



**18<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE COMCEC  
POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP**

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**EFFECTIVE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROVISION AND  
SOCIOECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE LIGHT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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# Outline

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- The aim and scope of the study
- Section I: COVID-19 Pandemics and Social Assistance
- Section II: Social Assistance and Monitoring and Information Systems
- Section III: Case Study-1, Turkey

# The aim and scope of the study

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- This study has several purposes:
  - Document how member and non-member countries reacted to COVID-19 pandemic in terms of social assistance
  - Present international evidence on how integrated social assistance systems can improve the efficiency of social assistance programs
  - Document how prepared the member countries are in terms of technological and legal infrastructure to move to integrated systems
  - Discuss case four studies in detail
- The ultimate aim: present **a detailed guideline/manual** on how to build integrated systems
  - Technological requirements
  - Legal requirements
  - Population and social registries
  - Coordination

# Method

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- Desk research:
  - Social assistance policies during the COVID-19 Pandemic
  - International evidence on integrated systems
- Detailed survey for member countries:
  - Current technological infrastructure
  - Current legal frameworks
  - Current state of data repository for population or social registries
- Face to face field visits and online interviews on case countries:
  - 4 case countries: Indonesia, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey
  - Meetings with relevant Ministries, Statistical Institutes, Country Offices of International Organizations and NGOs.
  - Field visits: Tunisia and Turkey
  - Online interviews: Indonesia, Sudan.

## Section I

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# COVID-19 Pandemics and Social Assistance

# Covid-19 exposed significant gaps in social protection

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- As of 2020: 47% of global population covered by social protection (of some form)
  - Large gaps in coverage, comprehensiveness and adequacy
  - Most vulnerable: Unemployed, women, informally employed, migrants
  - Effective coverage vs legal coverage: Enforcement, insufficient financing, weak institutional capacities
- Average % of GDP spent on SP: 12.9% globally, vs only 2.5% in lower-income countries
- Financing gap between high and low income countries increased by 30 percent during COVID-19 period
- Disproportionate effects
  - Sectoral level
  - low-skilled vs. high skilled
  - Who who can work from home, and those who cannot

