



The Virgin Islands Social Protection Policy



Ministry of Health and Social Development
Government of the Virgin Islands

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce the British Virgin Islands Social Protection Policy, which aims to establish an integrated social protection system that promotes development and transformation, reduces vulnerability, and strengthens resilience. This policy is especially important given the economic and social impact of the 2017 disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. While some social assistance programmes already exist in the Virgin Islands, they are fragmented, insufficient, and inequitable.

The British Virgin Islands Social Protection Policy establishes the main objectives for a shock responsive social protection system in the Territory. It guides the development and implementation of specific initiatives that align with the Government's priorities to invest in the social and economic well-being of its residents and to provide protection to individuals, families and communities in its role as a duty bearer.

The primary objectives of the British Virgin Islands Social Protection Policy are to create a responsive system of social protection within the Territory. It serves as a guide for specific initiatives that align with the Government's priorities, including investing in the well-being of its residents and providing protection for individuals, families, and communities. The findings and recommendations of the Review of Social Assistance Benefits and Grants Administration Systems have made it clear that there are gaps in the existing social protection system that must be addressed in order to make it more inclusive and responsive to shocks. This policy is a crucial step taken by the government towards reducing poverty and vulnerability to economic, social, and natural crises. It builds upon the BVI's commitment to poverty reduction as outlined in various policy documents, development plans, and budget allocations such as the National Sustainable Development Plan.

The process of developing this policy has been transparent and collaborative, with input from key stakeholders such as government departments, ministries, and civil society organizations. UNICEF and SIAPAC have provided invaluable support throughout this process.

I urge all parties involved to implement this policy by designing interventions that address the priority areas identified. I hope that through its implementation, we can strengthen the resilience of Virgin Islanders and ensure a secure population that contributes to the economic development of the BVI. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our development partners, particularly UNICEF and SIAPAC, for their unwavering support in creating the British Virgin Islands Social Protection Policy.

Tasha Bertie (Ms.)
Ag. Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Health and Social Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ministry of Health and Social Development extends its appreciation to the various institutions and individuals who played a crucial role in the development of a framework document that forms the basis of this Policy.

The process of developing this policy involved consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders, including Ministries, Departments, and Civil Society Organizations. We are grateful for the valuable input provided by representatives from important areas such as Social Development, Education, Health, Finance, Culture, Labour and Trade, Social Security Board, Royal Virgin Islands Police Force, and Family Support Network.

Special recognition is given to those who played pivotal roles in the development of this Policy, including Ms. Petrona Davies, former Permanent Secretary. The work on this Policy began in 2018 with Zehra Rizvi, Humanitarian Policy Advisor, supported by UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Office. This led to a draft Social Protection Policy. In 2021, a consulting firm - Social Impact Assessment and Policy Analysis Corporation (SIAPAC) - was employed to develop a national social protection policy framework and action plan for the Virgin Islands. With extensive research and stakeholder consultations, SIAPAC produced a draft policy, action plan, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework (MEL).

We extend our thanks to our development partners, particularly UNICEF and SIAPAC, for their support in developing the British Virgin Islands Social Protection Policy. We value your contributions and look forward to future collaborations.

This report will serve as a guide for providing social protection services and programs to all individuals and communities in our country. The Ministry anticipates continued interest and support from all partners as we work towards achieving our vision of improved living standards through Universal Social Protection that meets basic needs and provides opportunities for growth and prosperity for everyone.

ACRONYMS

BVI	British Virgin Islands
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCRIF	Caribbean Catastrophic Risk Insurance Facility
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CDEMA	Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency
COHSOD	Council on Human and Social Development
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPA	Country Poverty Assessment
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DDM	Department of Disaster Management
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MIS	Management Information System
MHSD	Ministry of Health and Social Development
MRO	Monitoring and Reporting Officer
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NDMC	National Disaster Management Council
NHI	National Health Insurance
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NSDP	National Sustainable Development Plan
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
OECS	Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
SDD	Social Development Department
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSB	Social Security Board
USD	United States Dollar
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF/ECA	United Nations Children's Fund Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area
USP	Universal Social Protection

SECTION 1. THE NEED FOR A SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY

1.1 RATIONALE

The Government of Virgin Islands launched a National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) in March 2023. The Plan is aimed at ensuring that the Virgin Islands fulfils its responsibilities to its people and aligns with international commitments, most specifically the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 1 aims to ‘end poverty in all its forms’, and under that, there is SDG 1.3 which reflects the role of social protection in ending poverty. SDG 1.3 specifically refers to the implementation of *nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable*. Social protection has an important role to play in achieving a range of other SDG goals including ending hunger, supporting gender equality and empowerment of women, reducing inequalities, and combatting climate change.

