool, extending beyond social protection to facilitate a diagnostic analysis of the wider identity ecosystem to inform the development of a foundational (cross-sectoral) approach to registration and ID systems development.

Analysis of the regional distribution of applications indicates that the majority have occurred in Africa at 47%, with 23% in LAC, 13% in Asia and the Middle East/North Africa and only 2% in East and Central Europe. The PWP tool has only been applied in Africa and LAC, see table 6.

Table 6: Regional Distribution of ISPA Applications (parenthesis indicates ongoing application)

Region	CODI	PWP	Payments	ID	SPPOT	FSN	Total
Asia	2 (2)	0	2	0	0	1	5 (2)
Africa	4 (2)	3	5 (6)	0	1 (1)	0	13 (9)
LAC	1 (2)	1	5	1		1	9 (2)
E Europe	(1)	0	0	0	0	0	(1)
Mid East/North Africa	3 (1)	0	0	1	0	1	5 (1)

Tool applications have been led by eight different development agencies, and the frequency of agency application is set out in table 7. The World Bank Group has led 29 of the 47 applications (62%), while no other agency has led more than three tool applications. This largely due to the fact that the World Bank Group has a more extensive geographical spread of activities and a significantly larger budget than the other participating agencies, and a broader institutional mandate in relation to social protection systems development, while many of the other agencies have a more specialized interest in specific aspects of provision. Agencies tend to lead the application of tools in which they have played a lead development role and/or are of particular relevance to their institutional mandates; FAO have led the three FSN applications, and the ILO the two SPPOT applications.

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together with the Omidyar Network, the Australian Government and DFID. The MDTF provides a platform for partners support the development of foundational ID systems with a common vision and shared actions, and aims to shape global approaches and a shared vision on identification. (https://id4d.worldbank.org

Table 7: Frequency of Agency Leads for ISPA Tool Application

Lead Agency	CODI	PWP	Payments	ID	SPPOT	FSN	Total
FAO						3	3
Finland	1						1
GIZ	2						2
GIZ&WB			1				1
HELPAGE			1				1
ILO					2		2
UNICEF	2						1
UNICEF/UNDP	2						2
WB	9	3	15	2			29
Interagency	1	1	1				3
Save the Children	1						1
Total applications	18	4	18	2	2	3	47

Source: ICT

UNICEF has taken the role of lead agency for a tool application twice, and twice has co-led with UNDP, all for CODI applications. ILO has led tool applications on two occasions, trialing the new SPPOT tool. Bilateral actors (Finland and GIZ) led the application the CODI in three instances, and the INGOs HelpAge and Save the Children led one 'spontaneous' application each (Payments and CODI respectively).[13] This participation by Finland and GIZ represented a strategic engagement to promote development agency harmonization in the social protection sector, and World Bank Group-ILO coordination in particular, in line with their longstanding engagement in the development of the ISPA concept and their commitment to promote the ISPA approach as a means to address the G20 aid effectiveness challenge.

While many of the 47 applications which are completed or underway entailed varying degrees of interagency collaboration, three were described as 'interagency' by the ISPA Coordination Team inasmuch as they were jointly implemented by more than one agency; the Uzbekistan CODI application which is in progress, and the Tanzania Payments pilot and PWP application. Three applications which had started as interagency initiatives changed to single agency applications by the time of completion, and these were ultimately led by the World Bank Group, GIZ and FAO. The distribution of ISPA tool applications across agencies and the concentration of activity by the World Bank Group is discussed further below.

Perceptions of the Tools

The survey and interviews elicited a number of consistent comments which held true across the range of tools and also some which were specific to individual tools. The findings are summarized in this section and explored in more detail in the tool development and tool application sections below. Given the informants were highly

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[13] The use of the payments tool by the International Non Governmental Organisation (INGO) HELPAGE was done at the recommendation of the consultant, who was familiar with the tool from previous work and felt that it would be the most useful tool to carry out the brief, rather than being initiated by the INGO, which was not familiar with the instrument.

heterogeneous in terms of institutional membership, seniority, field and HQ experience, technical knowledge, understanding of the broader social protection discourse and familiarity with higher level institutional and ideological debates, a frequency analysis of the findings would not be an appropriate way to summaries or present the findings. To address this challenge findings are reported which are: i) largely consistent across informants, ii) based on specialized technical or institutional knowledge or experience relating to the specific tool, and iii) which reflect country level user experiences. Whether perceptions converge or diverge among different groups is reported in the text.

Throughout the research significant differences in perspective were found between those individuals involved in the management and development of the tools in headquarters and the other informants who were not so directly involved. Even within the ISPA agencies significantly different responses were noted from informants directly involved in developing or managing the tools, and those who were not. The path-breaking and innovative function of the tools as promoters of interagency coherence and collaboration was perceived more strongly among the former than among downstream 'users' within development agencies, or governments, who were more concerned with practical application related issues, and reported less impact in terms of interagency collaboration. The role of the ISPA initiative in interagency consensus building and dialogue was highlighted by individuals involved in tool development (typically specialists working in agency head quarters) who presented it as a major reason for engagement in the initiative as it offered significant 'value added', but this perspective was not widely found outside this group of actors.

The comprehensiveness of the tools was widely recognized as a strength of all the tools, and as such were amenable to use by agencies with a range of mandates. Also, the fact that they have multiagency endorsement means that they are perceived as offering a credible, technically sound and 'state of the art' set of issues for consideration and result from a 'quality assured' process, by governments and smaller development actors, who looked to the tools as valuable references. However, this comprehensiveness and inclusivity also led to the dominant critical comment on the tools, which was almost universal; that the tools are overly complex and as a result difficult, time consuming and costly to apply. This critique was consistent over time, relating to both pilot and final versions, despite the simplifications which occurred as a result of initial piloting, and across all the tools, although to a greater degree in relation to the CODI. This critique was mentioned by almost all informants and survey respondents, including staff from the agencies which had developed the tools. This issue is explored in more detail in the development and application sections below. Overall, the technically focused delivery tools (ID systems and Payments) were perceived as more objective, less subject to interagency contestation, and most practically useful, particularly at country level, as they were perceived as offering significant value added.

The most frequently occurring comments and those provided by specialists in each area are summarized in the table below for each tool, together with data on tool usage based on the frequency analysis above.

Table 8: Summary of Major Comments on Completed Tools by Interviewees

Tool	Key Review Findings
Core Diagnostic Instrument	Very useful as a comprehensive reference resource for program and system appraisal Useful as a reference for program design Too long and complex to apply in full as an appraisal tool Difficulty gathering all required information Not all material required by the tool perceived as relevant/ necessary Shortened/simplified versions created in most applications Shortened version consistently requested 18 applications (9/18 World Bank Group)
Public Works Program	Useful as a reference document Some material required by the tool is perceived as redundant Instrument in need of updating Four applications (3/4 World Bank Group) Since piloting in 2013 only used twice (Senegal 2015 and Tanzania 2016)
Identification Systems	Useful as a technical reference Interagency identity gives credibility Perceived as technical and objective Sector specific (functional) rather than cross sectoral (foundational) identified as shortcoming Two applications (2/2 World Bank Group) Formed the basis for the World Bank Group *Guidelines for ID4D Diagnostics* Superseded by ID4D
Payments	Highly valued as current and comprehensive technical reference Perceived as comprehensive framework to guide appraisal of context and viable delivery options Interagency identity gives credibility 18 applications (16/18 World Bank Group)

Several informants identified some overlap in terms of objectives, content and country level application/process between the CODI and the UN's Social Protection Assessment-Based National Dialogue (ABND) tool (launched globally in 2014), which was developed by the ILO and is currently in use by the ILO and other UN agencies, and uncertainty regarding the respective roles of the ABND and the CODI.[14] The ABND provides a standardized methodology to conduct assessments and national dialogue exercises to facilitate participatory assessments of existing provision, similarly to the CODI, but it goes beyond an exclusively diagnostic function and also includes the elaboration of costed scenarios for extending provisions in line with the four social protection floor guarantees. The ABND tool was developed prior to the launch of the ISPA initiative and was intended to support UN agencies to 'deliver as one' on social protection while providing coherent support to member States (ILO, n.d) in much the same way that the CODI was intended to harmonize Development Partner coordination. The ILO has used the ABND for several years for sector review, and has not yet led an application of the CODI. The ILO is currently the lead agency for the development of a new ISPA tool on Social Protection Policy Options (SPPOT), that builds directly on the ABND and will go beyond the CODI collection framework to include scenario planning in terms

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[14] *The ABND is a joint United Nations tool to support the implementation of social protection floors and the Sustainable Development Goals which was formally launched UN-wide in 2014, following joint-UN ABND exercises in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe in the preceding years.*

of costing, fiscal space and impact analyses for different social protection policy options. SPPOT is intended to complement the diagnostic focus of CODI, by exploring policy options with the government.

Tool Components

Each ISPA tool includes five components; the 'What Matters' Guidance Note, the Data Collection Framework, the Overview of Findings, the Country Report and Implementation Guidelines, see box 2.

Box 2: Components of Each ISPA Tool

'What Matters' Guidance

- Lays technical foundation for assessment

- Provides good practices from international experience

- Provides instructions to gather information

- Describes how the assessment is organized

Data Collection Framework

- Gathers qualitative and quantitative information

Overview of Findings

- Assesses against the agreed criteria on a four point scale

Country Report

- Presents the findings

- Highlights strengths and weaknesses in relation to good international practice

- Summarizes complex landscape of policies and institutions

- Provide policy options to be used as jumping off point for future dialogue between stakeholders

Implementation Guidelines

- Outlines the process of application of ISPA tools from start to completion

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Source: https://ispatools.org/all-tools/

In terms of their function and content the *'What Matters' Guidance Note* explains the overall logic of the tool, in particular the data collection framework and assessment matrix, provides information on the conceptual background and how to use the different parts of the tool. The structure of the note takes the form of an introduction that defines key concepts and terminology relevant in the context of the tool and outlines the overall approach, a definition and explanation of key performance criteria that will be used throughout the assessment (developed on the basis of the CODI criteria), and sections that each discuss key areas for assessment, depending on the subject matter of the tool.

The *Data Collection Framework* sets out the quantitative and qualitative data needed to carry out the assessment and a format for presenting it. It is structured by the key areas identified in the *Guidance Note* and is designed to collect the information necessary to make an assessment against the performance criteria. For each area, likely sources of information are indicated and these are 'tagged' with the relevant performance criteria.

The *Overview of Findings* provides an assessment matrix in table format which sets out the performance criteria and indicators against which to assess them, using a four point scale. *The Country Report* sets out the standardized structure for country assessment reports. This is structured by the key areas identified for each tool and includes an introduction to the subject matter of the tool and the country context, the assessment overview tables, and a discussion which draw conclusions on the strengths and weaknesses and performance of the issue under review and may provide recommendations.

The *Implementation Guidelines* explain how the tool is to be applied at country level through a participatory approach that emphasizes country ownership, but acknowledge that this approach may need to be adapted as necessary for the purposes of the particular application.

Overall, interview informants found the *Guidance Note* to be the most valued and useful component of the tools. This was due to the fact that these were recognized as being formulated on the basis of internationally agreed good practices, standards and principles and approved by sector experts and as such provided a comprehensive, authoritative and objective overview of the key issues. They were reported to be particularly valuable as reference documents, setting out and defining key terms and promoting a common understanding of key concepts which was agreed across agencies. This was found to be appreciated in terms of educating actors working in the sector who may not be familiar with the issues in detail, or up to date with good practice, and promoting informed sector discussion, when applying ISPA tools. It was also noted to be useful in terms of informing program design and evaluation more widely.

The *Data Collection Framework,* (widely referred to as the 'questionnaire'), was highlighted by some informants as useful as source material for planning general research as well as tool implementation, but it was widely perceived as '*lengthy, complicated, and time consuming*' (case study informant) to complete. The excel format of the CODI and public works questionnaires was reported not to be user friendly by country level users, as it was hard to adapt and modify. The data requirements for the CODI and PWP in particular were generally reported by users to be overly onerous in relation to the insights offered by the tool, with the length and detail required for the CODI data collection framework (reported as '*extending to 13 sheets and 500 questions*' (case study informant) being a particular cause of concern. It was reported that the data requirements entailed gathering and entering some data which was not considered relevant or valuable, and was highly time consuming, and in most cases the questionnaires were not fully completed due to time and data availability constraints.

The need to adapt questionnaires to local realities, including the removal of questions without relevance to the specific context, was perceived as a challenge and in one instance it was reported that;

> '*the methodology and questionnaire of the tool itself appeared overwhelming at the technical level to the Task Force initially*' (Palestine FSN Report)

The *Overview of Findings* (also known as the 'assessment matrix') was identified by survey respondents as a particularly helpful component of the tools, who cited it as a primary reason for choosing to apply a tools in the future. Its value in guiding a comprehensive appraisal was widely noted, although country level users reported

that the conditions for each criterion were textually complex and difficult to use, and the adoption of clearer language was requested. The assessment matrix was used very differently across case studies; in some cases it was completed using a participatory process in order to stimulate participation, discussion, analysis and ownership by government and other development actors, and in others it was completed exclusively by the consultant applying the tool with varying degrees of subsequent validation by national stakeholders.

The Country Report presents the results of the assessment, providing an appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the social protection system and is intended to enable the identification of entry-level reform options (based on global best practice) for programs, policies, and implementation systems. No specific comments were received on the Country Report except that the omission of recommendations, a deliberate choice by ISPA in order to avoid mandate or ideological driven contestation among agencies was identified by several informants as a weakness, as it meant that a subsequent process was required to develop practical program options in response to the analysis, in line with the ISPA recommendation that 'Agency-specific recommendations may be formulated in separate and supplementary technical reports and policy notes'.

