

## Policy Brief

# Overcoming Barriers to Mainstream and Operationalise Adaptive Social Protection in Local Regions with Multiple Risk Contexts

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## Key Message

- To realise ASP, it is necessary to build some basic level of knowledge and understanding about the ASP concept among key relevant stakeholders.
- With an increasing number of interlinked shocks and vulnerabilities due to disasters, climate change risks, and socioeconomic shocks, it is urgent to have ASP in regions with multiple covariate risks.
- To overcome challenges in implementing the four pillars of ASP, concerted efforts to identify linkages and complementarities among fragmented policies and programs are required.

## Introduction

The escalating global risks posed by natural hazards and climate change are negatively affecting the well-being of communities (UNU-EHS, 2021). Addressing these risks has become more intricate and necessitates collaborative efforts across different sectors (Sett et al., 2022). A promising strategy known as Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) has surfaced, aiming to enhance community resilience by combining Social Protection (SP), Disaster Risk Management (DRM), and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) initiatives (Bowen et al., 2020).

ASP is an integrated approach that addresses the challenges of climate change by combining social assistance programs with humanitarian assistance and disaster risk reduction strategies (Gilligan et al., 2022). It expands the social protection concept by aiming to build the resilience of poor and vulnerable households so that their capacity to prepare for, cope with, and adapt to shocks improves, hence protecting their well-being and preventing them from falling into poverty (Bowen et al., 2020).

ASP has been discussed in the literature over the last two decades and is gaining more traction because there have been more events due to extreme weather and disasters that affected a larger number of poor and vulnerable people. According to IPCC (2021), the frequency and

severity of climate-induced disaster events tend to increase in the future, making poor people poorer and worse in the Global South. The main idea of ASP is to make social protection more adaptive to multiple risks and shocks and to improve community resilience. The key characteristics of SP, CCA, and DRR are summarised in **Table 1**.

The literature report integrated adaptive social protection approach in areas with environmental risks as cash transfers to bolster livelihoods, agro-pastoral input subsidies, public works programs to enhance environmental infrastructure, and social insurance against drought and production failure (more on investing in climate-vulnerable livelihoods or supporting diversification towards livelihoods or supporting diversification towards less vulnerable livelihoods) (Devereux et al., 2011). An adaptive systems approach can assist in dealing with a disaster's dynamic context and fostering policy to meet global concerns such as changing climate conditions (Patch, 2023). ASP in catastrophes entails implementing optimal adaptive techniques to increase resilience and reduce vulnerability. Bonding and bridging ties, which constitute social capital, play an important role in managing risk and crisis circumstances (Behera, 2023). Some countries in Africa and

**Table 1. Key Characteristics of Social Protection (SP), Climate Change Adaptation (CCA), and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)**

	SP	CCA	DRR
<b>Core disciplinary grounding</b>	Development and welfare economics	Social development and physical sciences	Physical sciences and social development.
<b>Dominant focus</b>	Implementation of measures to manage risk	Enabling processes for adaptation	Prevention of disaster events and preparedness to respond.
<b>Main shocks and stresses addressed</b>	Multiple - idiosyncratic and covariate	Climate-related	All natural-hazard related, including climate and geophysical.
<b>International coordination</b>	ILO, UNESCAP, OECD task group, 3 Targets of SDGs.	UNFCCC - The Paris Agreement, 5 Targets of SDGs.	UNDRRR Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk, 25 Targets of SDGs.
<b>Main funding</b>	Ad hoc, multilateral and bilateral, NGOs, national community-based and faith-based organisations.	Coordinated international funds. Global Environment Facility, UNFCCC. Ad hoc bilateral.	Coordinated international funding, USDR, GFDRR, UNDP, Red Cross, ad hoc, civil sponsor, and bilateral.

Source: Davies et al., (2008) and Fitritinia et al., (2022)

South Asia have already implemented ASP-related programs. Similar to Indonesia, they are also prone to shocks, disasters, and social conflicts, hence they implemented programs such as old-age allowance and income support for the poorest program (Jawtno) in Bangladesh (Johnson & Walker, 2022); mid-day meals and poor citizens medical treatment fund in Nepal (Johnson & Walker, 2022); Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia (Tenzing & Conway, 2022); Proxy-means Testing (PMT) and Household economy analysis (HEA) in Niger (Schnitzer, 2019), among others. However, the ASP-related program implementation faced challenges due to lack of commitment from the governments for long-term social protection planning, perception of social protection as charity for people experiencing poverty, lack of institutional management for sustainable ASP-related programs, low quality of population data and disaster and risk related data, and lack of monitoring and evaluation of the programs (Johnson & Walker, 2022; Schnitzer, 2019; Tenzing & Conway, 2022).