The NSDP builds on the 2018 Recovery and Development Plan that followed three major disasters in 2017¹ which highlighted the importance of building household resilience through well-targeted social protection service delivery, and strengthening the role of social protection in disaster recovery. The NSDP recognises that social protection is a fundamental human right, and a central element in sustainable poverty reduction and promoting human dignity. It highlights the importance of an effective social protection system to equitable growth and development, magnified by the social and economic impacts of the 2017 natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plan, therefore, calls for greater emphasis on a redesigned social protection system that will be more adaptive and responsive to shocks as a means of safeguarding the population. Under Goal 1 which aims to achieve a future where *Islanders are empowered for a Sustainable Future in an Inclusive Vibrant Society, Living Fulfilling Lives* falls National Outcome #2 – *Adaptive and Shock Responsive Social Protection Systems, Leaving No One Behind*. The Plan envisages that “by 2036 BVI will have a modern and dynamic social protection system – including legislation, policy and a digital social registry”.

As a reflection of this continued commitment to social protection reform, and in recognition of the critical role that social protection played in national recovery from the 2017 disasters (in particular the Emergency Cash Transfers supported through a Joint Cash Platform²), the Ministry of Health and Social Development (MHSD) initiated a process of developing a strategic framework for sector strengthening and specifically began the preparation of initial drafts of a Social Protection Policy. Key to policy formulation was the recognition that strengthening social protection meant more than just improving social assistance performance. It includes building an integrated, multi-sectoral social protection system that can strengthen household, community, and national resilience, adequately prepare for and respond to shocks, and alleviate poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle.

Strengthening the social protection system is also fundamental to improving the quality of the Territory’s governance. This was underscored in a Commission of Inquiry Report published by the United Kingdom Government in April 2022, and subsequent audits that pointed to the need to consolidate and improve the governance of social assistance programmes that were being administered by various governmental entities – thereby increasing transparency and accountability. As part of the Government’s *Framework for Implementation of the Recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry Report and Other Reforms*, the Cabinet decided that all social assistance programmes would be transferred to the Ministry of Health and Social Development from mid-2022. The Ministry was also required to conduct a comprehensive review of the Territory’s “welfare benefits and grants system”, which was completed in December 2022 with technical and financial assistance from UNICEF. The Consultant’s Report

Social assistance falls under the Ministry of Health and Social Development (MHSD), with other aspects of social protection falling under other agencies. The Ministry “seeks to provide a caring and integrated system of health and social services that facilitates human development and improves the quality of life in the Virgin Islands” through, among other means, developing proactive policies, legislation, strategies, and programmes for the health and social services sectors”.

The Vision of the Ministry is “that all residents of the Territory are able to maximise their opportunities for health and social well-being as key resources for life and development”.

The Mission of the Ministry is to “provide leadership that promotes health, social well-being and a safe environment as positive resources for living and sustainable development”.

<https://bvi.gov.vg/content/ministry-health-and-social-development>

¹ Disaster Recovery Coordinating Committee (2018). *Recovery to Development Plan of the Virgin Islands*, prepared by the Disaster Recovery Coordinating Committee of the Government of the Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands, <https://bvirecovery.vg/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Recovery-to-Development-Plan.pdf>

² See the evaluation of the programme at <https://www.calpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/1541608778.BVI-JCP-General-Case-study-1.pdf>