The concern to ensure structural consistency across the different tools in terms of the structure and sequencing of the components (guidance note, assessment matrix etc) was perceived by a few informants to be a constraint inasmuch as it limited the working group's flexibility to develop lighter or differently structured tools which were felt to be more appropriate for their purpose. For example, while the lengthy *Guidance Note* was identified as an excellent resource, some informants suggested that it would be more suitable as an annex for reference, rather than being presented as the first component of an integrated tool, as its length and comprehensiveness could be a disincentive for use by national actors, and contributed to the need for support from external consultants in the application process.

Overall, the main comment from users (governments, ISPA agencies managing tool application in-country and consultants) was that the tools were overly complex and not readily usable in their full form - except the two delivery tools (ID and Payments) - although even the Payments tool was considered to be more complex (as a result of the inclusive interagency development process) than necessary. Users called for the simplification of all the components and a shortening of the whole exercise, as the need to adapt and simplify the tools in each context was felt to be complex and inefficient, requiring the use of skills and knowledge which were not readily available in country. This challenge was anticipated by those leading the development of the tools, who recognized that the decision to develop generic instruments which were universally applicable, would require adaptation to each specific country context and application, illustrating the trade-off between comprehensiveness and universality of the instruments, and the expertise required for effective country level application. The ICT also highlighted the challenge in finding the correct balance between light, easy to apply tools, and ensuring technical soundness and interagency inclusivity in terms of content.

Tool Development

The process of tool development is specified in the Terms of Reference for the Working Groups, which outline the production cycle. Once the Executive Group has approved a proposed new tool, the cycle starts with the identification of a lead agency and the constitution of working groups through invitation of interested SPIAC-B members and other relevant partners. This is then followed by a series of virtual and face to face consultations, sometimes starting tool development from scratch, and sometimes based on a pre-existing tool or draft. This

process entails discussion and the contribution of comments from WG members, followed by the consolidation of comments and then drafting, revision, piloting, further revision and finalization, with the process ending when the tool is signed off by the ISPA Executive Group, and made publicly available on the website.

This process was widely celebrated by those involved and senior agency actors, for creating an opportunity for interagency dialogue and promoting institutional understanding and cooperation in the social protection sector. The contribution of the tool development process to improvement in the relationship between the World Bank Group and UN agencies in particular was highlighted by multiple informants, with several smaller bi- and multi-lateral agencies reporting that the primary incentive for their own institutional participation in the process was to promote UN-World Bank Group dialogue, and there was a feeling among such agencies that this goal had been largely achieved. Agencies with fewer financial and institutional resources were welcomed into the process on an equal footing with the large multilaterals when they had particular expertise to share and this was appreciated by the smaller agencies as it gave them an opportunity to share and mainstream their own expertise by incorporating it into multiagency tools in a way which would not otherwise have been possible.

The 'lead agency' approach, which meant that each tool has a sponsor who lead the process of tool development, was appreciated. The efficiency of starting the tool production process by incorporating materials which had already been partly developed by the lead agency, and then shaping them into interagency outputs through a process of engagement was praised (as with for example material previously produced under SPARCS or the ABND) and considered superior to starting from scratch with a multi agency drafting process. However, the cost of this approach was that the tools were in some cases perceived as tools which were closely identified with one particular agency. The fact that the CODI built on earlier World Bank Group work under the SPARCS initiative for example was noted by several head quarters informants, and many considered the CODI, and ISPA outputs generally, to be 'World Bank tools' given the particularly high profile role played by the World Bank Group in their development and subsequent application, despite the multiagency nature of their development. The fact that they were not perceived as 'belonging' to the wider group of actors who developed them or ISPA members in general, and were instead tied to one particular institution, was reported to be a disincentive for wider adoption.

Two respondents noted critically that a fully developed tool proposed by one ISPA agency to become an ISPA tool had not been accepted and questioned the rationale for this decision, but the ICT noted that the reason for this was that to be an ISPA tool, material needs to go through the agreed ISPA multiagency development and quality control process. This rationale for granting ISPA tool status was not known or fully understood by all informants.

The process of tool development was reported to be inclusive but universally criticized as overly complex and lengthy. While the rationale for the participatory approach was understood, and the benefits noted, all informants involved in the process argued that participation had a high cost in terms of staff time, and several argued that this was not commensurate with the benefits of the tools ultimately developed. The processes for the development of the delivery tools (Payments and ID) was subject to the same criticism of a lengthy and somewhat unregulated process, but this was less severe than for the other tools, particularly CODI, reflecting the more technical/objective, less contested and ideological nature of the contents and smaller group of agencies involved in the delivery tools.

The ICT were commended for facilitating the tool development processes well, but the process itself was reported to be too open and lacking in controls, inasmuch as there was no process or criteria for governing the inclusion or exclusion of material. It was widely reported by those who had participated in the tool development process that each agency added inputs according to their own institutional mandates, and that in the absence of mechanisms

for controlling length, or balancing the addition of new materials with the removal of other content, the result was tools that were lengthy, insufficiently focused and not readily usable. The consensus-based approach to tool development was considered positive for inter-agency relations, but was also felt to be detrimental to the user-friendliness of the tools, and several informants suggested that more strategic guidance in the development process would have resulted in better tools. The review found that many of the agencies which participated in the Working Groups, with the objective of mainstreaming their own particular institutional expertise and concerns, had little incentive to consider the usability or practicality of the resulting tools, as they did not intend to apply them; tool usage is primarily limited to the World Bank and the lead agencies, and most WG participating agencies have not used the tools to which they had contributed.   Inasmuch as the objective of ISPA was 'to ensure coherence in programming approaches, that tools are technically sound, and that certain principles are mainstreamed into each tool'[15] the process was a success, but there are trade-offs in terms of the lack of a mechanism to ensure that the tools are ultimately user friendly and concise.

Overall some informants felt that the inclusiveness of the process without adequate leadership or controls, rendered the resulting tools sub-optimal.

In terms of future tool development most informants who expressed an opinion questioned the rationale for the production of the anticipated constellation of 24 tools, particularly the program tools. It was suggested that rather than continuing the ISPA initiative in this way, developing a growing set of tools, an alternative focus could be on updating or improving the existing tools, increased dissemination and country application work, and supporting data gathering at country level. The reason given by several informants for not endorsing an expansion of program tools was that this approach risked fragmenting appraisal work in the sector and driving a silo rather than systems approach, running counter to the social protection systems development focus of most ISPA agencies. It was suggested that the subjects raised in the program tools should be incorporated/mainstreamed into a revised CODI tool, rather than each being addressed through a separate instrument and that there was a risk that ISPA tools addressing cross cutting issues (gender, FSN etc) might result in duplication rather than mainstreaming;

> *it is important that this analysis is integrated to other research and policy on FSN and built upon rather than duplicated (e.g. as part of a review of the food security sector or impact evaluations of social protection programs). (*Palestine FSN Report)

The criteria and process for agreeing the development of new ISPA tools were not felt to be transparent and were not known to informants outside the ICT and senior World Bank Group managers, and concerns were expressed by informants that the approach might be supply rather than demand driven. While ISPA EG and SPIAC-B members are generally well informed about ISPA processes, the review found that understanding of the institutional, conceptual and decision making aspects of ISPA was less well understood among those outside this group

While the Working Group Terms of Reference requires a 'periodic review' of each tool, and the CT is mandated to ensure a revision after four years or 15 applications,[16] the lack of a formal process for tool updating and renewal after completion was noted as a greater concern than developing a wider range of tools, as was the lack of funds to support Working Group activity in this regard, with one tool being described as '*dormant*' by a Working Group

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[15] ICT, pers comm
[16] ISPA Working Group Terms of Reference.

member due to the lack of resources and institutional process to keep it updated and relevant. This was presented as a potential challenge to the future relevance of the ISPA tools more widely.

Tool Application

This section examines the ISPA process in country, examining what worked well, the challenges faced in the application of the tools, and identifies the key lessons learnt from implementation.   The ISPA documentation explains that tools may be implemented in three different forms:

- Self Assessment – A Government may decide to complete an assessment on its own.
- Demand-Driven – A Government may contact any of the international agencies involved in the ISPA initiative and request support for the application of tools.
- Supply-Driven – A Development Partner may propose to support a government in implementing a particular tool.
  (https://ispatools.org/all-tools/)

The informants reported that the tools were not yet sufficiently well known for governments to implement them directly (self assessment) or request them by name (demand-driven). All the case study applications reviewed were supply-driven, with either the Development Partner or their consultant identifying an ISPA tool as the appropriate instrument for the required assessment, which was either requested from the government or carried out to inform the Development Partners themselves.

The application of ISPA tools is structured into five phases: i) preparation for the ISPA assessment; ii) data and information collection; iii) consolidation and assessment; iv) report finalization and v) policy dialogue. The Implementation Guidelines (IG) estimate that a full application of CODI can be completed in eight months, although this may vary depending on the complexity and comprehensiveness of the social protection system and the availability of relevant data, and it is likely that the other tools could be completed in significantly less time.

The process of tool application is outlined in the IG, and entails a set of steps, which detail the anticipated participation from other actors, including ISPA agencies, government and stakeholder at each stage set out below, as summarized below, with participation in parenthesis ;

- Inception Meeting (Lead Agency and Government)
- International Development Partners Coordination (Lead Agency, ISPA Agencies)
- Establish Assessment Team (Lead Agency, ISPA Agencies and Government)
- Orientation Meeting (Lead Agency, ISPA Agencies and Government)
- Preparation of Stakeholder Consultations - Timing & Logistics (Lead Agency and Government)
- In-country Training on CODI Components & Assessment Criteria (Lead Agency and Government)
- Pre-population of Data Collection Framework & Desk Review (Lead Agency and Government)
- Pre-Field Mission Meeting (Lead Agency and Government)
- Initial Kick Off Meeting with Stakeholders (Lead Agency and Government)
- Bilateral Meetings with Key Informants, Site Validation of Information and Collection of Pending Information (Lead Agency, Government and Other Stakeholders)
- Site Visits & Focus Groups with Beneficiaries (Lead Agency)

- Completion of Overview of Findings & Interpretation of Findings (Lead Agency)
- Debriefing of Preliminary Findings to the Government Lead Agency & the Steering Committee (Lead Agency and Government)
- Consultative (multi-day) Workshop (Lead Agency, Government and Other Stakeholders)
- Consolidation of Assessment Findings in Country Report (Lead Agency)
- Inputs from SC & Other Stakeholders for Final Version of the Country Report (Lead Agency and Government)
- Use of the Assessment to Foster Policy Dialogue (Government)

(https://ispatools.org/tools/CODI-Implementation-Guidelines.pdf)

Five principles are included to guide application; i) ISPA tools should be led by qualified staff in the subject matter, ii) ISPA tools should be adapted to national circumstances, objectives & interpretation, iii) the implementation of ISPA tools should be based on broad stakeholder participation to ensure wide ownership, iv) the implementation of ISPA tools should be adequately planned, and v) ISPA tools should be implemented periodically and can be complemented by other specialized ISPA tools.

Informants were asked open ended questions about the application process and the principles, and findings relating to each phases are summarized below.

The Preparation phase for ISPA assessments prior to implementation was identified as being critical for successful tool application and it was noted that this required significant inputs in terms of management and oversight of in-country work and often the engagement of national or international consultants to carry out initial data collection and review. This process also ideally entailed the process of promoting national government and Development Partner buy-in, which was not always successful, largely due to capacity constraints relating to both personnel availability, workload and skills shortages, and also in some cases due to lack of institutional incentives to participate.

Data and information collection was identified as the major challenge and in none of the case studies were the full range of items included in the data collection framework actually gathered. In many instances the requisite data was either not readily available and took significant time and resources to identify, was held by government actors not involved in the process, or was not available at all. While identifying information and data gaps is a key part of the of ISPA analysis, attempting to log data availability and gather the range of data required by the tools was reported to be a very time consuming process which extended over many months. Most of the tools were simplified after piloting to address concerns relating to their complexity and length, but even the finalized tools were still perceived as requiring data which was either not available or perceived as redundant in terms of program analysis, and so were modified *ad hoc* by implementers. There was some concern that significant sectoral knowledge was required to make good decisions about modification of the data collection process, and that this was not always available among the implementers, resulting in a request for further streamlined questionnaires.

In several instances the TTL for the Development Partners commissioning applications significantly underestimated the time and financial costs of tool application and the inputs required for the preparatory and data collection phases due to lack of familiarity with the ISPA tool application process and how it differed from the program assessment approaches with which they were more familiar, in terms of the data and participation requirements;

Development Partners I worked with do not consider the necessary duration for good results of CODI at government level. They use it as a usual assessment tool, just to provide information. Process for validation and ownership are not respected because it is not their primary goal. (Survey respondent)

This led to what was perceived by consultants as suboptimal implementation of the tools due to inadequately budgeted applications with an inadequate time frame and limited participation.

The consolidation and assessment phase was carried out in different ways depending on the context, the number of agencies participating, the resources available and by whom it was implemented. In most cases it was led by external consultants. In a couple of the case studies the identification of key findings and preparation of the matrix overview of findings was carried out in a participatory way with the national government, other national stakeholders and with other Development Partners, in line with the implementation guidelines, but it was more often carried out primarily by external consultants, then shared with government, other national stakeholders and the rest of the development community.

Report finalization was in some instances a challenge inasmuch as the implications of the findings were in several case studies contested by between different Development Partners or between Development Partners and consultants in line with institutional mandates and ideological orientations, which were beyond the ability of the tools to resolve.   Where the reports covered sensitive national challenges or data, tensions in report finalization were also identified, resulting in the reports not being shared beyond the implementing agency and government, excluding other Development Partners working in the sector nationally. These contentions and sensitivities delayed and in some instances inhibited report sharing altogether and to date only three of the 32 completed ISPA reports are available on the ISPA website and accessible to domestic and international actors working on social protection.[17]

Overall, while the guidelines were not intended to be prescriptive or restrictive, a generally participatory process which was anticipated in order to fulfill the principle of broad stakeholder participation to ensure wide ownership. A process entailing the development of a steering committee, a government focal point and the discussion of findings at multi-day multi-stakeholder workshops was proposed, but not adopted in most of the case studies, which instead took an approach which entailed lower levels of both Development Partner and Government engagement, with them taking a role primarily as informants, and being involved in briefings at the start and end points of the application.