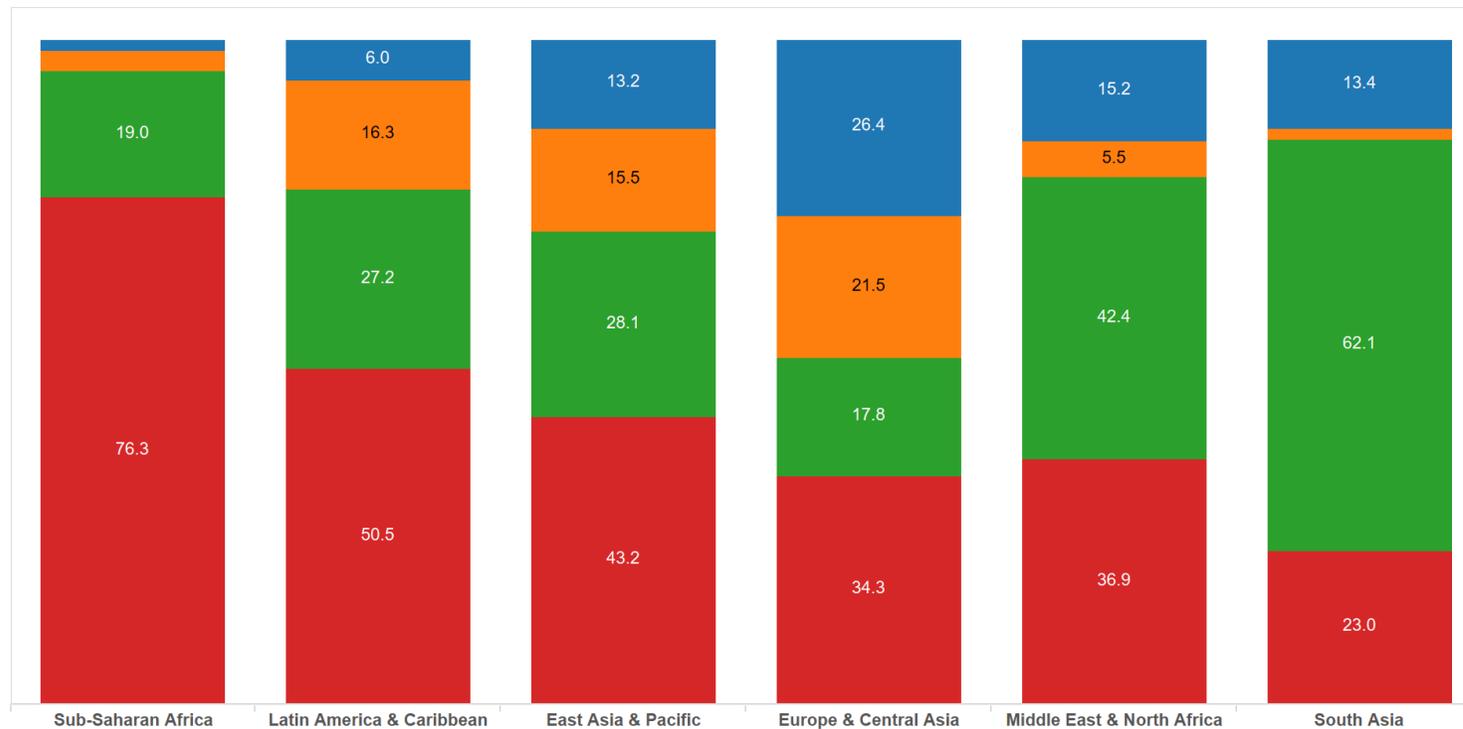
# Unprecedented social policy response

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- Protecting health, jobs and incomes
- High income countries: Mobilization of existing resources + new emergency measures.
  - Starting from healthcare extension to measures against incomes losses