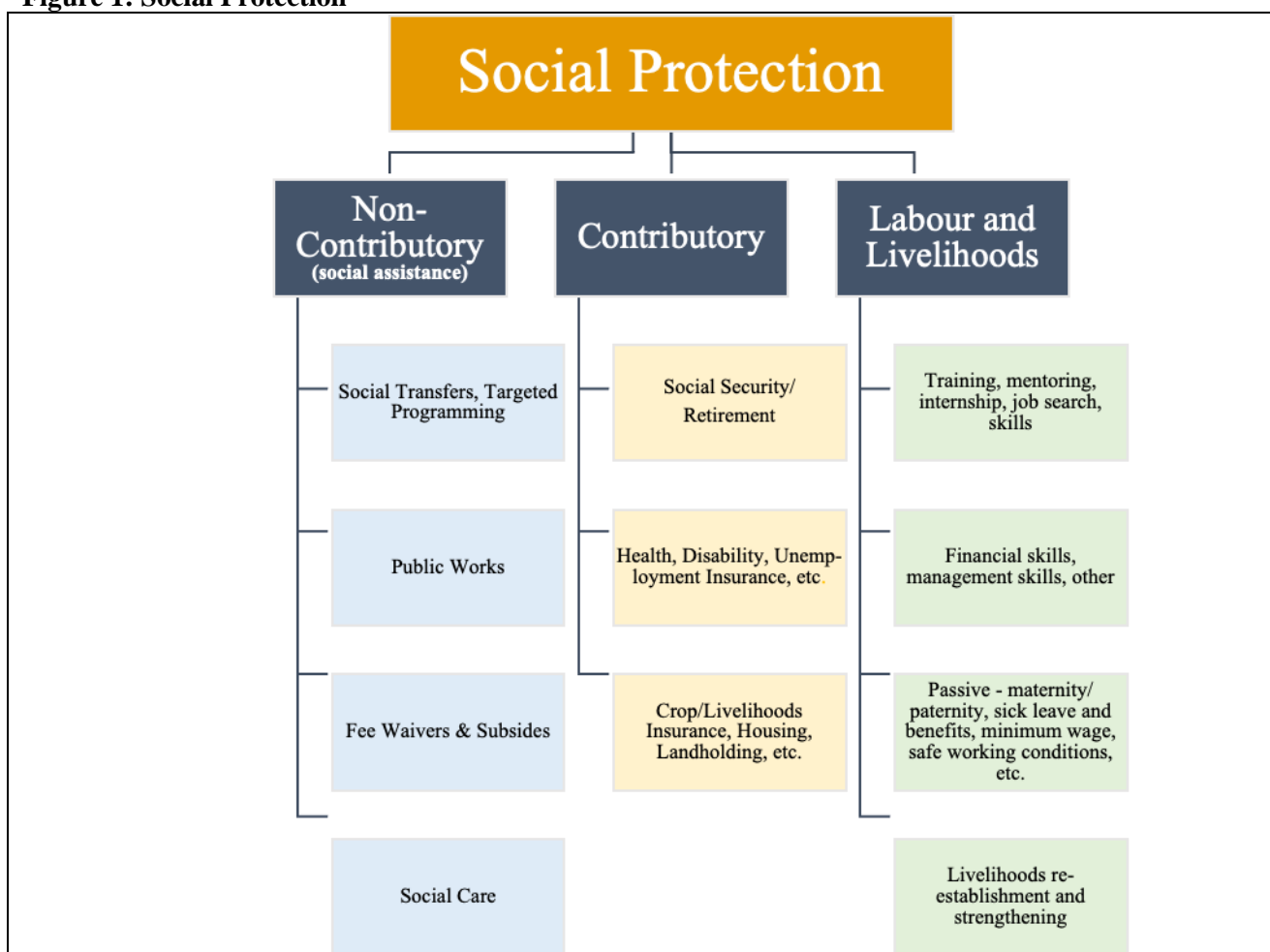
reinforced the notion that reforming the system of social assistance and other grants that existed prior to July 2022 was imperative. In taking forward these reforms, the Government was advised to further streamline the procedures for allocating social assistance benefits and make better use of modern information technology to make administrative processes simpler and more transparent. The Reviewer also pointed to the need to bridge several gaps in the social protection system to reduce levels of poverty and vulnerability in the Territory.

1.2 SOCIAL PROTECTION

Given that important reforms are now underway, and considering that there is strong demand for improving social assistance and work towards integrated social protection, a modern and comprehensive Social Protection Policy is essential. The Policy reflects the Territory’s commitment to improve governance in social assistance, and for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of social protection delivery. In so doing, it aims to promote social and economic development, reduce poverty and inequality, build a strong and cohesive society, and reach rights-holders with the services they deserve.

While social assistance is a key element of social protection, social protection itself also includes contributory social protection programming, community-based social care programming, labour market and livelihoods programming, and shock-responsive social protection. A streamlined version of this is included in the following figure, with shock-responsiveness falling across the categories:

Figure 1: Social Protection



Done competently, social protection offers a powerful means to alleviate poverty, build resilience, and improve the quality of life of families and communities. And it offers a critical means to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

1.3 POLICY DEVELOPMENT

With Government’s clear commitment to strengthening social protection, the Ministry of Health and Social Development spearheaded the development of the Social Protection Policy with support from UNICEF. The

design and adoption of this Social Protection Policy reflect Government’s commitment to providing efficient and effective social protection services with a high return on investment. As a reflection of this commitment, this Policy is attended by a *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework* that focuses on measuring *Policy* implementation. This means that Government has the responsibility to report against policy achievements and deficiencies and to put forward progressive and remedial actions necessary to improve delivery and accountability. This also contributes to the NSDP and to meeting international monitoring and evaluation standards³.