While policy dialogue is noted as the fifth phase of application, the success of this phase was reported to be influenced by a range of factors including the inclusion of formal recommendations in the report, the perceived objectivity of the report conclusions, the degree of participation by governments and other Development Partners, the availability of the reports and. More policy dialogue was reported for the technical delivery tools than the other types of tools and respondents suggested that this was due to the more technical and less ideologically contested nature of the subject. In one case study the consultants changed the structure of the report to include recommendations, but these were then contested with the Development Partners. Where the tools were applied in the participatory way anticipated in the guidelines they were reported to have promoted greater discussion and learning with government and also among Development Partners, particularly when assessment matrix was completed jointly, but this was not usually the case, and the assessment and report finalization was mostly carried out with a high degree of consultant independence and then subsequently presented to government.   The

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[17] Currently available on the website are the Tanzania PWP report, the Tanzania Payments report and the Philippines CODI report.

implementation guidelines foresee that the launch of the report triggers a national dialogue on next steps, but the absence of a formal dissemination phase, and the lack of publicly available reports were identified as limiting such a dialogue at country level, also limiting awareness, interest and knowledge of the initiative among Development Partner staff and governments internationally.

Participation

In line with the guiding principle that the implementation of ISPA tools should be based on broad stakeholder participation to ensure wide ownership, the implementation guidelines recommends a significant level of participation by government and Development Partners;

> *The implementation of ISPA tools should be based on broad stakeholder participation to ensure wide ownership. ISPA tools under the leadership of the relevant SP government institution(s), should involve all relevant stakeholders engaged in SP and poverty reduction efforts: ministry in charge of the specific SP component to be assessed, other relevant ministries and agencies, development partners (DP), social partners, civil society organizations, academia, etc. The tools aim to facilitate improved cooperation not just among national institutions but also between different development partners and the tool application should be interagency, i.e. open to all interested international organizations.*
>
> (https://ispatools.org/tools/CODI-Implementation-Guidelines.pdf)

The Guidelines also specify that the implementing agency is responsible for ensuring the requisite levels of participation, see box 3.

Box 3: Recommended Participation in ISPA Implementation Process

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Implementation Guidelines - Participation

CODI, as any other ISPA tool, should be led by the country government and involve related national stakeholders, including relevant government ministries and agencies, social partners and civil society organizations, national social protection practitioners and experts, private sector, as well as international development partners (Annex A).

[T]he DP agency that received the government request or has offered to lead the assessment needs to coordinate with other international development agencies that have expressed their interest to participate in the assessment or that have strong presence in the particular country.

Source:https://ispatools.org/tools/CODI-What-Matters.pdf and https://ispatools.org/tools/CODI-Implementation-Guidelines.pdf

The guidelines however are not intended to be prescriptive and, as noted above in the comments on each of the phases, this approach was not widely adopted by implementing agencies, in terms of the anticipated levels of government, Development Partner and Civil Society participation. Most applications were initiated by Development Partners, rather than governments, and led by external actors, often international consultants or Development Partner staff, with limited levels of government participation which was often limited to attendance at initial and final briefings, and inputting as key informant. Case study interviewees suggested that this was due to both the significant time commitment that full participation in tool implementation would require - with the Cambodia application for example taking a total of 18 months from initiation to completion of the final report, including a series of intensive consultations and field visits which required significant government inputs - and the high levels of technical expertise necessary for meaningful participation, given the depth and complexity of

the instruments. Government staff reported that allocating time away from program implementation to participate more fully in an application was a challenge, as in the case of the FSN tool application in Palestine;

> *there were points in the process where these meetings [between government Task Team supporting the application and the consultancy team] appeared to increase the workload for members, with a large part of the burden shouldered by a handful of senior staff in the institutions concerned. This can also potentially impact their motivation to play a more proactive role in the process.[...] it is important to recognize the strain the process can place on overstretched units and employees [and] impact their motivation to play a more proactive role in the process. (*Palestine FSN Report)

Informants noted that where national stakeholders had participated, for example in the scoring of the assessment matrix, greater ownership and commitment to the findings and associated program development was reported, but this was infrequent and the application process was characterized as technically demanding and time consuming and not feasible for governments to implement themselves due to time and technical capacity constraints. Government and consultant informants complained that the complexity of the application process meant that external consultants were required to facilitate or lead it;

> *The intention of the tool is to assist countries to assess their level of performance and to suggest ways to improve delivery. To apply the tool (current version), would require to constitute an Assessment Team with technical expertise on project management, PW design, construction and quality, operation and maintenance, M&E, skills development, working conditions. This combination may not be available immediately; this could be a deterrent to low-income countries to apply the tool given their capacity level. The next option is to rely on external assistance which could limit a country's hands-on potentials. There have been four country applications, all benefited from external resource persons.* (ISPA PWP Tool Summary of Improvements, written after tool application in Tanzania)

Overall, the degree of government participation varied, but in most cases was limited, to the detriment of the quality of the application, as illustrated by the case of the ISPA application in the Central African Republic;

> *The process of this CODI thus essentially took place without the active participation of the government with a negative impact on the obtaining of the information, in particular as regards the interventions of the ministries in charge of the social sectors. (*CAR CODI Report)

The time demands of ISPA participation were also reported to contribute to somewhat limited Development Partners engagement at country level. Inasmuch as it did occur, Development Partner participation was in many cases limited to joining initial briefing and debriefing activities rather than the deeper engagement anticipated in the implementation protocol. This was widely highlighted as a major shortcoming of the applications; as noted in the CAR;

> *Development partners have had little presence in the diagnostic exercise. (*CAR CODI Report)

In some cases lead agencies had not sought broader interagency engagement, but in others Development Partners were invited but did not respond positively. Lack of familiarity with the tools and unawareness of their agencies' commitment to the initiative and its interagency coordination objectives meant that incentives to allocate resources to participation at country level were limited. Hence, while the tools have the potential to encourage and facilitate interagency engagement, this was only documented where there were already positive interagency dynamics at

country level. Generally, interagency collaboration across Development Partners for ISPA tool application was limited. Greater collaboration took place where agencies stood to gain strategically through it, for example new entrants to a country or the sector were found to make greater efforts to promote interagency engagement, both to facilitate their entry diplomatically and also to gain sectoral information, than well-established agencies.

The objective of ISPA tools is to develop a comprehensive diagnostic analysis of the status quo which is informed by multiple agencies interests and experience. The country report summarizes performance against the set criteria and sets out policy options to be used as jumping off point for future dialogue between stakeholders, but it does not include the development of recommendations, as it was recognized that these would differ across agencies in line with institutional mandates and ideological orientation, as noted above.   However, informants reported that in relation to the CODI in particular, although not exclusively, this creates a tension as governments expect recommendations after the completion of the ISPA application. The absence of a process to develop interagency recommendations was highlighted as a shortcoming by implementers, as institutionally different and in some instances contested preferences emerge during the application which the ISPA process was not able to manage. In some instances tool application was followed by the development of recommendations driven by the lead implementing agency, but this process was reported to be challenging and in two cases consultants reported being pressed to provide recommendations in line with lead agency preferences, and perceived the ISPA process as being used to justify pre-existing programming decisions.

While the lack of capacity and/or strategic interest in participation which limited government and multiagency participation were the main challenges identified in relation to application, two other issues were also raised by informants; data and financing. The poor quality or unavailability of much of the data required to populate the assessment matrix was a consistent issue across the applications, which was felt by some informants to compromise the quality of the resulting appraisal, although the identification of data gaps and sources was itself an objective of the exercise. THE

 The lack of dedicated additional resources to finance ISPA applications was also identified as a constraint to application. Funding a full ISPA application was felt to be costly and beyond the resources available to most Development Partners or governments, and this was identified as a factor which limited more extensive use of the tools.

Finally, it was noted that there was some divergence in what informants perceived as the purpose of an ISPA application. While some informants perceived the process and its potential to promote intra-government and interagency collaboration as part of an ongoing discourse to be of primary importance, and promoted participation in ISPA applications accordingly, for others they were identified primarily as an appraisal tool and participation was not prioritised.

Outcomes and impacts

Given the relatively recent completion of the first set of tools and the pilot phase of the others under review, it is too early to expect significant impacts from the majority of the applications, and no changes in financing/budget allocations, legislation or policy were identified at country level in the case studies, interviews or survey responses. However, other impacts were widely reported which informants perceived as significant.

Over 60% of survey respondents reported that application of the tools had made a contribution to policy development, changes in program design and/or the identification of areas where further research, analysis and data production was required to support sector development, and direct impacts on program implementation modalities were noted by government staff in several cases.

Development Partners, government officials and consultants noted that although the applications were not carried out completely in line with the recommended process, the data gathered, the analysis in the report, the ISPA application process itself and the associated discussions did in several cases contribute to revisions in social protection programming in terms of design and stimulate policy change discussions. The well structured overview the application delivered was found to identify key areas of policy, programming and monitoring requiring further intervention;

> *The review also shows that the Philippines suffers from a weak level of coherence of SP programs, which results in fragmented and overlapping or duplication of programs. […] there are still many programs with overlapping mandates and target population, and a lot of gaps in their monitoring systems.* (Philippines CODI Report)

The Indonesia Payments tool application was similarly useful giving a credible sector wide analysis which provided a systematic analysis of the national context, identifying and appraising the major factors to be considered when introducing alternative payment modalities along with recent developments;

> *The gaps in payment system interoperability (see section* **Error! Reference source not found.***) and a conducive legal and regulatory framework (see section* **Error! Reference source not found.***) have constrained the introduction and uptake of innovative financial products in Indonesia. However, both these aspects are now being tackled by the regulators. […] Recent changes to regulation have addressed many constraints and the outlook is hence better for the spread of more financial access points comprising bank agents and MNO mobile money agents.*

The application was also found to be valuable in revealing where there was a need to deepen knowledge and common understanding;

> *…whilst there is a desire within the government to move towards digital or electronic payments, there does not seem to be a shared understanding amongst stakeholders of what this means, which hampers the ability to implement this change.* (Indonesia, Payments Tool Report)

The most commonly reported outcome of the applications was the promotion of policy dialogue, and in cases where there was significant government engagement the process was reported to have contributed to a common conceptual understanding and catalyzed informed policy dialogue by enhancing government understanding of the sector;

> *The work of validating social protection concepts to be used for diagnosis has evolved into training / information on basic concepts to put in place a minimum of shared understanding* (Central African Republic CODI Report)

This impact is illustrated by responses to the survey question 'Did the use of an ISPA tool contribute to improved coordination among DPs?' which are set out in box 4.

Box 4: Survey Responses Regarding Harmonisation and Policy Dialogue

The use of the tools has fostered a common understanding of the concepts, has updated the areas of comparative advantage of the agencies, enabled the provision of a frame of reference for joint action and facilitated the planning of, inter alia, the UNDAF

This tool has been useful for coordinating the interventions of development partners in the field of social protection; as well as at the level of both national actors and partners. It has revealed that there is a duplication of interventions towards the same target beneficiaries, sometimes not towards the real needs; many resources are injected without a real impact: in short, there are inconsistencies in interventions at the country level.

[As a result of participation in the ISPA process] we [Development Partners]are talking the same language; and we had aligned messages to government.

The tool created a common knowledge about a specific topic, a common language, and a common identification of strengths and weaknesses.

The process and outputs were considered valuable in cases where pre-existing sectoral or thematic overviews had not been carried out, particularly in countries with less developed social protection provision and Development Partner engagement. The preparation of a descriptive overview, even if data was limited, was recognized as a valuable first step in the absence of alternative summary data, and was valued as an initial reference which could form the basis for discussion. Even when the ISPA product and processes were perceived as imperfect, application of the tools was still of value in terms of sector development;

> *In no case is it a successful product of the CODI diagnosis which is an exercise that spans six to eight months when done in its entirety. This is therefore a first document, which should be used to stimulate the nascent collaboration and intersectoral dialogue within the CPA / PNPS and provide a basis for study so that this working group can start its own analysis of the sector, draw its own lessons and formulate its proposals for the revision of the national policy.* (Central African Republic CODI Report)

In another instance, The Gambia, where an ongoing a process of sector development had already been initiated, the ISPA application was reported to have contributed documentation and analysis needed to take the process forwards.

The usefulness of ISPA tools

Based on the findings set out above conclusions can be drawn regarding the usefulness of ISPA tools for governments and Development Partners. Perceptions of usefulness varied by institution and also by the location of the individual within the institution, with the major difference being found between country level staff on the one hand, and Development Partner head quarters personnel on the other. Perceptions of usefulness were also informed by what informants considered the objective of the ISPA initiative to be – this varied significantly, ranging from seeing ISPA as a meta-initiative attempting to improve aid effectiveness institutionally in the social protection sector in response to the G20 Aid Effectiveness agenda, to seeing it as a more practical set of tools for enabling improved program or sector appraisal at country level.

The value of the tools as a way of contributing to ideological accommodation and interagency dialogue was highlighted by one informant who argued that;

Even the process of organizations sitting together to develop a common framing [of social protection] has a massive value

While several informants from the consultancy/INGO sector and from smaller bilateral viewed this as the primary value of the intervention, there was a more generalized agreement on the practical usefulness of the tools. They were identified as most useful in providing a sound framework for a comprehensive overview of the issue under review, particularly in the early stages of Social Protection systems development when alternative sectoral overviews were lacking (this was perceived as being of less value where there were pre-existing sectoral overviews, with which the CODI for example was perceived to replicate in some measure). All the tools were considered useful as references, but as noted above, their complexity limited their usefulness in application. The more technical systems tools (ID and Payments) were reported to be more useful in terms of their direct contribution to sector development and to offer more practical and less contested recommendations, due to the lesser concern with ideological or mandate-related design preferences.