- Low-income: Pressure on fiscal resources and macro policy

# Lessons from Covid-19: "Business-as-usual" SP does not work

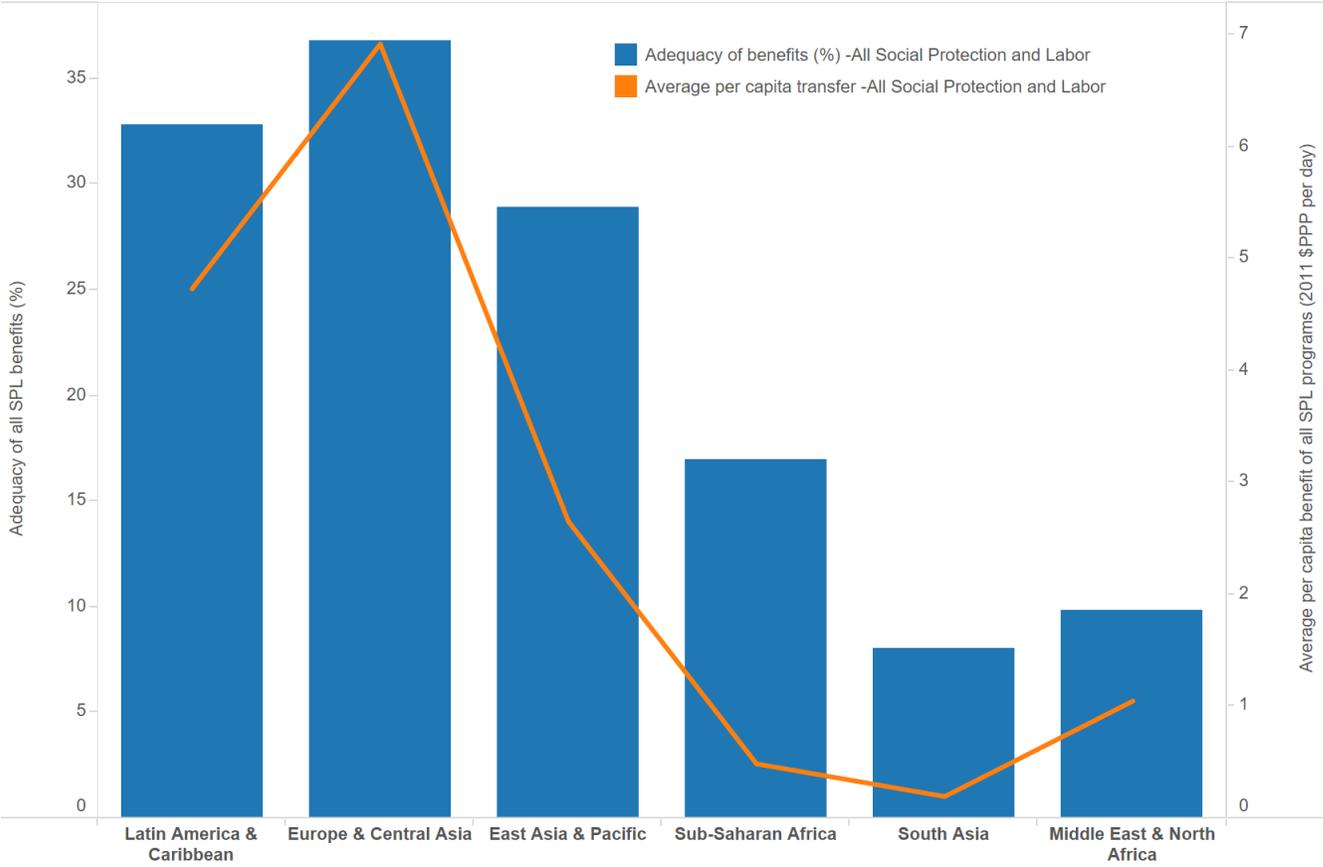
- Universal social protection and social insurance are on the agenda due to that inherent vulnerability of SP exposed