To operationalise this Policy and to support Policy implementation, it is accompanied by a costed *Action Plan* that elaborates priority actions, desired outputs, and measurable indicators to assess progress. To enable both Plan and Policy implementation, the Action Plan includes human and financial resource requirements and costs of planning activities for those actions that are not already covered by existing human and other resources. The Action Plan is also attended by a MEL Framework, but in this case the Framework is focused on supporting operational delivery at activity and output levels.

This Policy will also help inform the creation of a Social Protection Act, and wider policy, legal and institutional reforms throughout the social protection system⁴.

1.4 CONTEXT

The Virgin Islands is a United Kingdom Overseas Territory 151 km² in size where ultimate executive authority is vested in the British monarchy, represented by a Governor appointed by the monarch on the advice of the British Government. As per the 2007 Constitution, the head of Government is the Premier, with a Cabinet nominated by the Premier and appointed and co-chaired by the Governor. The Virgin Islands is a parliamentary democracy with regular elections, normally held every four years, to elect members to the single legislative chamber House of Assembly with thirteen members (including the Premier), as well as the Speaker and the Attorney General⁵.



The last census was conducted in 2010⁶, giving a population of some 28,504. This is estimated to have grown to over 30,000 as of 2023⁷. Sixteen of the sixty islands are inhabited, while half of the population lives in urban areas, and the population is concentrated on the largest island of Tortola (83%) (where the capital Road Town is located), and the second island Virgin Gorda (with 14%), followed by Jost Van Dyke (with 1%) and Anegada (also with 1%).

The average household size was 2.6 persons. Well over half (61%) of the population was born outside the Territory, including about 33.6% who have obtained citizenship status.

The Virgin Islands has one of the world’s highest Human Development Index (HDI) ratings, at 0.945 out of the possible highest score of 1. This ranking is based on high levels of social development and social service provision, and a per capita Gross Domestic Product of USD34,246 (2017 estimate)⁸. This high HDI rate reflects longevity (with a life expectancy of almost 80 years), 100% access to improved drinking water and sanitation, and an average of twelve years of education⁹.

³ See <http://www.bvi.gov.vg/media-centre/consultations-sustainable-development-plan-moves-forward>

⁴ This is guided by a recent report outlining legislative drafting requirements to achieve social assistance reform. See SPRI (2023), *Policy Brief: Basic Instructions for Legislative Drafting to Achieve the Policy Objectives Set Out in the Proposals for Reform of the Social Assistance Benefit System and the Administration of Institutional Grants*, prepared by C. De Neubourg, Social Policy Research Institute for UNICEF ECA, mimeo.

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/place/British-Virgin-Islands>

⁶ https://bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/resources/virgin_islands_population_and_housing_census_2010.pdf

⁷ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/british-virgin-islands-population/>. The CIA World Factbook gives a much higher estimate at 37,891. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/british-virgin-islands/>

⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/british-virgin-islands/>

⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/british-virgin-islands/>

Nevertheless, despite a high development rating, the 2010 census¹⁰ considered monthly individual income and found that 29.1% of the population earned ‘relatively low income’, defined as income that is 80% or less of the median income. Poverty was at a much lower rate of 9.9%, according to the census, while it was twice as high for women (13.3%) as for men (6.5%). Other data from a 2002/03 poverty assessment¹¹ found that children were more likely to live in poverty than adults and that households with higher numbers of children were more likely to be living in poverty. The findings highlight the fact that, while the Territory has a high standard of living, levels of poverty remain of concern, especially for women and children.

Of the three main islands, the smallest proportion of the population classified as ‘low income’ was found on the main island of Tortola, with those in the very low-income category highest on Jost Van Dkyle. Women were twice as likely as men to fall into the lowest income category and overall were 50% more likely than men to fall into the two lowest income categories. Citizens were less likely to fall into low-income categories and had income some 30% higher than non-citizens, reflecting the fact that a number of migrants hold relatively low paying positions.

In 2017 the Virgin Islands was devastated by a rapid succession of extreme weather events, beginning with a deep tropical wave that was followed by two Category 5 hurricanes. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates declined by 3.7% due to these disasters, and the devastation exceeded the Territory’s GDP.