Eighty seven percent of survey respondents reported that they would use ISPA tools again in the future, indicating that users had experienced some degree of utility from their use, and an open question exploring the main benefits of the ISPA tools[18] indicated that the they were primarily valued for program level analysis, and for promoting a standardized tool and common standards in terms of appraisal practice and with just a few mentions of their value in terms of the promotion of policy coherence and donor coordination or the stimulation of policy dialogue.

The survey confirmed the finding that the main factor inhibiting tool usefulness was complexity, which was identified by over half the respondents as a significant deterrent to future use.[19] The other main constraints to usefulness noted by all types of informants were the time consuming nature of the implementation process, the lack of implementation capacity in country, the lack of resources to finance tool application and the lack of available data.

Usefulness for Governments

Government actors reported the tools to be useful as reference resources and particularly valued the credibility of the analytical framework which they valued due to the fact that it had buy-in across the donor community, and represented a comprehensive state-of-the-art overview of the key issues in the sector. They reported that the tools had been valuable in terms of stimulating new insights into program performance and design options, and planning future research. Government officials highlighted the technical learning and insights arising from the assessment matrix as the most useful aspects of the initiative, and particularly valued the technical program design recommendations arising from applications, when these were provided.

Where the tools were implemented in a participatory way, officials noted the high time cost of participation relative to the benefits the tool provided. In other instances officials reported that the practical and conceptual complexity of the tools meant that they felt unable to fully participate in the application process. They reported having to rely on facilitation by external consultants, and that this limited ownership and usefulness.

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[18] Q17 What are the main benefits of the ISPA tools?

[19] Q18 What are the factors that would make you less likely to use the tool?

The tools were felt to be most useful when they were implemented in a way which promoted national dialogue and informed discussion which was relevant to the national policy development process, responding to analytical and data needs in a timely way. One survey informant reported feedback from governments on two applications which were driven by donor planning cycles, rather than government needs, and went forward without taking into account the timing of the government's own policy development processes, the implications for staff availability, or the inclusion of adequate feedback processes, significantly limiting their usefulness. The informant noted that country led demand, and timeliness of application were critical for impact;

> *the process involved collection of quite significant data and information, and no follow up workshop and dialogue took place. [...] I think one the challenges of those assessments and application of tools designed by development partners is to respond to a specific need expressed by Government and partners. [...], if there is not a specific request by the Government, such exercise can be perceived as additional work put on them by UN agencies. Also we must ensure that the analysis can be completed fast enough so it can feed timely the national dialogue for a new social protection strategy or policy.*

Hence, while applications were recognized as having the potential to contribute to informed decision making in the sector, this is contingent on them being applied flexibility to respond to national policy processes and in a way which entails government ownership – which itself was repeatedly reported to be undermined by the cost of applications and the complexity and inaccessibility of the tools. Reflecting this concern, many country level informants (agency, government and consultants) reported that the tools are perceived as being 'supply driven', 'external' and 'Head Office' initiatives, which may entail higher costs to governments than they deliver in benefits and insights.

While the tools have considerable potential and credibility as agreed interagency products, Government staff did not identify intra-governmental coordination as a significant outcome of application or improved sectoral coordination among the Development Partners, and as such the impact on improved efficiencies in the sector has been limited.

Usefulness for Development Partners
The usefulness of the tools for Development Partners can be assessed by looking at usage data, with some additional insights from examining survey responses.

Perhaps the most fundamental indicator of the value of the tools is the frequency of tool usage. Formal application data from the ICT (presented in section one) indicates that in total ISPA tools have been applied 47 times, with the CODI and Payments tools each applied 18 times, the PWP four, and the ID, SPPOT and FSN twice each. This suggests that the CODI and Payments tools are most highly valued, compared to the ID tool, which informants suggested had been superseded (by the I4D4) and was no longer in active use and the PWP tool, which was applied only twice since it was piloted (the most recent use being four years ago). The SPPOT and FSN tools are still being piloted so conclusions regarding their usefulness cannot at this stage be drawn from the number of applications. However, the fact that the SPPOT is an interagency version of a tool already in regular use within the UN (the ABND), and that it responds to the demand for practical recommendations, suggest that it is likely to be useful for Development Partners and governments.

The fact that 64% of applications were led by the World Bank Group suggests that they may be more useful to this institution than other agencies – although this is also in part a consequence of the larger financial resources,

geographical coverage, and multisectoral interests of the institution. However, the limited usage by the other main Development Partners, particularly involved in the initiative, and their failure to mainstream usage, is notable, and indicates a limitation in buy in, interest and/or awareness. Limited knowledge and understanding of the ISPA tools at country level among Development Partner staff may inform this pattern of usage; the review findings indicate that TTL within ISPA agencies were not necessarily familiar with the tools or the initiative, leading one informant who was familiar with the tools and their potential contribution to request;

> *Please make them popular - disseminate them to bank staff more and to clients governments as well.*

This relates to the issue of dissemination, which is discussed below.

Analysis of the pattern of usage indicates that most tool applications are carried out by the lead agency/ies engaged in its development rather than a range of ISPA agencies, indicating that each tool is particularly useful for a subset of ISPA agencies and that participation in Working Groups for tool development, or ISPA more generally, does not necessarily translate into utilization of the tools, or participation in country level applications. Agencies may participate in tool development in order to shape the content and ensure that tools are comprehensive or reflect their institutional priorities, rather than creating a tool which they themselves will find useful or intend to apply.

The available data on applications may not however be an adequate guide to tool usefulness as the current free access model for ISPA tool enables unlimited and unregistered downloads from the ISPA website. This renders monitoring of tool usage problematic and wholly dependent on elective reporting back to the ICT as there are no requirements for reporting usage. The consequence is that there is no definitive data on tool usage in full or in part, and ICT estimates are likely to significantly understate usage as they only include formal usage of the full tools which is reported back to the ICT by ISPA members. The review found that tools were downloaded from the ISPA website by a range of actors and used for the variety of purposes as outlined above - as reference documents or check lists, sources of information, templates for appraisal etc - without any reference to the ICT. Several examples of this were captured by chance during the interviews, relating to the CODI, PWP and ID tools. Components of the PWP tool were used by the ILO informally as a check list to inform a sector appraisal exercise in Greece, rather than making a formal tool application with the associated ISPA process and reporting, and as a result this usage was not captured in the formal application statistics by the ICT. Another informant, a consultant, reported using CODI as an important sector reference for framing, defining and conceptualizing social protection in the development of another interagency social protection initiative.[20] The informant reported that using ISPA conceptualization gave them the confidence that their material would be consistent with ILO and UNICEF approaches. The same consultant also mentioned using the ID tool in a similar way as a reference, and that a colleague in the same agency had used the CODI as an analytical tool for a regional study examining coordination across the sector, and extracted questions from the Questionnaire. There are likely to be many other similar cases which are not captured in existing statistics.

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[20] The TRANSFORM Social Protection Learning Package is an inter-agency initiative of United Nations agencies supporting the building of **social protection** floors in Africa. It is coordinated in Africa by the **ILO**, UNICEF and UNDP and was launched in 2017 https://socialprotection.org/transform .

Linkage between ISPA and other initiatives

This section reports on the extent to which the ISPA tools are linked with other major initiatives in the social protection sector, including data harmonization activities.

Informants were not aware of actual or intended linkages between ISPA and other social protection sector initiatives, such as the SDGs/2030 Agenda or USP 2030, at either Development Partner headquarters or country level, and it was generally perceived as a standalone process. No formal or strategic mechanisms to link ISPA with other initiatives were identified during the review, and the ISPA initiative was not found to be formally or institutionally linked to other bi- or multi-lateral initiatives for social protection sector development. The ICT personnel however are also working on Agenda 2030 for their respective organizations, independently of their ISPA work, and are currently in the process of exploring potential avenues for collaboration, and so there may be some degree of integration of initiatives at this level.

Two senior informants reported that the initiative was initially a response to harmonization challenges highlighted by the G20 Development Working Group on Aid Effectiveness and that ISPA had originally been intended, *inter alia*, to promote data rationalization as well as programming harmonization across agencies. While the promotion of Development Partner and intra-governmental coordination is an ISPA goal, the ICT reported that the ISPA initiative was not launched in response to the G20 request,[21] and that data rationalization was not an ISPA objective; this aspect of harmonization was taken forward by a separate SPIAC Working Group on statistics which is no longer operational. Accordingly, no formal mechanisms for systematic data sharing were developed under ISPA to promote integration and harmonization between ISPA and other institutional initiatives which attempt to collate international data on social protection provision (such as ILO's Social Security Inquiry (SSI) database, the World Bank Group's ASPIRE, or the International Social Security Administration (ISSA)'s Social Security Programs Throughout the World (SSPTW) initiative).[22] The informants were disappointed that ISPA did not fulfill this role as currently at the global level no alternative mechanisms for strategic collaboration on social protection data and harmonization exist. Interest in technical collaboration with ISPA on data was articulated by the ISSA respondent to the 2017 ISPA survey but this area of potential linkage was not subsequently taken up.[23] It was noted by respondents that the way the ISPA resources have been developed mean there is currently no way to automatically link ISPA outputs with other social protection databases. The CODI data collection framework was reported to have been designed to be consistent with the SSI questionnaire used for SDG 1.3 reporting, although the SSI questionnaire had subsequently been revised. Also formal links with the SDG initiative to

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[21] The Social Protection Inter-agency cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) was founded in response to the request from the G20, and the creation of the ISPA initiative was agreed during a discussion at the first SPIAC-B meeting in 2012, following a series of interagency Development Partner meetings at which the concept of improved sector coordination through harmonized Development Partner tools had been developed (see McCord, 2013) McCord, A. 2013   , The Public Pursuit of Secure Welfare: Analysis of the institutional context informing the extension of donor supported social protection in developing countries, prepared for the EC. https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/the-public-pursuit-of-secure-welfare_en.pdf

[22] A biannual publication by the Social Security Administration which highlights the principal features of social security programs in more than 170 countries, https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/progdesc/ssptw/

[23] The collection and dissemination of information, including analytical and statistical databases on social security was identified as a priority area for strategic collaboration between ISSA and the ILO, see https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_176109/lang--en/index.htm) resulting for example in the linking of SSPTW and SSI databases to automatically exchange certain data, but this was not extended to include ISPA applications.

improve indicator data quality and availability and ongoing ISPA dialogue around data collection for SDG 1 are yet to be developed.

The absence of strategic and also practical inter-institutional collaboration was raised as a concern by senior informants who had been involved in initial discussions about the potential strategic role of ISPA in relation to the Paris recommendations for increased donor harmonization (2005),[24] but it was not identified as an issue by most interviewees who perceived ISPA as a more program and country support oriented initiative. This situation was compounded by the fact the anticipated mechanism for sharing ISPA data and analysis outputs through report publication had not occurred as planned.

The ISPA initiative is not yet linked to the growing 'Shock Responsive Social Protection' (SRSP) agenda or the social protection in humanitarian contexts discourse and the decision has been taken by the EG not to extend the tools to cover these issues currently. The review found that knowledge of the ISPA tools had not penetrated this sector, as discussed in the dissemination section below.

Senior informants from within bi- and multi-lateral development agencies and other non-government agencies suggested that the ISPA initiative was somewhat isolated within the wider universe of social protection initiatives and even within ISPA agencies themselves. This was attributed to the absence of an organizational development plan to integrate the ISPA initiative and tools into the work of the major institutions who participate in it, and the lack of senior level champions to take forward the strategic dialogue required for the initiative to be integrated into the wider institutional discourse.

Dissemination

The ICT has carried out a range of initiatives to promote ISPA, notably the development and population of an ISPA website, a communication strategy, a visual identity, a series of trainings, presentations to various sector groupings, and a number of Webinars.

The ISPA website, managed by the ICT, hosts the tools and associated material and is the main portal for users to access the documentation produced under the initiative relating to both process and also outputs. The website received uniform praise during the review, and the 2017 survey found that most visitors found the information they were looking for on the site and found the information provided helpful. The ICT report that in total the site had over five thousand tool downloads by February 2019,[25] see table 9.

Table 9: ISPA Tool downloads

Tool	CODI	PWP	ID	Payments
Downloads	1179	1094	915	2158

Source: 6th Meeting ISPA Executive Group Report to SPIAC-B Geneva, February 7th, 2019.

The fact that the recently launched Payments tool had double the number of downloads of the other tools (2000 compared to 1000 each for the other tools) confirms the popularity of the tool reported above, relating to its

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[24] The Paris High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness was held by the OECD in 2005

[25] No more recent data was available to the reviewer.

technical strength and uniqueness.   Overall, this data supports the suggestion that the tools may be more widely used than is captured in the ICT log of formal ISPA applications, possibly being used as reference documents, templates for appraisal design etc. The fact that the PWP and ID tools have a similar number of downloads as the CODI suggests that while they may not be perceived as sufficiently up to date ISPA tools in a formal sense by many key informants, they may continue to be widely used in a more flexible way by other actors.

While the site was found to be useful as a resource, its value as a means to disseminate findings (as opposed to process information) is limited inasmuch as it provides access to only three ISPA tool application reports, out of a total of 32 completed applications. This was widely noted as a disappointment by respondents at all levels, who articulated a demand for access to completed reports in order to learn about the tools themselves and how they might be used, and also to learn from their findings, as had originally been anticipated. It also resulted in a lack of awareness of the significant scale of ISPA tool applications since their inception among member agencies. The non disclosure of ISPA findings and reports, even in summary form, is a barrier to national level learning, as well as the cross program, cross institution and inter-country learning anticipated under the initiative. It also creates a barrier to understanding the initiative among non ISPA actors, leading an NGO informant to state;

> *[…] the website is also somewhat elusive. There seems no recent update as to which countries have completed the full SP assessment or what the reports – or any of the findings – were.*

The free access model selected to facilitate tool dissemination on the website was identified as problematic inasmuch as it excluded the possibility of the automatic registration and identification of actors downloading and using the material (in whatever way) or monitoring of tool application (and outputs), rendering any definitive appraisal of usage impractical. The appropriateness of the selected access model used on the site was questioned by a few informants with expertise in this area and alternative approaches suggested (see recommendations).