Country's most recent value between 2010 and 2018.

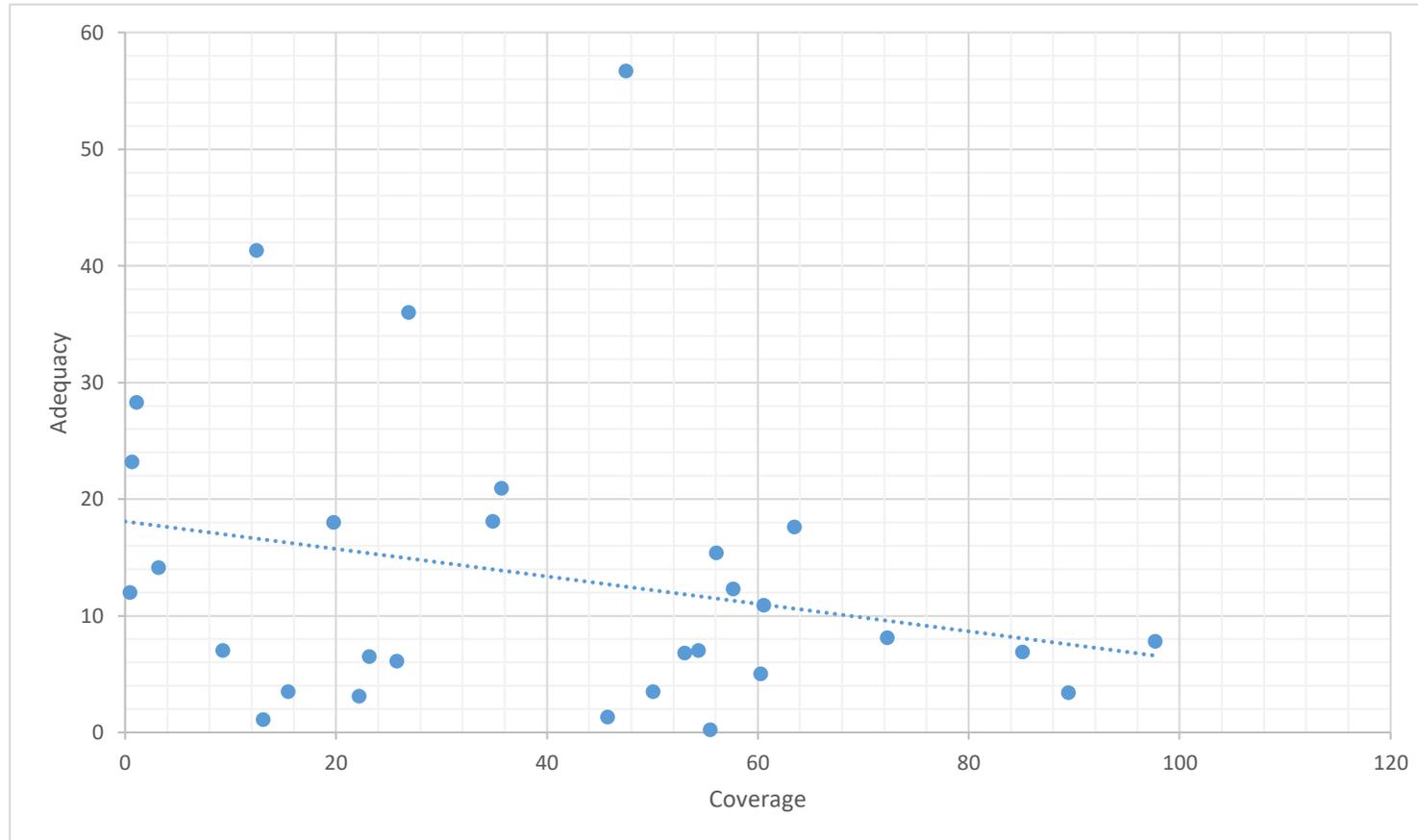
More than one S.. Only social assis..  
Only social insur.. No transfer

# Adequacy and per capita benefits



Country's most recent value between 2010 and 2018.