Rapid investment in reconstruction led to growth of 3.3% in 2018, but the collapse of the world tourism market due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in negative economic growth for 2020¹². While the economy is somewhat diversified, especially compared to other more tourist-dependent Caribbean countries and territories, its reliance on tourism had grown in recent years. A 2020 COVID-19 impact assessment estimated the GDP declined between 11-13% in the first six months of the pandemic¹³. The study on the impact of COVID-19 also suggested an increase in unemployment from 2.9% in 2015 to 17% in 2020. Higher levels of unemployment were expected among non-Belongers and female workers. The 2015 unemployment rate was much higher for females (4.1%) than males (1.5%), and this gap has likely worsened.

1.5 RENEWED COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Virgin Islands’ response to the triple disasters of 2017 has shown what can be delivered if social protection is properly resourced and when a range of actors work together. The Government’s commitment to recovery from the disasters of 2017 and the relative wealth of the country showed what was possible more broadly. Its weathering of the COVID-19 pandemic and its ability to provide social protection services to growing numbers in need reflect lessons learned.

High living standards co-exist with stubborn pockets of poverty and patterns of vulnerability that highlight the importance of effective social assistance delivery and social policy coherence and coordination. Low levels of unemployment underline the critical role that contributory programmes do and can play within the social protection sector. Additional attention to effective labour market programming will help ensure that people have the skills necessary to better meet labour market needs and are fairly compensated and adequately protected from life-cycle risks. In so doing this will help reduce poverty, inequality, and vulnerability.

Through its recent actions, and as reflected in the National Sustainable Development Plan, the Government of the Virgin Islands renews its commitment to supporting strengthened social protection sector integration and service delivery. Social protection in this regard means social assistance, contributory social protection programming (i.e., social insurance), labour market programming, as well as adaptive and shock-responsive social protection to strengthen resilience and response, as per the figure in Section 1.2 above.

1.6 ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL SOCIAL PROTECTION

Universal Social Protection (USP) refers to the rights of all persons to social protection, achieved through a nationally defined system of policies and programmes that provide equitable access for all people, and that protects them throughout their lives against poverty and risks to their livelihoods and well-being. This

¹⁰ https://bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/resources/virgin_islands_population_and_housing_census_2010.pdf

¹¹ Referred to in https://www.unicef.org/Child_Poverty_in_the_ECA_WEB_VERSION.pdf

¹² Caribbean Development Bank (2020). *Country Economic Review 2019: Virgin Islands*, prepared by the Caribbean Development Bank, Bridgetown, Barbados.

¹³ <https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20caribbean/attachments/publications/2020/covid-19%20heat%20report%20-%20human%20and%20economic%20assessment%20of%20impact%20-%20british%20virgin%20islands.pdf?la=en&vs=3511>

protection can be provided through a range of mechanisms, including cash and in-kind transfers, contributory and non-contributory schemes, and programmes that enhance human capital, productive assets, and access to employment. This would take place within the context of a nation's progressive realisation of universal coverage based on capacity, context, and challenges. It involves the identification and expansion of programme reach, policy development and the identification and securing of financing that would best achieve universality.

For the Virgin Islands, there are important opportunities to advance towards Universal Social Protection. The opportunities presented by a well-educated and skilled labour force, including citizens and permanent and temporary residents, as well as its status as a United Kingdom Overseas Territory, gives the Virgin Islands a level of flexibility in national development that many other small island states may not have. Further, the reforms being put into place as agreed following the United Kingdom's review have the potential to advance the Virgin Islands' progress towards USP.

Having said this, despite these advantages, the narrowness and openness of the economy and the challenges posed by natural disasters weaken the ability of the Territory to attain USP. This Policy aims to build on the strengths of the Territory while reducing these risks.

SECTION 2. VIRGIN ISLANDS APPROACH TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Section outlines the Government’s **commitment to the alignment of this Policy with international, regional and national strategies, policies, plans, and protocols**, outlines the Virgin Islands’ social protection **vision, mission, aim and objectives**, and specifies commitments consistent with the Territory’s intention to progressively advance towards **Universal Social Protection**.

2.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Social assistance is largely governed by the Public Assistance Act of 2013¹⁴. Social Security is governed by the Social Security Act of 1980¹⁵ (as amended) and a series of follow-on regulations¹⁶. The Social Security Board also oversees the administration of a National Health Insurance scheme adopted in 2016 which provides access to a wide range of services to all persons covered and where premiums are based on ability to pay. Contributory pension schemes are offered by private sector service providers for private sector employees, regulated by the Ministry of Finance. Pensions for Public Officers are governed by the Pensions Act and are fully funded by Government.

The Public Assistance Committee established under the 2013 Public Assistance Act is a statutory agency that decides on individual eligibility for, and terms of, social assistance grants. The Chief Social Development Officer receives applications for Public Assistance through various means and forwards completed applications to the Committee. The Committee reviews all applications and decides on whether to award social assistance and makes decisions on funds to be made available.