Training & Presentations

Several regional ISPA trainings have been organized by the ISPA Coordination Team to promote awareness of the tools between 2016 and 2019, including most recently, a face to face Regional Training Event in Yogyakarta, Indonesia which took place in March 2018, a webinar series for the Regional UNDG (United Nations Sustainable Development Group) Arab States which took place in November 2017 and a face to face training event in Africa organized by the ILO. In addition the ISPA website hosts a series of online training modules which introduce the ISPA initiative and the tools and describe how to apply them in practice. Other forms of training dissemination include the presentation of ISPA content within agency specific trainings, including the World Bank Group's Social Safety Net (SSN) Core Course, and Human Development Week events.

To complement these initiatives the ICT has worked with Socialprotection.org to convene a series of 12 webinars on aspects of the ISPA tools, the application process, and findings.[26] The audience for these seminars was found to be somewhat lower, at 40, than average (70) for Socialprotection.org webinars, an outcome which was attributed by some informants to unfamiliarity with the ISPA concept and instruments within the wider social protection community and the fact that some ISPA terminology, eg 'Core Diagnostic Instrument' or 'CODI', was felt not to be inherently meaningful to group members outside the ISPA circle, and hence not effective in terms

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[26] See Appendix 5 for details of the seminars presented.

of attracting interest.[27]   Other informants suggested that the highly specialized nature of some of the tools might also be a factor.

Notwithstanding the communication activities carried out by the ICT, dissemination was consistently identified as the least well developed aspect of the ISPA initiative and was identified as a major challenge by several senior informants. Even within ISPA agencies at Head Quarters knowledge about the tools was found to be limited beyond those directly involved in their production, and among informants at country level knowledge was found to be low even within ISPA agency staff. Dissemination of knowledge about the ISPA tools and their achievements internally within the agencies involved was weak and the lack of completed reports was perceived to be a significant factor.

Awareness of ISPA was also reported to be hampered by the lack of a formal uptake strategy for promoting use of tools among participating ISPA agencies individually and the wider social protection community, and the lack of high level champions promoting usage within major agencies.[28] The absence of formal organizational plans for promoting and mainstreaming sector analysis using the tools, at individual agency, and at the strategic multiagency ISPA level, was perceived as undermining the potential impact of the initiative. As noted by a member of one ISPA agency informant;

> *HQ is thrilled by the excellent ISPA tools developed, but it is a struggle by agencies to promote usage… (*ISPA agency informant)

One respondent who was a long term senior Social Protection Expert in a SPIAC member agency, when asked about dissemination of ISPA within their own organization and awareness of the tools among other agencies active in the sector replied;

> *Pilots have been carried out…. Yes there have been disseminations…. There was an event... I believe I went to some of them….. that was a long time ago […] I have never discussed ISPA tools with other agencies, I am not sure if they are aware of them or use them.*

While the primary targets of ISPA dissemination are ISPA members and governments, the growing importance of social protection within the humanitarian sector in recent years, and the associated discourse of shock responsive social protection, which links crisis response with social protection systems building, mean that humanitarian actors are increasingly active in the social protection sector. Some ISPA members have identified coordination between the humanitarian and social protection sectors as a critical current issue, see for the example the EU Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (SPAN) initiative[29] and DFID's funding of the Shock Responsive Social Protection Agenda,[30] but despite some initial discussion, ISPA has not yet attempted to extend dissemination to this group, and accommodation of this discourse in the tools is not currently on the agenda.

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[27] A similar comment was made by a humanitarian INGO actor who had searched for sector appraisal tools online but not found the CODI stated *'... maybe the name isn't very helpful... CODI is a terrible name, it could be anything….'*

[28] The ICT reported one attempt to implement a unified 'internal communication strategy' to promote the initiative, but take up was limited and follow up activities were not completed, and the strategy fell into abeyance.

[29] https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/sp-nexus/wiki/guidance-package-social-protection-across-humanitarian-development-nexus
[30] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OPM_Synthesis_Report_Shock_Responsive_SP.pdf

During the review process it was noted that one significant means of dissemination was found to be word of mouth, in terms of both individual advocates associated with Working Group tool development and also independent consultants who found the tools by chance when searching online for appraisal materials, and adapted them as a methodology to carry out appraisals, making a spontaneous use of the tools, rather than being formally requested to use them by country level commissioning agencies. While only two spontaneous uses of the tools were identified by the ICT and included in this analysis, these findings may also indicate that there may be more informal use of the tools than is captured in current application data.

Awareness

It is difficult to make a robust assessment of overall awareness of ISPA among social protection staff of the ISPA agencies in HQ and in country due to the lack of an appropriate sample frame. The 2019 survey attempted to explore this, and was explicitly targeted to ISPA agency and contacts staff working on social protection, but was not a representative sample, and it is likely that the 90% non response rate entailed a response bias in favor of those who were aware of the initiatives, meaning that it isn't possible to draw conclusions about ISPA awareness overall. Ninety percent of respondents had heard of the ISPA initiative, and of these all were aware of one of more tools, even though only 50% had direct experience of tool application, indicating some familiarity independent of application. The survey indicated that those who had heard of the ISPA initiative were also aware of the tools, and that the CODI was the best know tool, (polling 84% recognition) compared to 57% for the payments tool, 54% for SPPOT, 52% the PWP tool, 41% the ID tools and 36% the FSN tool. Headquarters were the main source of awareness of the tools (60% of respondents), while a further 11% heard about the tools through internet search and 5% through training or SPIAC-B communications.

Overall the review found that awareness of the ISPA tools is limited outside the immediate group of agencies active in the associated Working Groups and the consultants they employ, and that field staff within these agencies sometimes had only limited, or no knowledge of ISPA, and the field level staff were not clear on the relevance of the initiative for their work.   One Development Partner informant noted;

> *ISPA as a bit of a headquarters initiative, with unclear relevance to our work. It may well be more relevant than we realize, and there are clear exceptions like the ID tool, but it all seems quite removed from our real work. This I hold down to our end as much as ISPA itself, but the fact is that people are busy and do not tend to have time to familiarize. It is not a case so much of being exposed to the tools, but being exposed to direct experience where the tools have been used and progressed a policy dialogue.*

The small number of interviews conducted with actors in the social protection sector outside the ISPA member agencies suggested that awareness of the ISPA tools beyond the ISPA member agencies was also low, with one informant from the INGO sector working in social protection reporting;

> *No-one seems to know, in the INGO world at least, about ISPA*

Another independent informant perceived the lack of active dissemination to be a challenge;

> *They [the tools] are plonked on the website, but not promoted, and they are not asking whether anyone is using them, and who users are…*

Awareness among humanitarian actors working on social protection was found to be similarly low. A poll of members and management of the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) - a global partnership of over 80

humanitarian actors engaged in policy, practice and research which attempts to promote coordination and effective programming[31] - conducted as part of this review found that only two of ten respondents had heard of ISPA and none were familiar with the tools or had used them to inform their own sectoral analysis or developing their own materials or tools on related issues. One CaLP member informant had found out about CODI just two weeks previously, via a socialprotection.org seminar and said;

> *I was frustrated when I found out about the CODI. When heard about it I thought why haven't I heard about it before… I didn't find it when researching on the internet...*

This is significant as CaLP is engaged in the development of somewhat parallel social protection appraisal and coordination tools which are being developed without reference to the ISPA tools. In recent years CaLP has developed guidance materials which overlap with aspects of the CODI, ID, Payments and FSN tools and is currently developing a tool for the review existing SP systems, but these are not integrated with or informed by the ISPA tools.

Institutional Adoption

The review has indicated that institutional adoption of the ISPA tools may not be as strong as had been hoped and that the commitment to the initiative displayed by individual WG members from ISPA agency headquarters is not reflected more widely across the institutions they represent, in headquarters or at country level, leading one informant to ask;

> *They have created a network, but the question is, can they extend it into the institutions beyond the individuals involved? The initiative has not gone broad or deep, two top people work on it, but it does not reach out further...*

The tools have not been widely adopted as the 'go to' instruments of first choice across ISPA agencies, and little evidence was found of significant and widespread agency commitment to the their promotion and usage. Some agencies which were key to the development of the initiative have not continued their initial strategic engagement in ISPA and are not actively promoting adoption within their own institutions; DFID is no longer involved in strategic oversight of the initiative and is not actively promoting or using the tools institutionally,[32] the OECD have independently developed a parallel toolkit for social protection system review for use within their own institution, and Finland has terminated its strategic focus on social protection more generally. Even the World Bank Group, which has been the major user of the initiative, has achieved only limited institutional adoption. One informant who was a consultant working for Development Partners in the sector reported;

> *ISPA tools are not used by all the agencies who developed them... the commissioning agencies are not promoting their own tool...s*

And another Development Partner staff member wrote in the survey;

> *Most agencies still want to do their own assessments with their own tools*

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[31] http://www.cashlearning.org/about-us/overview
[32] DFID is currently taking the lead on gender responsiveness within SPIAC and as such will lead the work on gender-mainstreaming within the ISPA tools.

The dominance of the World Bank Group in terms of ISPA development and usage also contributes to a perception among other agencies that ISPA is essentially a '*World Bank initiative*', in the words of one key informant from an ISPA member agency, rather than a shared ISPA agency tool which also serves as a disincentive to more extensive use among other ISPA agencies.

One informant, a consultant, who reported using CODI as a reference on a major piece of work on social protection commissioned by ILO, UNICEF and UNDP, had not been lead to the initiative by these agencies, but had discovered it by chance,[33] and similarly had used the PWP tool as key resource for a piece of work commissioned by DFID, who had not proposed the tool as a reference.

The limited adoption of the tools by ISPA agencies is in part due to the absence of institutional mandates requiring regional social protection leaders or TTL at country level to be informed about and to utilize ISPA tools for program appraisal or development. This may be attributed in part to the high levels of decentralization in the main agencies working on ISPA, but it is also notable that there are no institutional incentives for adoption of the tools, with the exception of the recommendation of ISPA tool usage in the World Bank Group documentation relating to accessing funding under the Rapid Social Response Multi Donor Trust Fund.   In the absence of dedicated funds for tool application (such as those available for utilization of the ID4D tool), strong senior level champions promoting adoption (as with the ILO and UN's ABND), a high level advisory group (as with the ID4D) or an organizational development plan to disseminate and promote ISPA, it is understandable that institutional adoption has not been higher.

High level institutional advocates of the tools were not found during the review, even among the ISPA Executive Group, and strategic leadership of the initiative was reported to have waned since its inception, and been replaced by operational/administrative leadership. This was attributed by informants to the departure of key personnel who were the initial strategic drivers and champions of the initiative in the major agencies, leading one Development Partner informant to note;

> *Overall some of the [ISPA] momentum seems to have been lost in recent years*

This situation has been exacerbated by the limited investment in ongoing tool management after their completion, in terms of promotion and updating which is primarily the responsibility of the Working Groups, despite their unfunded and voluntary nature, as reported by another Development Partner informant;

> *It is up to the WG to determine how useful it is to exchange information around the application of the tools and the frequency of meetings on specific topics in relation to the technical work, especially with view to harmonizing language and indicators and the possible creation of a Community of Practice* (ISPA Implementation Guidelines)

This lead one informant to suggest;

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[33] The TRANSFORM Social Protection Learning Package is an inter-agency initiative of United Nations agencies supporting the building of **social protection** floors in Africa. It is coordinated in Africa by the **ILO**, UNICEF and UNDP and was launched in 2017 https://socialprotection.org/transform .

> *In the absence of WG meetings associated with the EG meetings it has now been left to each WG lead to organize meetings 'piggy backing' on other workshops, with the result that follow up on each instrument is discretionary and unfinanced.*

As a result the curation of the tools in terms of follow up activity (including ensuring regular WG meetings, monitoring of usage, application follow up, keeping the tools updated, sharing lessons learned relating to applications and findings, the creation of a community of practice and communication and dissemination among those working in the sector) has been somewhat *ad hoc*, limiting information exchange on applications and ongoing dialogue about tool support and promotion, and leaving WG members unaware of tool usage and performance. The consequence is that the locus of institutional responsibility for the ongoing monitoring, support and development of the tools is somewhat unclear.

Implications for Institutional harmonization and development cooperation effectiveness

The findings outlined above indicate that the tools have the potential to promote coordination between Development Partners and also government agencies, through both the proposed participatory application process and also through the sharing of sector analysis. However, these coordination benefits were identified in only a small number of the case study applications, but not the majority. There was more multi-agency participation in the pilots, in line with the ISPA requirement for interagency piloting, than subsequent tool applications, which have not followed the same model for the variety of cost and institutional reasons outlined above. Most applications were found to be implemented by a single agency, with participation by other agencies, government and inter-ministerial participation largely limited to attendance at briefings, and some participation as informants. This, together with the restricted circulation of the resulting reports has limited the harmonization function of the initiative.

In terms of institutional harmonisation between Development Partners, the process of tool development was widely acknowledged among Working Group participants, to have promoted dialogue and understanding between individual members of key institutions in the sector. However there was widespread skepticism that this harmonization extended beyond these individuals and more broadly into the participating institutions.

Governance
ISPA was initiated by SPIAC B and is a SPIAC-B workstream, but is independent of it in the sense that it set up its own governance structure and does not report to nor receive guidance from SPIAC-B. Instead ISPA reports to an ISPA Executive Group drawn from SPIAC B members. Only SPIAC B members can be members of ISPA but working groups can invite other actors to participate where they contribute specialized expertise for the subject matter of the tool. This governance situation is complex and was not well understood by informants other than those involved in the ISPA Executive Group. Informants felt that decision making in relation to the initiative was somewhat opaque and were not aware how strategic direction for the initiative was set or whether agencies other than the World Bank Group and ILO, who staff the Coordination Team, contributed to its vision.