# OIC countries: SP coverage and adequacy, 2010-2020



# Lessons from Covid-19

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- Most vulnerable groups: migrants, urban poor, women, children
- Cannot ignore “invisible” employees in the informal economy
- SP policies should be aligned with labor market policies
- Short-term measures
  - Recovery will last long, so long-run strategies needed
- Inclusive social protection needed
  - Digital technologies help to integrate, yet, how about those who do not have access to banks, lack digital literacy or simply phones?

# Adaptation to alternative employment types

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- Tailored registration, contribution collection and benefit payment
  - Data sharing between private-public entities
- Harmonize the contribution rates of the self-employed with others
  - Preventing disguised unemployment
- Portability and transferability of entitlements for the mobile workers
  - Social insurance integrates the self-employed
- “Every job counts”: Digital jobs, multiple employers...

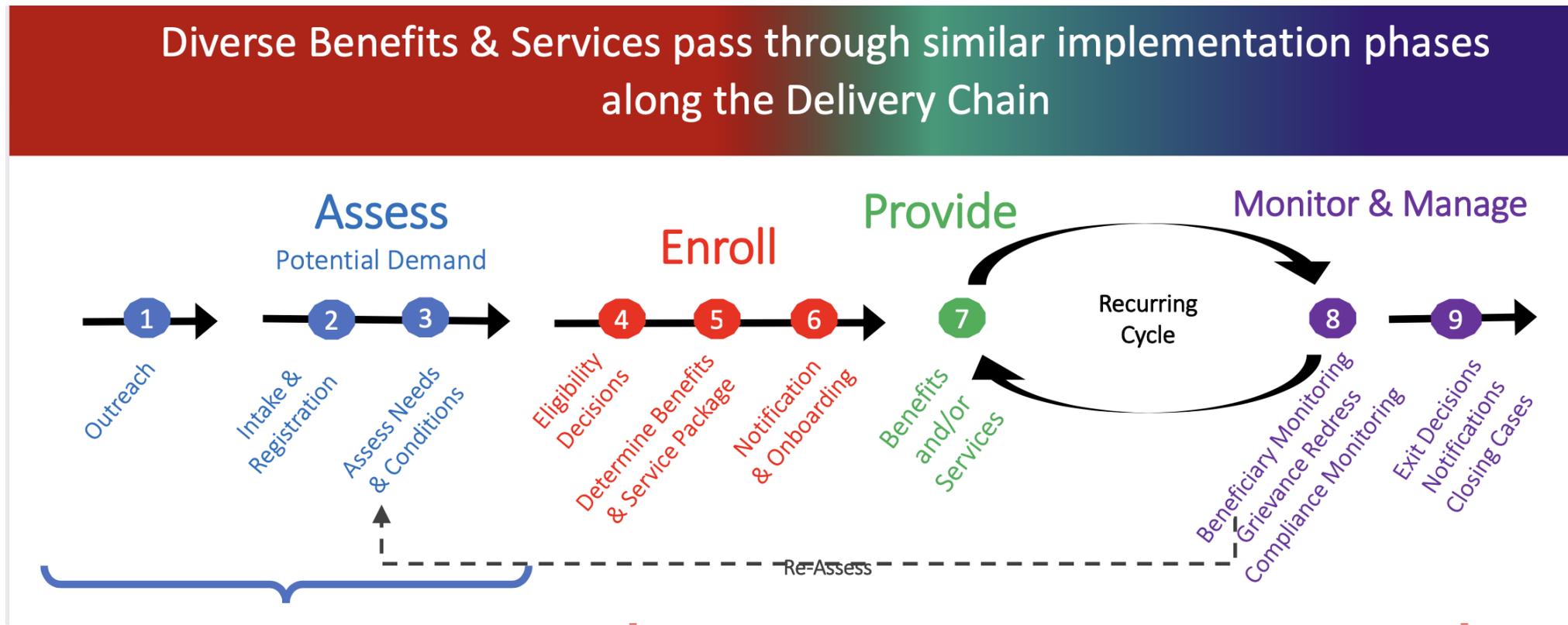
## Section 2

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# Social Assistance and Monitoring and Information Systems