As a concept, ASP remains relatively unknown and has not been fully understood by policymakers in Indonesia, especially at the local level. It is indeed a relatively new concept that has just been introduced in the national development strategy document in 2020. For instance, in East Nusa Tenggara Province, policymakers questioned the difference between the ASP concept and the existing social protection programs. Being the implementers of many previous and current social protection programs, they raised questions if it is simply because of the addition of an 'adaptive' element into the existing programs. It is a challenge to promote the importance of ASP, especially in regions like East Nusa Tenggara, where multi-covariate risks exist and are increasing in terms

of frequency and intensity.

## Challenges in Mainstreaming and Operationalising ASP in Indonesia

The ASP has been stipulated in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional-RPJM*) 2020-2024 and will also be stipulated in the National Long-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang Nasional-RPJN*) 2025-2045 and RPJM 2025-2029. In 2020, the government formed the ASP Development Team, based on the Decision Letter of the Ministry of Development Planning (*Keputusan Menteri PPN/Bappenas*) No KEP.57/M.PPN/HK/05/2020. Moreover, in the RPJM 2020-2024 document, the government has set a target that by 2024, thirty percent of central and regional agencies will have adopted the adaptive social protection system (Bappenas, 2020). The RPJM also included a target for the government to have a draft of the Presidential Regulation on ASP by 2024. To date, progress to achieve the ASP policy direction and targets in RPJM has been still relatively slow. Considered as a new framework to complement mainstream social protection systems, the Presidential Regulation has yet to be drafted or enacted and there are no reports of local governments already adopting ASP in their development planning and budgeting. Social protection policies and programs in Indonesia still have more focus on programs that aim to help people overcome financial problems due to lifecycle economic shocks as well as due to catastrophic disaster events and have not responded to climate change issues, for example addressing environmental issues. It is hard to differentiate ASP from the 'everyday SP programs', as a policymaker in East Sumba put it:

***“It is as if adaptive social protection is a new issue. What are the differences between this adaptive social protection and social protection that we already knew? Is it because the social protection that we know is not adaptive?”***  
(quote from Transdisciplinary Workshop, 2023)

Nevertheless, some steps have been taken. The government has been working with several non-governmental agencies to establish the foundation of ASP. This includes assisting inter-ministerial discussion in drafting the Presidential Regulation for Social Protection Reform as well as efforts to promote the ASP concept, implementation, and operationalisation at the national and sub-national levels. For example, in 2023, the Ministry of Planning and Development (Bappenas), as the main national government agency responsible for mainstreaming ASP in Indonesia, organised capacity-building programs in three regions i.e. the Special Region of Yogyakarta, East Nusa Tenggara, and West Nusa Tenggara, involving several district government representatives. The training facilitated them in identifying their potential risks, vulnerable groups, and existing social protection programs as well as created space for them to collaborate in formulating their own action plans, with a focus on ASP-related initiatives.

Currently, Indonesia has various social protection programs that cover the basic elements needed to build an adaptive social protection system. However, the disparities in access to services as well as the coverage of beneficiaries particularly among vulnerable groups and those working in the informal sector and precarious employment, remain limited. This limitation also applies to the "missing middle" category, as social assistance initiatives mainly target the poorer segments of society, while the wealthier segments of society already have social insurance (TNP2K, 2023). Looking forward, there are still some issues that must be resolved to implement and operationalise the four pillars of ASP i.e. in terms of institutional arrangement and partnerships, program and service delivery, data and information, and financing. These challenges, drawn from our research in East Nusa Tenggara Province, especially in East Sumba District, are explained in the following.

On the issue of institutional and partnerships, local governments encounter challenges, including limited human resource capacity, and limited supporting infrastructure, particularly in technology and information-related aspects. Another key issue is the lack of coordination among stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, and local communities, when implementing programs related to social protection, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation. This lack of collaboration hampers the effectiveness of these initiatives, making it difficult to address the complex challenges faced by the community. Our research in East Sumba District in 2023 also found insufficient cross-sector collaboration and coordination among various stakeholders in implementing social protection programs. While coordination meetings among regional apparatus organisations have taken place, optimal

coordination and collaboration in social protection implementation within the context of disasters and climate change remain lacking.