The initiative is widely recognized as having been successfully administered by the ISPA Coordination Team, which was uniformly praised for their efficiency and support by informants. However, several senior informants reported that the potential and vision of the initiative has been compromised by what was perceived as a shift from

strategic management to a more administrative/managerial approach over time, and a focus on the production of outputs, rather than a more strategic engagement with coordination around sectoral and institutional issues.

Overall Performance Summary

Taking the review findings into account, overall performance of the initiative and the tools can be summarized with reference to ISPA's stated aspirations and objectives, set out on https://ispatools.org/.

In terms of the three core ISPA objectives it can be concluded that;

➢ ISPA assessments do successfully provide a thorough analysis of the country's social protection systems, programs and delivery mechanisms,
➢ Most ISPA assessments provide entry points on how to improve and strengthen social protection, and
➢ Most assessments do not provide lessons for other countries to learn from about how to analyze and develop their social protection system as few country reports have been shared

In terms of the wider systems development and coordination the tools have the potential to contribute to all four objectives set out on the ISPA website;

➢ 'support countries in building coherent social protection systems and delivery structures that respond to the needs of the population,
➢ ensure complementarity between SP interventions and coordination across sectors,
➢ provide a platform for collaboration across agencies, and
➢ help craft a common vision for SP systems'

However, there was little evidence that applications had yet had a significant impact in terms of these systems development and coordination objectives at country level. A couple of the case studies indicated that tool application had provided insights which stimulated improved dialogue across ministries at national level, and the Payment tool was perceived as directly improving delivery structures, but overall the level of national government engagement was not extensive and it is too early to find evidence of the tools contributing directly to systems building. Little evidence was found of the tools promoting in improvements in the complementarity of Development Partner interventions, or improved cross sectoral coordination, although the creation of an inventory when none was previously available was noted as an contribution to future coordination. The initiative has contributed to improved inter-agency collaboration at Head Quarters level on the development of the tools, although head quarters collaboration may have been limited to those participating in the Executive, Working Groups and ICT. Interagency collaboration at the point of application was found to be varied, having occurred more in pilot than subsequent applications. The tools were particularly effective in identifying a unified vision in relation to technical issues (Payments or ID), but so in developing a common vision of social protection systems overall.

The initiative also sets objectives for itself by target actors; country, government, international partners and household members. Performance against these objectives is also mixed. As noted above, at country level ISPA does have the potential to contribute to the building of social protection systems, and at government level applications provide consistent, reliable and technically sound description and analysis of existing provision, although evidence on improving effectiveness and efficiency may be provided better by the delivery tools (ID and Payments) than the others. While the process of tool development led to the consolidation and sharing of advice

and good practice, particularly for the technical tools, there is little evidence that ISPA improves the coordination of resource allocations among Development Partners or coordination at country level. Interagency and cross-country learning has been limited by the failure to share application reports and it is too early to find ISPA impacts at household level, in terms of better access to goods and services, improved adequacy of social protection benefits, or more coordinated and integrated provision of government benefits and services. Given the limited impacts at government level, it is unlikely that applications to date will result in significant changes in social protection experience at household level. These findings are summarized in table 10.

Table 10: ISPA Performance against internal Objectives

Objective	Performance Summary
ISPA assessments provide a thorough analysis of the country's social protection systems, programs and delivery mechanisms	Yes
ISPA assessments provide entry points on how to improve and strengthen social protection	Most
ISPA assessments provide lessons for other countries to learn from about how to analyze and develop their social protection system	No - country reports are not available
ISPA tools support countries in building coherent social protection systems and delivery structures that respond to the needs of the population	Potentially - but too early to have direct impact
ISPA tools ensure complementarity between SP interventions and coordination across sectors	No – but they enable the identification of overlaps, gaps and need for coordination
ISPA tools provide a platform for collaboration across agencies	Partially Yes at Head Quarters level At country level they have the potential to strengthen inter-agency collaboration where this already works well but do not forge collaboration where it is not well-established
ISPA tools help craft a common vision for SP systems	Yes – most notably with delivery tools (ID and Payments)
At country level ISPA supports the building of cohesive social protection systems	Potentially - but too early to have direct impact
At government level ISPA provides consistent, reliable & technically sound evidence on improving the effectiveness & efficiency of a social protection system	Partially – most notably with delivery tools

At international partner level ISPA helps to coordinate advice & resources & facilitates the sharing of information and good practices	Partially – yes, information and good practice sharing, no, advice and resource coordination
At household level ISPA contributes to better access to goods & services, improved adequacy of social protection benefits, and more coordinated & integrated provision of government benefits & services	No - except in relation to Payments

Source: Objectives extracted from ISPA site (https://ispatools.org/)

Conclusions

This review has elicited feedback from a wide variety of actors engaged in the management, production and application of the tools over the last six years, creating an opportunity to learn lessons and put forward recommendations which would enable the initiative to respond to its constituency of Development Partners and national governments, and play to its significant strengths in the future.

ISPA has from its outset been an ambitious initiative with ambitious objectives; the development of a common vision among Development Partners and governments to promote effective and efficient social protection systems through the development and application of a process which entails meaningful government participation and ownership.

The initiative has had many significant success; four tools have been developed, piloted and finalized, two have been piloted and are currently in the process of finalization and 47 applications have been completed or are nearing completion. In addition the tools are highly praised as comprehensive reference materials have been used as sources or templates in a wide variety of contexts, although this has not been formally captured. Overall the review has found that the ISPA tools are highly commended as well structured, comprehensive and institutionally credible - due to their multi-agency endorsement - program analysis instruments and while they are not fully applied in most instances they were highly valued as reference and didactic tools.

As such ISPA is a fully functioning initiative which has successfully met its goal in terms of the production of a series of tools which are high quality, excellent reference materials. The process adopted to produce the tools was also successful inasmuch as it entailed high levels of participation and brought Development Partners together, promoting interagency collaboration in pursuit of improved SP systems.

While in these terms ISPA has been a successful initiative, this review has identified a series of challenges with the tools themselves (the complexity of the tools was found to inhibit take up and government utilization and ownership), and also with the processes of tool development, dissemination, application and follow up at country and interagency level, which have limited the impact of the exercise in terms of its potential contribution to social protection systems development at national level, and aid effectiveness and coordination more widely.

The focus of the initiative to date has been the administration of tool production, and the same attention has not been paid to ensuring that the initiative is supported with strategic leadership which promotes awareness, dissemination, incentives for utilization and institutional buy in, strategic linkages with emerging initiatives or adaptation in a changing external context. Similarly, the curation of the tools after their production in terms of

ongoing tool management, application follow up, updating, ensuring continued relevance and promoting linkages across emerging initiatives has not been a priority focus, again compromising potential impact.

The implication of these findings is there is an opportunity to consider the future goals and role of the initiative and the strategy required to achieve them. There is a need to ensure the continued value added and cost effectiveness of the initiative and avoid the institutional inertia of continued tool production without first considering how existing ISPA material might most effectively be managed to contribute better to social protection systems development, as part of an iterative and ongoing process which revisits the content and structure of the tools, as described by one informant;

> *It's been a long road to get to where they are, but now they need the capacity to take on feedback on applications; [the tools] need to be a living thing.*

There is a need to explore the demand for existing and future tools, and to link the initiative with emerging debates which are becoming central to the social protection discourse, particularly climate change, shock responsive social protection and the emerging humanitarian-social protection nexus to inform the future development of the initiative. As well as strategically reviewing the goals of the initiative and issues to be covered, there is a need to revisit the processes of tools development and application modalities and to improve dissemination and communication, as well as promoting incentives for usage.

In addition to the practical achievements of the production of the tools, and the associated challenges outlined above, the review also identified the importance of ISPA in terms of the meta-objective of improved interagency collaboration and aid effectiveness, which was widely noted as symbolically, if not yet practically, significant, particularly by senior Development Partner informants, see for example;

> *Keep up the inter-agency spirit. It is so essential to have common grounds for assessments and reviews. The ISPA platform can critically help enhance coherence across development partners...* (Survey Respondent, 2017)

The fact that the initiative is a vehicle to bring together and create a dialogue between the two most influential agencies working on social protection (the World Bank Group and the ILO) was for smaller Development Partners, a key reason for supporting the initiative, and was perceived to be at least as important as the development of the tools themselves. The initiative was identified as crucial in terms of establishing and promoting this interagency dialogue at head quarters level, even though it was clear that this had not yet fully penetrated though the two key institutions, and had not yet resulted in significant operational changes at country level.

To conclude, the review has indicated that significant investment by the Development Partners, led by the World Bank Group and ILO, has resulted in the establishment of several key resources and a credible ISPA brand over the last five years, but there is now a need to consolidate this achievement by revisiting and updating the initiative's vision and modus operandi if it is to retain its relevance. The initiative has great potential which has not yet been fully realized, and the challenge is now to shift from an administrative vision centered around the production of tools, to a strategic vision which builds on this achievement to promote the efficiency and effective of social protection systems development.

Recommendations for achieving this shift are set out in section three.

SECTION THREE: RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of the review recommendations were gathered from informants to contribute to the improved implementation and future development of the ISPA initiative. The main themes raised by these informants were consistent with those emerging for the wider research activities which informed this review, and are grouped under; tool development process, tool design, tool management and curation, application, dissemination, links with other initiatives and management.   After these practical recommendations, a series of strategic recommendations relating to future directions for the initiative are provided and finally the priority recommendations required to consolidate achievements to date and set the agenda for the future are highlighted.

Tool Development Process

The tool development process was celebrated as participatory and inclusive and providing equal voice to all actors engaged in each Working Group. However, the process was also widely criticized as inefficient, lengthy and costly in terms of staff time. The accommodation of multiple agency perspectives and priorities within the tools also contributed to the complexity of the resulting instruments and undermined their usability.

The current proposal to develop a set of new tools, resulting in a constellation of twenty plus, was questioned. There was a linked concern that more issues should be incorporated as cross cutting considerations and might better be incorporated into existing tools in order to rationalize production and increase the likelihood of tool usage, rather than through the production of additional tools. At the same time, adding cross-cutting issues would contradict the aspiration of making the tools lighter.

Recommendations;

- Maintain the lead agency concept, but mandate the lead agency to present a well developed initial document to the wider group to streamline production times

- Moderate the production process more directly. The ICT should be mandated to actively moderate rather than just facilitate the process, in order to ensure that the tools remain practical in terms of their length and complexity, ensuring for example that the inclusion of additional material by WG members is balanced by the removal of other material in order to prevent overloading of the tools and the production of comprehensive but over complex and not readily usable instruments

- Review and update criteria for new tool development, and apply to the proposed constellation of new tools, taking into account i) demand ii) value added of ISPA tools, and ii) a review of similar instruments/initiatives available, as well as government preferences, balancing new tool development against curation of existing tools.

- Initiate dialogue with key actors working on the SRSP and humanitarian-social protection nexus and also climate change and social protection, and appraise the need for tools in these areas or mainstreaming these issues into existing tools

Tool Design

Informants uniformly commented that the usefulness of the tools was compromised by their complexity. This sentiment was articulated in relation to all the tools to some degree, but was a particularly strong complaint in relation to the CODI. In most applications a simplified and reduced version of the tools was prepared at country level, or sections of the tool were omitted in order to make the application feasible in terms of the resources available, and there was a widespread demand for them to be simplified in order to increase accessibility and reduce the cost of implementation in terms of time, financial and skills requirements. This was also considered to be critical in terms of enabling increased government participation in and ownership of in tool applications. Overall a need to make the tools more user friendly and accessible was identified as a prerequisite for increased take up.

Recommendations:

- Revise the content of the existing tools so they are more user friendly, shortening and simplifying them in terms of their structure, the language used and the amount of content to reduce financial, skills and knowledge barriers to application.

- Change the formatting of the documents to make them more accessible, eg provide a short and accessible summary of the 'What Matters Guide' and make the full comprehensive version available as a separate reference document.

- Include more visualization through the use of flow diagrams to highlight logical connections, key steps and processes.

- Produce a summary which reduces the tools to a set of clear steps that can be incorporated into a booklet for translation into local languages as an accessible guide.

- Make the tool components available in alternative electronic formats for ease of editing and customizing the different sections at country level.

- Provide ISPA endorsed translations into selected other languages, to increase efficiency at the point of application.

- Link the tools directly to other relevant databases to enable direct population and consistency with existing data (eg from ISSA or ASPIRE).

Tool Management and Curation

Online Access

The current free access model for ISPA tools enables unlimited and unregistered downloads from the ISPA website rendering monitoring. There are benefits to this model in terms of accessibility, but this approach renders monitoring of tool usage in full or in part problematic and wholly dependent on elective reporting back to the ICT, with the result that monitoring data for the tools is poor, and there is no way of monitoring informal usage, meaning that ICT estimates are likely to significantly understate usage. Alternative licensing options are available

which would still enable free access, but would also enable monitoring of ISPA tool usage and greater sharing of user adaptations and outputs.