# Social Protection and MIS: Definitions and Concepts

- Integrated Monitoring and Information Systems for SP
  - Needed for efficient implementation of SP components:



# Social Protection and MIS: Definitions and Concepts

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- Aims of integration:
  - Providing coordination and oversight over multiple programs
  - Better determination of eligibility
  - Better coordination of operations and services
- Two types:
  - Social registers
    - Data on potential beneficiaries
    - Centralized data, could be used for simple programs, more comprehensive
    - Should be linked to other programs via software (with unique IDs)
  - Integrated (beneficiary) registries: Combined data from multiple programs
    - Main objective: Coordination and oversight
    - Focusing on existing beneficiaries
    - Primary example: Kenya's Single Registry
    - Tend to be less comprehensive, less integrated with other programs, could be regional

# Social Protection and MIS

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- MIS increasingly popular among developing economies: in 2015, 30 countries already used MIS in some form
- High coverage associated with high inter-operability
- Less coverage associated with on-demand data collection and surveys
- Social registeries ensure higher coverage

# Drivers of country success in MIS for SP

<b>Policy objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Oversight of the multiple schemes</li><li>• Efficient eligibility</li><li>• Social protection as entitlement</li><li>• Life-cycle vulnerabilities addressed or not</li><li>• Policy towards integration</li></ul>
<b>Existing set-up</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Target or universal social protection</li><li>• Conditional or unconditional</li><li>• Managed by government or another entity</li><li>• Level of centralization</li><li>• On-demand data collection or censuses</li><li>• Social registry or integrated registries</li><li>• Level of coverage and adequacy</li><li>• Ability to respond to shocks (prospect of vertical and horizontal integration)</li></ul>
<b>Country context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Existence of funds to maintain and improve the system</li><li>• Staff and financial capacity at administrative level</li><li>• Prospect of technological innovation</li><li>• Legal framework</li><li>• Political will to focus on integration</li></ul>

# COVID-19 and MIS

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- SP is more relevant at the time crisis/shocks
  - Within countries: Poor and vulnerable more exposed to the shocks
  - Between countries: Low-income countries are less resilient and adaptive
- 5 ways to address crises/shocks for social protection (O'Brien 2018)
  - Design tweaks
  - Piggybacking
  - Vertical integration
  - Horizontal integration
  - Alignment
- All need better information systems

# COVID-19 and MIS

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- Adaptative Social Protection (WB): greater flexibility and scalability
- Scaling up: vertical and horizontal expansion
  - Census-type data collection: easier but rigid and slower
- Early warning, risk mapping can show who are more likely to be affected when and to what degree
  - Need better/dynamic data on earnings, risks, vulnerabilities
- Social insurance needed for developing economies
  - Need better data on wages/earning

# MIS for SP and crises

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- 6 areas related to MIS needed to be improved to address shocks (Barca 2019)
  - **Completeness: Is there data on potential new beneficiaries?**
  - **Relevance: How relevant data is to extend additional transfers?**
  - **Currency: How current data is?**
  - **Accessibility: Different institutions have access?**
  - **Accuracy: How accurate data is?**
  - Data protection

## Section 3

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# Case Studies: Turkey

## Selection of Case Countries

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- Indonesia, Sudan, Tunisia, Turkey
- Selection criteria:
  - Two successful member countries as examples
  - Geographical coverage: Asia, Africa, Middle East
  - COVID-19 pandemic response and potential future risks
- Face to face interviews: Tunisia and Turkey
- Online interviews: Indonesia and Sudan

# Case Study 1: Turkey's Social Assistance System

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- The main responsible public body for social assistance is the Directorate General for Social Assistance (DGSA) under the Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS)
  - Responsible for policy making, monitoring and budget allocation
- Social Assistance and Solidarity Encouragement Fund (SASEF) and local Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASF) are critical institutions to deliver social aid to the beneficiaries.
  - Responsible body for evaluating, monitoring and inspection of social assistance applications.
- Each local foundation has Board of Trustees consisting of representatives of municipality, government units, locals, NGOs, and mukhtars.
  - Responsible body for evaluating, monitoring and inspection of social assistance applications.
- There are in total 1,003 SASFs across the 81 provinces of Turkey.
- 8,421 employees in total with 3,921 Social Assistance and Inspection Officers.