To achieve a rights-based approach to social protection, the 2013 Public Assistance Act will need to be replaced with a Social Protection Act that is aligned with this Policy and with reforms underway in social assistance. There is a particular need to expand legal provisions to respond to multi-sectoral matters and the integrated objectives of social protection sector reform. This has been included in the Action Plan.

2.3 POLICY ALIGNMENT

National development in the Virgin Islands is guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as highlighted through the **National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP)**. For social protection, the most important is SDG 1.3 falling under Goal 1 on ‘ending poverty in all its forms’ which refers to the implementation of *nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable*. The NSDP articulates Government’s recognition that poverty has various dimensions, and reducing and eliminating poverty can be achieved by enhancing opportunities and capabilities in a manner that also promotes social justice.

It emphasises that social protection is key to addressing multiple dimensions of poverty and vulnerability, and speaks directly to its importance under Goal 1: *Islanders are empowered for a Sustainable Future in an Inclusive Vibrant Society, Living Fulfilling Lives - National Outcome #3 - Adaptive and Shock Responsive Social Protection Systems, Leaving no one Behind*. In this vein, the NSDP calls for “poverty policies and strategies” that will consider, “a joined-up approach underpinned by collaboration among public policymakers, civil society, and the private sector to create appropriate solutions for eliminating poverty and creating the enabling environment to increase employment opportunities and entrepreneurship; as well as creating vibrant and economically viable rural communities that support alternative and sustainable livelihoods; and ensuring that there is adequate shelter, housing and social infrastructure for all”.

In recent years development in the Virgin Islands has been guided in particular by the **Recovery to Development Plan**¹⁷ issued in 2018 as an expression of national development intent following the three disasters of 2017. The Recovery to Development Plan gave a stated aim of providing “social protection to every vulnerable member of society and ensuring their basic needs are met” (page v). As elaborated in the Plan, Government recognised that social protection was indeed a critical element in building resilience at

¹⁴ http://www.bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/resources/Public%20Assistance%20Act%2C%202013_0.pdf

¹⁵ http://www.bvissb.vg/PDF_files/26Benefits_Legislation.pdf

¹⁶ http://www.bvissb.vg/PDF_files/23Social_Security_Ordinance.pdf

¹⁷ Government of Virgin Islands (2018). *Recovery to Development Plan of the Virgin Islands*, prepared by the Government of the Virgin Islands, Road Town, Tortola, Virgin Islands.

household and community levels and enabling recovery. The Plan goes on to note (page 19) that “social protection has always been a key focus of the Territory’s human and social development programme. Post-disaster, it is even more critical that social protection programmes and initiatives are functional, and where necessary ‘shored up’ or new disaster-specific programmes introduced”. The Plan goes on to note that social assessments were necessary to inform this expanded role for social protection to inform the ‘design and implementation of a new social protection strategy’ (page 22). This Policy reflects in part the momentum that comes from the implementation of the Recovery to Development Plan.

The **National Physical Development Plan**¹⁸, issued in 2019, focuses on land use planning and the built environment in the context of climate change, environmental protection, and fair and equitable development. For social development, of particular relevance were discussions around affordable housing, amenities and services within communities and walking distance, access to transport, safety and security, greenspace and parks, and specific and repeated mention of the need for significantly improved access by those with physical disabilities to physical infrastructure and transport. Physical development planning now incorporates hazard mitigation into all physical plans, and all environmental assessments must consider these impacts. The Social Protection Policy recognises the role that physical planning can play in sustainable livelihoods, economic opportunities, and disability access, among others.

Health system policies and mechanisms designed to support universal health coverage are convergent with the objectives of poverty and vulnerability reduction, since they ensure access to health services and that no one suffers undue financial burden from healthcare payments. The **National Health Insurance Act** (GoVI, 2015¹⁹) is a contributory social insurance scheme provided to all BVI residents who have paid into the scheme. This includes both formally employed persons and self-employed persons. It offers a range of benefits to enrolled persons, and covers the majority of residents of the Territory.