Recommendation:

- Investigate online access and licensing options for the ISPA tools, including non commercial licensing arrangements such as the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 license [34] adopted to access training material produced under the ILO, UNDP and UNICEF TRANSFORM initiative, under which users are free to share and adapt material, but must give credit and provide a link to the license, enabling usage tracking and sharing.[35]

Curation
The curation of tools after they have been finalized (tool use monitoring, tool updating, sharing knowledge among users, following up on applications and ensuring ongoing Working Group activity) is not well developed. Most of these responsibilities (other than follow up at country level) are explicitly allocated to the Working Groups according to the *Implementation Guidelines*, but no resources are allocated to this (WG members are expected to finance this activity themselves) and no formal process specified, meaning that the process is *ad hoc*, if it occurs at all and no instances of proactive curation were identified during the review, with the ICT focusing on its primary tasks of tool development and dissemination. This challenge was recognized by members of both the tool WGs, and the ISPA EG who noted '*There is no systematic mechanism to follow up on application*'.[36]

Recommendations:

- Establish an ISPA EG tool review and monitoring system

- Revisit and develop the curation process set out in the *Implementation Guidelines* to ensure that ISPA support continues for the tools after they have been piloted and that curation is adequately financed. This should include the identification and agreement of key curation activities (to include monitoring usage, ensuring the tool is updated and relevant, sharing information on tool implementation, coordinating feedback and retiring tools which are no longer relevant), revisiting the triggers for tool updating and identifying a formal 'curation lead' with responsibility for ensuring these activities take place for each tool.

- Create a mechanism on the website for two way feedback, sharing both country level feedback on tool applications, and tool improvement updates and suggestions from the WG.

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[34] To view a copy of this license visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

[35] Under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License users are free to share, copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to adapt it, in terms of remixing, transforming, and building upon the material. The conditions of usage are; attribution – users must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made, non commercial – users may not use the material for commercial purposes, unless expressly authorized by the licensor, and share alike – if users remix, transform, or build upon the material, they must distribute their contributions under the same license as the original.

[36] 6th Meeting ISPA Executive Group, Report to SPIAC-B, February 2019 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---nylo/documents/genericdocument/wcms_671585.pdf

- Relax the criteria for sharing or publishing beta-versions of tools on the website

- Consider reallocating resources allocated to the creation of new tools to improving curation of existing tools

Application

The challenges identified in applying the tools at country level were primarily linked to the complexity of the tools and the format of the materials, the associated issue of cost, and the unfamiliarity with the tools on the part of the government and also country level Development Partner personnel. If the quality of the tools is improved by a process of simplification as recommended above and implementation experiences are shared this will facilitate implementation by national personnel and potentially also make government participation less onerous. However there is also a need to increase awareness of the tools among Development Partners to increase the number of applications, encourage the interagency aspect of applications and ensure adequate resourcing.

Recommendations:

- Improve the quality of the tools (as outlined above) to increase the uptake of tools

- Improve familiarity with and understanding of the tools among Development Partners through formal inclusion of ISPA in sector trainings, to ensure that applications are appropriately planned and resourced and to encourage interagency aspects of implementation.

- Ensure that examples of previous country studies are available on line as a reference to inform and guide new application.

- Negotiate funding provision/subsidies to support the costs of implementation where necessary, reviewing the experience of the Multi Donor Trust Fund established to support utilization of the ID4D tool.

Dissemination

The limited penetration of the ISPA tools into member institutions and other key groups of actors in the sector (consultants, INGOs and other Development Partners) was raised repeatedly during interviews. This has been recognized by the ISPA EG which has recently made the decision to increase engagement on dissemination, with a first step being sending a dissemination letter to ISPA partners to encourage them to carry out interagency applications at the country level. Given the limited number of applications identified in this study, and the limited number of applications conducted interagency , there is a need to go beyond this and to strategically promote the initiative on an active basis.

Recommendations:

ISPA Agency Dissemination

- Create and implement an ISPA dissemination and operationalisation strategy (and ensure availability of necessary related resources) to promote the tools among Development Partners, reviewing the experience of the development of an ABND operational plan to promote usage across the ILO and UN agencies.[37]

- Create senior level champions promoting adoption, reviewing the experience of the ILO and UN's ABND which was formally endorsed and promoted by the Chair of the United Nations Development Group and Director-General of the ILO

- Create a high level ISPA advisory group, following the experience of the ID4D which established a High Level Advisory Council, comprised of eminent practitioners and thought leaders from the public and private sector, which provides strategic inputs and 'amplifies the global narrative of the initiative'.

- Create incentives for adoption of the tools, reviewing the experience of the recommended use of ISPA tools in the World Bank Group documentation on accessing funding from the Rapid Social Response Multi Donor Trust Fund and the ID4D Multi-Donor Trust Fund.[38]

- Ensure the tools are included in formal inductions and trainings for HQ and country personnel working on social protection within ISPA agencies, including for example the World Bank Group's annual 'The Design and Implementation of Effective Social Safety Nets' training course and the ILO's Training Course on Public Employment Programs

- Set up and curate a 'chat room' for ISPA commissioners (TTL) and implementers to share experiences

- Shift to active rather than passive communication of ISPA activities and achievements – emailing members and associated actors, in addition to placing information on the website

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[37] The operational plan for promoting the ABND within the UN included a call for UN agencies to adopt the instrument which was formally included in the ILO's global guide; *'we ask Resident Co-ordinators and UNCTs to consider a number of specific steps to advance this work, which could include: 1. building, or where they already exist, strengthening One UN national social protection floor teams, which should include committed UN organization representatives, relevant national stakeholders and development partners. 2. supporting national dialogues, including within Governments, on potential options for designing and implementing locally appropriate SPFs, consistent with relevant provisions in the ILO Recommendation, and related initiatives – such as WHO's work on universal health coverage and existing national development priorities and strategies. 3. assisting countries to undertake analysis of social protection needs and gaps, optional measures which would close these gaps, tools to monitor progress, and possible sources of financing, with the hope of increasing floors over time. 4. in the context of preparing United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) promoting SPFs as instruments to advance inclusive and sustainable development. 5. working with national statistical offices to strengthen their ability to collect the data needed to analyse social protection needs and existing provisions, disaggregated by factors such as gender, age, and geographical locality. Promote an efficient and co-ordinated UNCT approach to data collection and capacity support. The "Manual on the Strategic Framework for Joint SPF UN Country Operations" sent to UN Country Teams in 2009 remains a useful guide for your efforts to undertake these or other SEPS. As well, a set of complementary tools is being developed (to be circulated shortly). It can be used to help governments assess the cost and the design of SPFs.' (ILO, 2014)*

[38] The ID4D Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) was established with catalytic contributions from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation followed by the UK Government, the Australian Government and the Omidyar Network. This MDTF provides a platform for partners to cohesively advance progress across ID4D's three pillars with a common vision and shared actions; and shapes global approaches and a shared vision on identification. See https://id4d.worldbank.org/who-is-involved

INGOs and Consultants

- Develop an ISPA dissemination strategy targeting key agencies in the sector

- Promote active outreach providing on line ISPA training materials and on the ground trainings for INGOs, Consultants and other key actors working in the sector

- Make use of specialist groupings (eg CaLP or the EU SPAN network) to disseminate information

Website

- Ensure country studies (and adapted tool formats) are shared on the website where possible and explore alternative mechanisms for sharing reports within ISPA agencies if they cannot be public access documents

- Produce country report summaries/one pagers, covering content and process insights to share on the website, consider including a mechanism to request contact details of tool applicants.

- Introduce a feedback/comment section on the website itself to increase interaction and enable iterative tool adjustment

- Review structure of the website to facilitate finding relevant content, including enhanced key word search facility and a searchable library

- Translate the website into other languages.

- Identify alternative modality for open access to ISPA tools that allows better follow-up of how tools are used.

ISPA Links with Other Initiatives

Respondents indicated that the ISPA initiative had become somewhat isolated from other international initiatives and institutions working in related areas of social protection.

Recommendations:

- Establish technical dialogue with managers of relevant databases (including SSI and ASPIRE) to explore options for mutual country level data sharing, (eg automated data sharing through the development of an interface to synch data and streamline tool application), in order to limit the duplication of activity between agencies and demands on national governments

- Establish strategic linkages with closely related initiatives (SSI, ASPIRE etc) at senior manager level to explore options for further collaboration and efficiency gains

- Explore options to link CODI and SPPOT with SDG indicator monitoring activities at country level, and with other member agency tools covering similar areas (eg UN's ABND).

- Identify efficiency gains from ISPA coordination with emerging Shock Responsive Social Protection and Social Protection Humanitarian Nexus discourses and incorporate into tools

Management

While day to day management of ISPA was effective in terms of the production of tools and support for the processing of applications, lack of strategic management and engagement in the oversight of the initiative was identified as a concern, particularly as there is a need to revisit the ISPA vision in a changed institutional and developmental context, and to determine the focus on the next phase of the initiative.

Informants were uncertain about ISPA management in terms of which institutions and individuals were now leading the initiative, how decisions are made, and processes for determining the ongoing vision and direction of the initiative. The ISPA governance situation was not well understood by informants and there was a concern that this could represent a challenge to transparency in decision making and accountability.

Recommendations:

- Explore how to further strengthen the strategic leadership of the ISPA initiative

- Increase ISPA EG visibility and transparency by shifting from passive to active communication about EG activities and processes on key management issues. Share information on vision, decision making processes, annual ISPA work plans, budgets, ISPA EG meeting notes etc, directly with ISPA member agencies (eg through email) as well as placing it on the website.

Future Directions

The value of the ISPA initiative to date was widely recognized and validated, both in terms of the tools, and also as a potential mechanism for agency coordination.

However, the low number of applications, limited institutional penetration of the tools and limited interagency applications raise questions about how to improve the operationalization of ISPA tools.

Recommendations:

- Revisit the goals of the initiative, taking into account
    - the extent of active demand for existing and proposed tools among ISPA members
    - member interest in promoting interagency appraisal approaches at country level, and
    - the institutional commitment from ISPA members to tool utilization

- The ISPA EG should manage the modification of the tool format in line with user demand, as set out in the recommendations above, as well as revising processes for tool selection, development, access, application, dissemination, and communication, and ensuring adequate financing is in place to support ongoing tool production and curation

- Alternative options for a second phase of the ISPA initiative should be considered, including:
    - Revision of output to focus on the production of definitive reference documents and outline tools for user-adaptation

- o Repositioning ISPA tools as instruments for strategic interagency sector/systems appraisal where sector/systems reviews have not previously taken place

- o Refocus the initiative on supporting primary data creation where this is not currently available

Priority Recommendations

It is proposed that the following recommendations are prioritised in order to consolidate achievements to date and position ISPA for the future:

- ISPA EG to convene a membership meeting to appraise achievements and challenges to date based on the findings of this review

- Revisit the ISPA vision and goals in a changed institutional and developmental context, identifying membership demands for future direction and focus

- Agree future role and objectives of ISPA initiative

- Create an ISPA dissemination and operationalisation strategy and high level advisory group

- Initiate strategic collaboration with specialized agencies on

  - o Data (technical dialogue on the potential to integrate ISPA with SSI, ASPIRE and the SDG data initiative, and for ISPA to contribute to the creation and/or harmonisation of basic social protection data)

  - o Shock Responsive Social Protection and the humanitarian-social protection nexus, and

  - o Climate change and social protection

- Convene curation discussions with Working Group leads to assess need for review and update of existing tools, including resourcing.

SECTION FOUR: APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

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Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA)
An External Results tracking study (2013-2018)

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1. Introduction

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.

During the 5th ISPA executive group meeting in New York in February 2018, ISPA members emphasized the importance of assessing and documenting the experience of past ISPA tool applications: to analyze the application process, draw lessons on what did (not) work well, and reflect country and other social protection practitioners' perspectives on the added value of the tools.

Tracking the results and up-take of findings by international agencies and national stakeholders following the application of an ISPA tool would generate valuable evidence for ISPA partners and countries as to the relevance, usefulness and added value of the tools. This request was also articulated during the Asia regional training carried out in March, 2018 in Indonesia jointly financed by DFAT, GIZ, ILO and the World Bank. In this event participants were first and foremost interested to learn about the results of the ISPA tool applications.

2. General background on ISPA

Around the world, Governments are recognizing the importance of Social Protection Systems in securing the well-being of the population and in fostering economic and social development. Yet, many countries are only starting to build coherent social protection systems. Countries wanting to strengthen their social protection systems often seek technical advice on how to design and implement social protection initiatives.

Fragmentation is perhaps the major challenge to ensuring a comprehensive range of SP benefits and services are available in many developing countries. Programs are implemented by numerous institutional actors belonging to different sectors and administration levels. Programs have their own rules and delivery mechanisms.

In addition, coordination among Ministries, and development partners continues to be a challenge for the design, consolidation and implementation of programs and systems. On the donors and development partners side, too many research and analytical pieces were being completed in an inconsistent manner, and this led to results that could not be compared.

To respond to this problem, in 2012, the Social Protection Interagency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B), launched an initiative to develop a suite of tools to enable countries to systematically assess the performance of their social protection system, policies, and programs, administrative and delivery structures in place based on an agreed interagency framework jointly developed by international

Box 1: Main features of ISPA tools

Collaborative:

- *Country owned.* In all stages of the assessment process, there is strong partnership and participation with governments.
- *Interagency.* ISPA tools are unique in that they are developed and applied through a collaboration of over 20 agencies, which is unprecedented in the field of social protection. The agencies worked together to develop and approve the tools, offering the most cutting-edge research, resources, and best practices in the field. This advantage also allows for the initiative to harness the 20+ agencies' communications and human resources to amplify the message to countries. When possible, inter-agency tool development translates into coordinated tool application at country level and thereby reduces DP coordination complexity for clients.
- *Sharing among international partners.* ISPA agencies commit to coordinating resources and sharing good practices / data among international partners and countries.

Flexible

- *The individual ISPA tools are rapid, rigorous, and technically sound assessments.* Countries are able move quickly into action once they decide to initiate an assessment and the tools allows for seamless tracking of progress over time.
- *ISPA tools address fragmentation.* ISPA tools facilitate the harmonization of fragmented polices & programs, allowing for more coordinated social protection services in countries.
- *ISPA tools contribute to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals* on poverty, health, and inequality, and enable tracking progress towards the social protection related targets and indicators.