# Case Study 1: Turkey's Social Assistance System

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- Social protection expenditures in Turkey: 655.6 billion TRY (approximately 91 billion USD) in 2020,
  - 13 percent of the GDP in 2020.
  - Up by 20.9 percent from 2019.
  - Majority of the social protection expenditures are pension and health insurance related.
  - Old age payments constitute the largest expenditure share in on social protection benefits followed by sickness/health care payments.
- Total amount of social assistance expenditures: 97.8 billion TRY by the end of 2021.
  - 1.74 percent of the GDP in 2021.
  - Increased from 1.33 percent of the GDP in 2015.
- During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the integrated system proved to be highly efficient to reach out to individuals at risk and need.

# Case Study 1: Turkey's Social Assistance System

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- There are more than 40 social assistance programs supervised by MoFSS in Turkey.
- These programs consist of social assistance for families, shelter and food assistance, old age and disability benefits, health support, education support and project assistance.
- Number of households receiving social assistance: 5.9 million.
  - Corresponding to approximately 22.6 percent of all households.
  - Significant increase from the 3 million households in 2015 (15.5 percent of all households)
- Number of households receiving *regular* social assistance: 2.5 million.
  - 2.3 million in 2015

# Case Study 1: Turkey's Integrated Social Assistance System (ISAS)

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- Turkey is among the pioneer countries in transforming its social assistance system from a paper-based into an integrated system.
- ISAS is an e-government system that electronically facilitates all steps related to the management of social assistance, including the application, identification of eligibility requirements, disbursement of funds, and auditing.
- ISAS is based on the Social Assistance Information System (SAIS), a software program developed by the General Directorate of Social Assistance in 2009 which enabled the collection of supporting documentation for social assistance applications.
- The computer-based information system was launched in 2011 as a part of “Digital Transformation Turkey Project”, which integrated data from several institutions and provided additional services to disburse funds, record and track information, and report on programs.

# Case Study 1: Turkey's Integrated Social Assistance System (ISAS)

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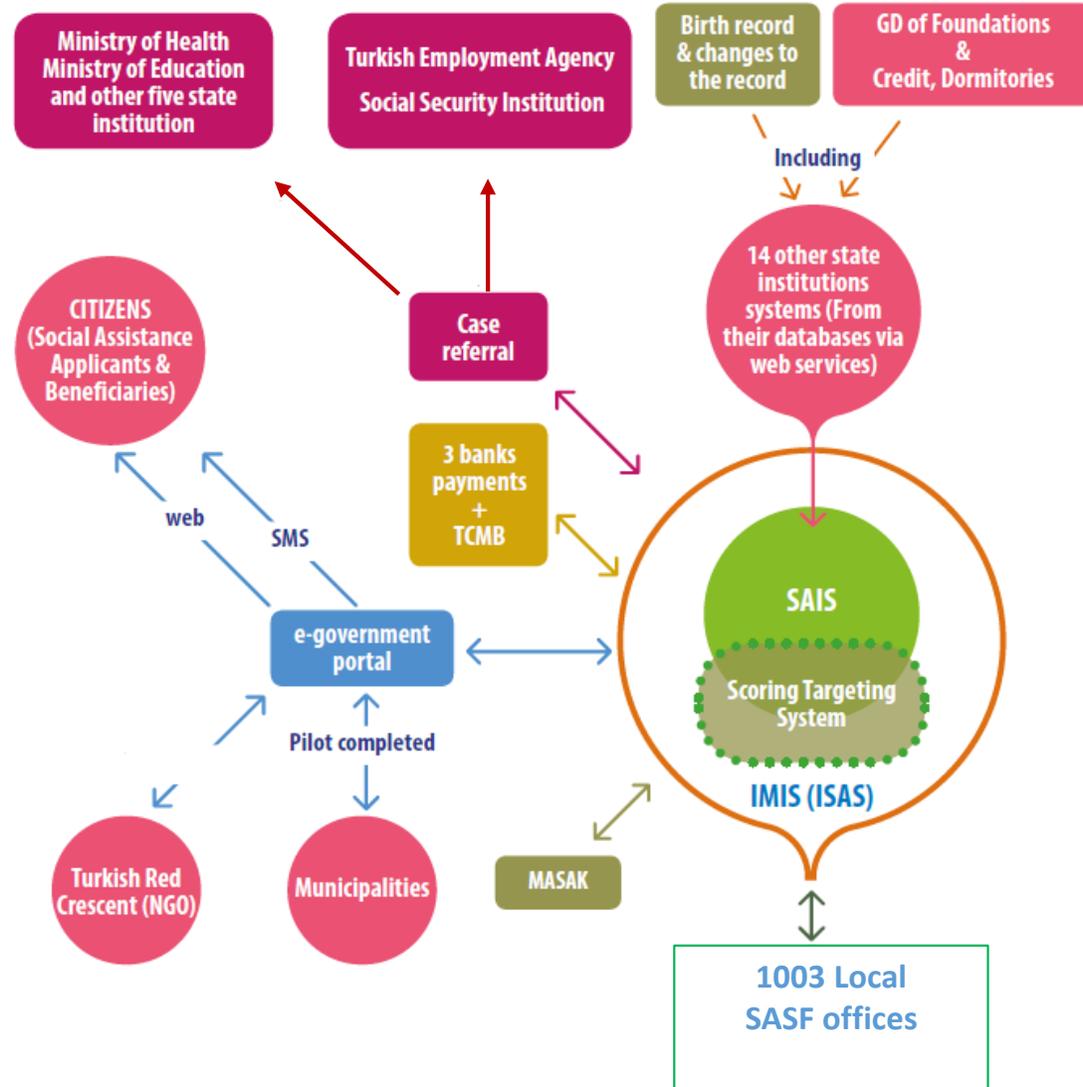
- ISAS was developed in cooperation with the Turkish Scientific and Technological Research Institution (TUBİTAK).
- Previously, applications for social assistance were entirely paper based.
- Each social assistance program had its own eligibility criteria and own process, and citizens had to collect the required documents in hard copy from various organizations to verify their information, such as income, bank statements, land, vehicle and tax registration.
- 17 different documents needed for a citizen's social assistance application, and it took on average 15 days for the social workers collect the appropriate paper documents.