The Social Protection Policy also has a vital role to play in disaster preparedness and response. The Territory’s **Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Policy**²⁰ (GoVI, 2009), the Recovery to Development Plan (GoVI, 2018)²¹ and the Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy²² (GoVI, 2019) envisages that the “negative effects and impacts of hazards will be reduced through the implementation of sound policies, practices and programmes aimed at reducing risk” – to ensure the full integration of disaster management plans in the development and management cycle of projects within an efficient Government structure and grounded in community support. The CDM Strategic Framework²³ specifically calls for the development of a shock-responsive social protection system, which would help to ensure rapid, appropriate, and effective mobilization of assistance to persons in need, especially those living in poverty who have limited capacities to manage disaster impacts. In line with the Disaster Management Act of 2019²⁴ (GoVI, 2019), the Social Protection Policy aims to contribute to increased economic security and resilience of the population through the integration of disaster risk management concepts within its framework and action plan. Further, the Government has mainstreamed disaster risk management in its development plans and sectoral plans.

In the wake of the 2017 disasters, the Virgin Islands initiated an expansive set of social protection schemes aimed at meeting immediate disaster needs and assisting in recovery. Delivery was found to be efficient and effective, with low operational costs and high reach and relatively good targeting of services²⁵. The Financial Assistance Programme implemented in 2017 and 2018 in collaboration with the BVI Red Cross and other

¹⁸ <https://bvi.gov.vg/content/national-physical-development-plan-british-virgin-islands>. This was issued in draft version only; no final version is available online.

¹⁹ See the explanation of the scheme in <https://www.vinhi.vg>

²⁰ https://eservices.gov.vg/gazette/sites/eservices.gov.vg.gazette/files/archiveattachments/G00383_The%20Virgin%20Islands%20Comprehensive%20Disaster%20Management%20Policy.pdf

²¹ GoVI (2018). Recovery to Development Plan of the Virgin Islands, Disaster Recovery Coordinating Committee, Government of the Virgin Islands, British Virgin Islands. https://bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/resources/recovery_to_development_plan_document.pdf

²² GoVI (2019). **Comprehensive Disaster Management Policy**, Department of Disaster Management, Government of Virgin Islands, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

https://eservices.gov.vg/gazette/sites/eservices.gov.vg.gazette/files/archiveattachments/G00383_The%20Virgin%20Islands%20Comprehensive%20Disaster%20Management%20Policy.pdf

²³ Also contained in:

https://eservices.gov.vg/gazette/sites/eservices.gov.vg.gazette/files/archiveattachments/G00383_The%20Virgin%20Islands%20Comprehensive%20Disaster%20Management%20Policy.pdf

²⁴ GoVI (2019). **Virgin Islands Disaster Management Act, 2019**, Government of Virgin Islands, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

<https://www.bvibeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BILL-Disaster-Management-Act-2019.pdf>

²⁵ Government of Virgin Islands (2018). **Final Report on the Financial Assistance Programme: Implications and Next Steps for the Ministry of Health and Social Services** as well as the **Final Report on the Household Assistance Programme: Implications and Next Steps for the Ministry of Health and Social Services**, both prepared by the Government of the Virgin Islands, Road Town, Tortola, Virgin Islands. See the concise review report on the Joint Cash Programme prepared by Caritas, CRS, British Red Cross and British Virgin Islands Red Cross (2020), **British Virgin Islands Joint Cash Platform: Case Study for Learning on Collaborative Cash Programmes**, issued in Road Town, Tortola, Virgin Islands.

partners was especially important for advancing social protection for three main reasons: 1) it showed that social protection services could be scaled up for existing targeted households and horizontally expanded to cover new households; 2) it showed how social protection delivery was central to overall economic recovery; and 3) it showed how Government could deliver across several ministries working with national civil society organisations and international non-governmental organisations. The response to the 2017 disasters highlighted how rapid progress could be made in reaching those most in need, and how Government and civil society could work well together. Despite this, however, the programme ran parallel to Government's overall delivery systems, rather than through its agencies, underlining challenges in scaling up and expanding assistance to those in need.

While the Virgin Islands was already increasingly committed to environmentally sustainable development, as reflected in documents such as the **Climate Change Adaptation Policy**²⁶ (GoVI, 2012), and more recently the publication in of the **Strategic Blue Economy Roadmap** (GoVI, 2020)²⁷ on ocean resource management²⁸, the links between environmental management and economic and social development were reflected in the Recovery to Development Plan²⁹ referenced above on rebuilding after successive disasters.

The Social Protection Policy aims to address gendered risks over the course of a lifetime through the promotion of gender equality, gender equity, and social inclusion; ensuring that social protection systems are designed to meet the specific needs of women, girls, and marginalized groups. In these respects, it is committed to enabling the **National Policy for Gender Equity and Equality**³⁰ (GoVI, 2011). The stated vision was “to combat and change systems that preserve the gender-based distribution of power and resources at the societal level, and ... create the conditions for women and men to enjoy the same power and opportunities to influence their own lives”. Social protection can promote the National Gender Policy's objectives around gender-based violence and respective services, child support and maintenance, unwanted teenage pregnancy, mental health, and civil society engagement.