Cutting edge

- *ISPA offers support to governments.* ISPA tools provide consistent, reliable & technically strong support to help countries improve their social protection system based on actual experiences in other countries.

organizations working in social protection. A team of over 20 international development partners came together to develop ISPA: a set of practical tools that helps countries to assess their social protection systems, programs and delivery mechanisms. ISPA tools facilitate policy discussions, build social protection capacity, and harmonize agencies.

The objective of the ISPA tools is to enable governments to improve their social protection systems on the basis of a sound analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the SP system, certain programs or implementation aspects.

ISPA tools support countries in building coherent social protection systems, ensuring complementarity between initiatives, and coordination across sectors, and sufficient scale for addressing needs as well as strengthening effective and efficient service delivery systems. All ISPA tools consist of:

- A guidance note lying the technical foundation for assessment, good practices from international experience, and definition of the key areas and criteria to be assessed.
- A data collection framework to facilitate the collection of quantitative and qualitative information needed to carry out the assessment.
- An assessment matrix (summary of findings) to assess system, programs or delivery mechanisms performance
- An outline of the country assessment report.

Each tool provides examples from real world experiences and references to existing evidence and practice to help guide choices for improvements on design and implementation. Tool applications follow implementation guidelines that emphasize country ownership and stakeholder participation to ensure assessment findings are based on a broad information base and wide consensus among the social protection stakeholders in a country. All the ISPA tools that are free and publicly available and can be downloaded on www.ispatools.org.

The ISPA tools that have already been approved by the Executive Group and are made publicly available in www.ispatools.org include:

- The Core Diagnostic Instrument (CODI),
- Social Protection Public Works Programs (PWP) tool
- Identification Systems for Social Protection (ID) tool, and
- Social Protection Payments Delivery Mechanisms tool (piloted in Indonesia and Tanzania).

ISPA agencies have agreed to develop more than 20 different tools over the 2016-2021 period arranged under the system, programs, and delivery mechanisms suites. The development of the proposed ISPA tools will require the collective effort of ISPA partners.

THE ISPA CONSTELLATION

Over the next 5 years, over 20 ISPA tools are proposed to be developed, covering social protection SYSTEM, PROGRAM & DELIVERY mechanisms.

In addition, the initiative is finalizing the development of the Social Protection Policy Options Tool (SPPOT) tool, led by ILO that provides a framework to complete a participatory assessment of national social protection policy options measured against international principles relevant to social protection, and supports the formulation of nationally-owned policy recommendations. Also, FAO has been spearheading the Food Security and Nutrition Tool (FSN) that seeks to assess the performance of different types of social protection programs regarding their contribution towards the improvement of food security and nutrition outcomes.

In parallel to the finalization of the above mentioned two tools, the agencies that are part of the initiative are currently working in the development of a new ISPA tool on Social Information Systems (SIS), led by the WBG, and two more on Social Assistance Cash Transfers (WBG-led) and Social Protection Financing (led by ILO).

Since the ISPA tools are pilot tested and become publicly available more than 60 applications in 52 countries were notified to the ISPA Coordination Team (CT). Table 1 below shows a breakdown of tool application per tool, country and status (the abbreviation behind the country indicates the agency that lead/leads the respective tool's application). Of the 62 overall applications 12 have been in the context of ISPA tool pilot testing.

Objectives of the Results Tracking study

The main purpose of this review is to have an independent assessment to track the results of the initiative from its inception in 2012 to date.

Essentially, the focus of the study is to have a critical retrospective of both the successes and failures of the ISPA initiative at the aggregate level; and thereby on the lessons learnt: what works well, what does not, and what needs to be improved in the design, implementation arrangements, and the Results Framework (RF) for the continuation of the initiative.

It is expected that the study gathers evidence on areas for improvement of ISPA tools/processes and the usefulness of ISPA tools for partner countries and supporting development partners will provide the basis for improved capacity building for policy coherence and coordination of social protection-related activities.

The focus will be on:
- Have a better understanding of the process of application of ISPA tools
- Shed light on the effects that their application is having in the development/improvement/reform of social protection policies and programs in countries, and understand to what extent lessons from past applications were useful for the policy process in respective countries
- What is the effect of ISPA on promoting coordination among ISPA agencies and country-SP agencies/ministries
- Identify the challenges that are faced in the application of the tools
- Suggest improvements on tool design and process of application
- Suggest if/how the (further) tool development and participatory application process could be adapted to emphasize country ownership, national dialogue and increased use of assessment results.

3. Primary Scope and Coverage

- Analyze results of the ISPA tool applications, in particular:
    a. Changes or reforms at policy, program or delivery level? – Were the findings of the ISPA application used to advocate for changing social protection programs, delivery mechanisms or policies? Were any changes or reforms carried out following the results/recommendations articulated in the ISPA tool application?
    b. Changes or reforms regarding national dialogue or decision-making processes at delivery, program or policy levels? – Did the ISPA tool application process contribute to improve exchanges and coordination between stakeholders (national and/or international) that previously did not coordinate their work on social protection? Did this exchange/coordination continue after the ISPA assessment was finalized/ was the coordination formalized or institutionalized in any way?
    c. Changes or reforms regarding the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for social protection programs or the system as a whole?
- Analyze the processes of ISPA tool applications in different countries
    a. ISPA tool application processes and outcomes, draw lessons on "success factors" that lead to strong ISPA tool application outcomes (see a) above)
    b. Identify "failure factors" that lead to suboptimal results in those applications where the assessment did not produce any valuable insights
- Provide prioritized recommendations regarding areas or aspects of the ISPA tool application process(es) and/or specific tools that should be revised.
    a. How to link the work of ISPA with other initiatives as well as on refinement on the design of the tools and the implementations arrangements.
    b. How best to create, generate, and disseminate Knowledge from the ISPA experience both externally with countries and internally within the agencies.
    c. Furthering the SDGs-2030 Agenda in collaboration with other development partners, especially the UN agencies. Reflect on how ISPA supports progress towards SDG goal 1.3 and indicator 1.3.1.[39]

A specific focus in the work is to be put on the perspective of partner governments/agencies and their perception concerning results and processes. The final target groups are ISPA members and partner countries/ILO constituents working on social protection, including government officials and social partners as well as other international agencies, development organizations and social protection experts carrying out social protection technical advisory services.

4. Suggested methodology

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[39] 1.3 Implement nationally-appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.
1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable.

The results tracking study is intended as a desk review, and no field visits are required.   The evaluation methodology should focus and the tools and their applications. It is expected that the consultant(s) develop a sound review methodology, in consultation with focal points of the ISPA Coordination Team. Amongst others, the methodology should include:

- Interviews/ surveys to members of ISPA tool application assessment teams working in 15-20 countries to understand the ISPA tool application process and context.[40]
- Interviews/submit surveys to national partners/government officials involved in the ISPA application process to understand the process and context from the partners' perspective, the objectives of the application and if/how results were used. It will be important to explore the points of views of more than one agency, when possible.
- Interviews with ISPA partners and members of the Executive Group.
- Draft a report to be submitted to the ISPA Executive Group. The report should include actionable recommendations.

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[40] Consultant may start with a survey-monkey type interview with an extended number of partners and follow up with individual interviews for a limited number of countries.

APPENDIX 2: ORGANIZATIONS CONTRIBUTING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EACH TOOL

The CODI (Core Diagnostic Instrument) - led by WBG

European Commission (EC), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (FIN), Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Policy Center for Inclusive Growth (IPC), Overseas Development Institute (ODI), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and The World Bank Group (WBG)

Social Protection Public Works Programs – led by WBG

Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), European Commission (EC), HelpAge, International Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, International Labour Organization (ILO), Overseas Development Institute (ODI), The World Bank Group (WBG), World Food Program (WFP)

Identification Systems – led by WBG

Center for Global Development, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), International Labour Organization (ILO), The World Bank Group (WBG), World Food Programme (WFP)

Social Protection Payments – led by WBG

Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, International Labour Organization (ILO), International Policy Center for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), UK Aid/Department for International Development (DFID), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank Group (WBG), World Food Programme (WFP)

Food Security and Nutrition – led by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation)

European Commission (EC),), Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Policy Center for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), Save the Children (SCF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme (WFP), The World Bank Group (WBG), Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (FIN)

SPPOT Social Protection Policy Options Tool – led by ILO

European Commission (EC), France, UK Department for International Development (DFID) United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC/CEPAL), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), FES, Germany Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), The German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Helpage International, Maastricht University, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights(OHCHR), Save the Children UK (SCF), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), World Health Organisation (WHO), UNWOMEN, International Social Security Association (ISSA)

Source: ISPA Coordination Team.

APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH APPROACH SUMMARY

QUESTION	SUB-QUESTION	INDICATORS	METHODOLOGY	INFORMANTS
Understand the application of the ISPA process in country			KII Semi structured interviews on how/why the ISPA was selected and applied.	Civil servants DPPs – national SP lead DPs HQ SP and evaluation leads
Identify lessons learnt from implementation	What worked well?	Content and quality of resulting report	KII ISPA report review	Civil servants Agencies implementing ISPA SP experts
	Challenges faced in the application of the tools		KII ISPA report review Survey on awareness and usage	Civil servants Agencies implementing ISPA SP experts
Identify outcomes and impacts	Change in social protection policies, policy processes and programs at country level Communication, M&E, programming	Perceptions Policy/program documents – change in indicators/processes /harmonisation Meetings using ISPA Awareness of ISPA	KII Semi-structured interviews– identify changes in policy, policy processes (eg program review, evaluation, development) and programs, and key drivers without Survey on awareness and usage	Civil servants DPs – national SP lead INGOs – national SP leads SP experts
	Coordination among ISPA agencies at country/regional and HQ		KII Semi-structured interviews – changes in DP coordination around SP policy (SP systems overall, PWP and payment modalities). Survey on awareness and usage	ISPA agencies' national, regional and HQ SP and evaluation leads SP experts
	Improved sectoral coordination at HQ/country level	Perceptions (triangulate) Use of ISPA tools Joint activities Harmonisation of tools	KII Identification and review of sectoral evaluations/overviews/ planning processes Survey on awareness and usage	Civil servants and DPs – national SP lead @ country level DP SP leads @ HQ SP experts

	Coordination ISPA agencies and governments		KII Semi-structured interviews to identify and explore changes in coordination/duplication/ harmonization of ISPA agency support to governments Survey on awareness and usage	Civil servants DPs – national SP lead SP experts
Usefulness of ISPA tools	Usefulness of ISPA tools for partner countries	Perceptions Usage	KII Survey on awareness and usage	SP experts
	Usefulness of ISPA tools for DPs	Perceptions Usage	KII Survey on awareness and usage	DPs – national SP lead DPs – HQ SP lead SP experts
Suggest prioritised improvements on tools design and process of application - what needs to be improved in the design, implementation arrangements, and communication and the Results Framework (RF) (tools and processes)	How to refine the design of the tools and the implementations arrangements		KII Review of documentation	
	How to create, generate, and disseminate Knowledge from the ISPA experience both externally with countries and internally within the agencies.		KII	

	How to link the work of ISPA with other initiatives		KII	
	How to use ISPA to promote the SDGs/2030 Agenda in collaboration with other DPs, focus on UN and support progress towards SDG goal 1.3 (Social Protection Systems development) and indicator 1.3.1		KII	SDG monitoring actors in HQ ILO & WB

APPENDIX 4: ISPA REPORTS REVIEWED

Country	Title of Report	Year	Instrument
Cambodia	Report on a pilot application of the ISPA-FSN tool for the Home-Grown School Feeding Program in Cambodia	2018	ISPA Food Security and Nutrition (ISPA-FSN) tool
Philippines	Social Protection Review and Assessment	2018	Social Protection Programs
Indonesia	Payment Mechanism Assessment	2016	Payments
Dominica	Payment Assessment for Post-Disaster and Regular Delivery of Social Protection and Labour Support	2017	Payments
Mexico	Payment Delivery Mechanisms of Federal Social Assistance Programs in Mexico	2018	Payments
El Salvador	Programa de Apoyo Temporal al Ingreso (PATI) in El Salvador	2014	Public Works
Liberia	Liberia Youth, Employment, Skills (YES) Project and Liberia Youth Employment Program (LYEP)	2014	Public Works
Grenada	Payment Assessment for Post-Disaster and Regular Delivery of Social Protection and Labour Support	2017	Payments
Tanzania	Assessment of TASF PSSN in Tanzania using the ISPA-PWP Tool	2017	ISPA PWP
Sao Tome	Social Protection Payments in the Directorate of Social Protection and Solidarity	2018	Payments
Belize	Comprehensive Review of Belize's Social Protection System with Policy Recommendations for System Strengthening	2016	CODI
Morocco	Delivery Systems Assessment- Identification Module Morocco Country Report	2014	ID
Myanmar	Options Assessment for Cash Transfer Delivery, Myanmar	2018	Payments
Palestine	Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment Food and Nutrition Security	2018	Food Security and Nutrition

Jamaica	Assessment of the PATH Payment Delivery during Routine and Post Disaster Operations in Jamaica	2017	SP Payments
Cabo Verde	Payments Delivery of non-contributory Cash Transfers in Cabo Verde	2018	SP Payments
Central African Republic	Core Diagnostic Instrument Central African Republic Country Report		CODI
Sénégal	Etude sur les Projets HIMO au Sénégal dans le cadre des Filets Sociaux	2016	
Peru	Delivery Systems Assessment- Identification Module Peru Country Report	2014	ISPA-ID
The Gambia	The Gambia: Social Safety Nets Diagnostic Social Protection and Jobs Practice Africa Region	2018	Social Protection

APPENDIX 5: ISPA WEBINARS (Socialprotection.org)

Webinar	Date	# Registrants	# Attendees
1. The ISPA Tool: Assessing the Quality of Social Protection Payment Delivery Mechanisms	7-Sep-16	201	103
2. Assessing Social Protection Payment Delivery of the Productive Social Safety Net Program (PSSN) in Tanzania	28-Sep-16	125	67
3. The ISPA Tool: How to use the tool for successful delivery of social protection payments?	9-Nov-16	92	38
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