On program service delivery, provinces like East Nusa Tenggara encounter multiple challenges due to its complex geographical and infrastructure barriers. The current social service delivery has much emphasis on poverty alleviation and less on empowerment measures. Distribution of assistance remains suboptimal, particularly in ensuring timely, responsive, and targeted delivery. We identified common obstacles in fund utilisation and distribution that caused delays in distribution, suboptimal program utilisation, perceived complexities in the disbursement process from beneficiaries, and additional costs to deliver assistance to the community due to geographical and infrastructure barriers.

Furthermore, issues on social protection and disaster response data practised at the local level might hamper the quality of program delivery, hence must be addressed. Based on the experience in East Nusa Tenggara Province, data is still highly fragmented depending on agencies and programs, local and national, and many citizens have not been registered legally and do not have ID cards, birth certificates, family cards, and so on, making data collection and verification difficult. Lastly, the province also has challenging geographical conditions and a lack of IT infrastructures to support data collection, entry, and verification.

Therefore, concerted efforts must be carried out to ensure that lessons learned from the current implementation of fragmented SP, DRR, and CCA programs as mentioned above are used to operationalise the concept of ASP, especially in the regions that are prone to multiple risks.

## Recommendations

- **Capacity building for the local government to increase awareness about climate change impacts on community livelihood and health conditions.** Although at the national level, the government has issued several policies and targets for climate change mitigation and (less on) adaptation, including the financing targets, little has been interpreted into policy and programs at the local government level in which populations suffer the impacts of climate change. Climate change remains an obscure concept and has not been seen as related to some changes in people's livelihood and health conditions.
- **The Ministry of Planning and Development (Bappenas) should lead a concerted effort**

to lay the groundwork for creating a stronger interlinked approach between social protection, disaster risk reduction, and climate change adaptation. Currently, various social protection programs are delivered by the government through sectoral offices and have covered different segments of the community to address socioeconomic deprivation. Bappenas can either develop specific programs (pilot projects) design tweaks or piggyback current programs. To do so, the government needs to do a mapping of the most potential programs for further development.

- **The Ministry of Planning and Development (Bappenas) should create a platform for the coordination of the development of the policy architecture of ASP with institutions whose work is related to DRR, CCA, and SP,** both in sectoral ministries, other coordinating ministries, and non-ministerial or quasi-governmental institutions. This may look like the Disaster Risk Forum (*Forum Risiko Bencana*), but with expanding 'nomenclature' to climate, disaster, and social protection, and can be formed both at the national and local levels.
- **The Ministry of Planning and Development (Bappenas) and the National Statistical Bureau should facilitate multidimensional data integration and explore ways to make data interoperable among ministries and external stakeholders which can improve targeting of assistance and disaster response.** The intended data involve information on socio-economic status and geographical risk areas that collect data from sectoral ministries, municipal government, non-government organisations, and local stakeholders.
- **The National government must set clear guidance about ASP in the form of RAN (*Rencana Aksi Nasional/National Action Plan*) and roll it down to the local level in the form of RAD (*Rencana Aksi Daerah/Local Action Plan*).** These plans will set clearer targets, and strategies and focus on priority activities used as a reference for institutions and local governments in implementing ASP. A National Action Plan on ASP will be a comprehensive strategy to ensure systematic, planned, and integrated steps involving the active role of all stakeholders in the operationalisation of ASP from the national to the sub-national level.

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## Written by

**Victoria Fanggalda, Ph.D.**

The PRAKARSA

**Darmawan Prasetya**

The PRAKARSA

**Dr. Saut Aritua Sagala**

Resilience Development Initiative

**Dr. Ayu Krishna Yuliatwati**

Indonesia University of Education

**Dr. Maklon Felipus Killa**

Wira Wacana Chistian University

**Rahmah Aulia Zahra**

Resilience Development Initiative

**Debby Paramitasari**

Resilience Development Initiative

**Farijzal Arrafisena**

Resilience Development Initiative

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**Dr. Dominiggus Elcid Li**

Institute of Resource Governance and Social Change (IRGSC)

**John Petrus Talan**

Institute of Resource Governance and Social Change (IRGSC)

**Hestin Kezia Octalina Klaas**

Institute of Resource Governance and Social Change (IRGSC)

## Disclaimer

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