# Case Study 1: Turkey's Integrated Social Assistance System (ISAS)

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- ISAS currently collects data from 28 public and private institutions that can be reached with a single national identity number and all documents can be collected in less than a minute.
  - Includes key ministries such as Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Health.
  - Initially the system was integrated with 22 public institutions.
- Covers 57.7 million individuals, corresponding to approximately 70 percent of the population.

# Case Study 1: How ISAS Operates



Source: MoFSS and World Bank, 2017

# Case Study 1: How ISAS Operates

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Citizens apply to local SASF branches / SASF social workers reach out to potential beneficiaries

SASF staff reach the relevant information collected from 28 institutions upon approval of the applicant with written consent.

ISAS provides poverty scores for the applicants and provide guidance on the social assistance programs the applicant is eligible to benefit from

SASF inspection officers perform the household visits to verify the data and collect additional information (if needed)

Local SASF Board of Trustees evaluate the application and approve or reject the application

Payments are made through bank transfers, or through Postal Offices (PTT) or through a debit-type Social Assistance card

Regular auditing and monitoring (ISAS produces 260 risk indicators and 88 service reports for the use of the inspection officers.

# Case Study 1: How ISAS was Built

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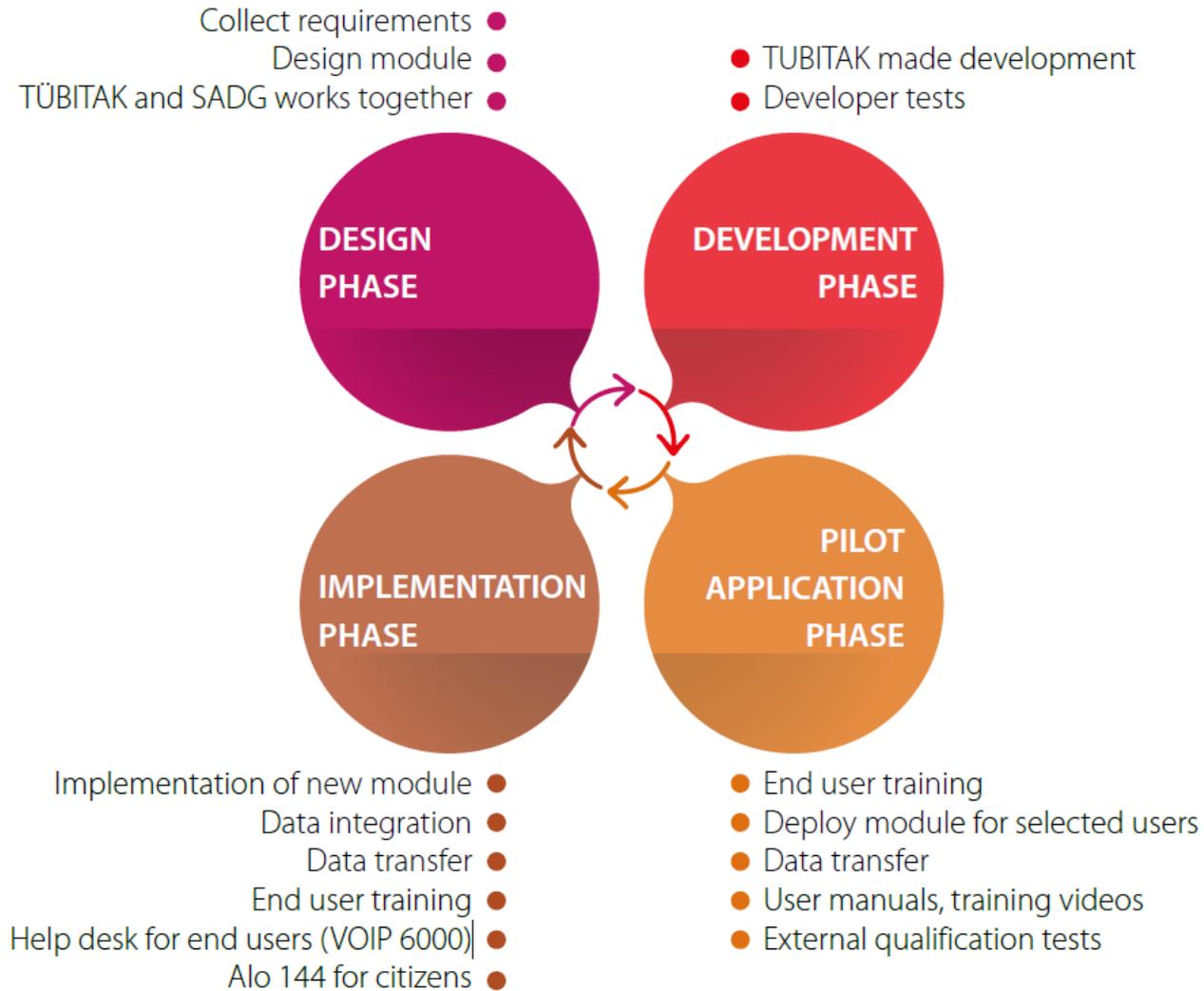
- The system is built in-house using solely the national resources and human capital.
- The building block which facilitated transition into the integrated system was the Digital Transformation Project of Turkey.
  - **2002, MERNIS project:** all population registries were digitalized and individuals' public records started being tracked through a single national identity number
  - **2008, E-Government Gate:** centralized the institutions' public records where all applications can be made electronically under one under one platform.
  - **2009-2015:** ISAS gradually improved through modular upgrades.

# Case Study 1: How ISAS was Built

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- At the initial phase, local SASF branches and DGSA buildings are connected on a virtual network using Virtual Private Network (VPN) technology.
- At the project's completion in July 2009, all SASF and GD computers effectively started operating on the same network and it has become possible to use Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) technologies between the SASFs and the GD buildings.
- Through the IP sets procured in July 2009, it has become possible to make free phone calls between these locations, which has offered significant advantages to the GD and foundations in terms of both cost and data security.
- Very high levels of security: the ISAS infrastructure allows access only through computers connected to the network.
- Data flow within the system is encrypted according to international standards

# Case Study 1: How ISAS was Built



Source: MoFSS and World Bank, 2017

# Case Study 1: Success Factors

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- Existing technological infrastructure and know-how to build and integrated system for social assistance.
  - MERNIS, single population registry and E-Government Gates were key milestones
- Strong political will and commitment, ISAS was endorsed and launched by the Undersecretary of Prime Ministry himself. This facilitated the coordination among public institutions.
- The system was built by the experts and engineers that worked in the same institution, hence social assistance experts were able to convey the needs to software engineers, and test whether the system functioned properly.
- The staff who built the system was highly motivated.

# Case Study 1: Challenges Ahead

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- Social assistance programs have been increasing both in numbers and coverage, and hence it is challenge to main the security of sensitive individual data while at the same time ensuring that the system generates key information in a consistent manner.
- 117 municipalities are currently integrated to the system, however, this number is expected to increase significantly over the coming periods. Municipalities have also their own social assistance programs and the system needs to account for these programs.
- Turkey has been increasingly subject to natural disasters, such as wild fires and floods in line with climate change. The system has to be flexible and up to date to reach out to all citizens at risk in the case of shocks.

## Section IV: Next Steps

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- Field visit to Tunisia (May)
- Online interviews with authorities in Indonesia and Sudan (May and June)
- Surveys sent to member countries (May)
- Analysis of surveys (July)
- Preparation of a comprehensive guideline (July-August)
- Finalization and presentation of the report (October)