A 2019 review on the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration³¹ reported progress in implementing the National Action Plan for Gender Equity and Equality, including legal progress, the establishment of the National Domestic Violence Protocol (MoHSD, 2014)³² to enable the 2011 Domestic Violence Act³³, and more women serving in leadership positions in government and society. Challenges including inadequate political and technical support to the gender infrastructure, major data gaps, the lack of gender-responsive budgeting, the lack of regular reporting by various ministries, and little progress in changing social norms and gender stereotypes that undermine rights are all joint challenges that the Social Protection Policy will aim to support.

This Social Protection Policy further aims to support the vision of the **National Youth Policy** (GoVI, 2014)' the document covers the period 2014-2019 but it still in place³⁴. Strengthened labour programming is a central objective of improved social protection delivery, and youth unemployment arising in part from skills mismatch is a critical constraint in the Virgin Islands. The Youth Policy's vision is that “Virgin Islands youth attain their

²⁶ Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour (2012). The Virgin Islands Climate Change Adaptation Policy: Achieving Low-Carbon, Climate-Resilient Development. Conservation and Fisheries Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour, Government of the Virgin Islands, Road Town, Tortola, Virgin Islands.

²⁷ GoVI (2020). Virgin Islands Strategic Blue Economy Roadmap 2020-2025, Government of the Virgin Islands with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, Government of the Virgin Islands, Road Town, Tortola, Virgin Islands. <https://www.undp.org/barbados/publications/british-virgin-islands-strategic-blue-economy-roadmap#:~:text=October%2023%2C%202020&text=Specifically%2C%20the%20roadmap%20aims%20to,opportunity%20for%20building%20equitable%20societies>.

²⁸ Government of the Virgin Islands (2020). Virgin Islands Strategic Blue Economy Roadmap 2020-2025, Government of the Virgin Islands, Road Town, Tortola, Virgin Islands.

²⁹ Government of Virgin Islands (2018). Recovery to Development Plan of the Virgin Islands, prepared by the Government of the Virgin Islands, Road Town, Tortola, Virgin Islands.

³⁰ GoVI (2011). The Virgin Islands National Policy for Gender Equity and Equality, prepared by the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago for the Government of Virgin Islands.

<http://www.bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/additionalfiles/National%20Gender%20Policy%20Virgin%20Islands%20Final%20version%20PDF.pdf>. Issued as 'first submission', contains gaps. The final version was issued in 2013 but is not circulated.

³¹ https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/informe_beijing25_britishvirginislands_final.pdf

³² MoHSD (2014). National Domestic Violence Protocols for the Virgin Islands, Office of Gender Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Development, Government of Virgin Islands, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

<https://bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/additionalfiles/Domestic%20Violence%20Protocol%20Final%20Document%20for%20stakeholders%20PDF.pdf>

³³ <http://www.bvi.gov.vg/content/domestic-violence-act-2011#:~:text=This%20Act%20to%20provides%20greater,protection%20orders%20and%20related%20matters.>

³⁴ GoVI (2014). Virgin Islands National Youth Policy and Strategic Framework 2014-2019, prepared by the Minister of Education and Culture, Government of Virgin Islands, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands.

https://bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/resources/virgin_islands_national_youth_policy_print_final_.pdf

full potential and freely and actively participate in the political, social, economic and religious processes of the Territory” (page 2).

Goals were expressed around education and technical training, decent work and livelihoods, safety and security, access to sports and recreational activities, counselling support, and volunteerism and national pride. Engagement was noted through the National Youth Parliament, the National Youth Commission, and the National Youth Council. The Commission included actors from a range of sectors and serves as an advisory body to Government. The Council serves as the umbrella body representing a wide range of youth organisations around the country. Aspects especially relevant to social protection included skills development and decent work that reinforced contributory programming, sound mental health, a reduction in social pathologies and strengthening social cohesion, and active engagement in community development.

The Social Development Department (SDD) in MHSD has responsibility for both social assistance and child protection, facilitating integration, but resulting in heavy workloads and some lack of clarity on mandates. This Social Protection Policy seeks to advance child protection objectives, helping to address the priorities outlined in the **National Child Protection Action Plan** (GoVI, 2019)³⁵.

There has been some progress in terms of legislation around child protection, such as the 2014 Status of Children Act that discontinues distinctions between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ children including in regard to inheritance, and in the 2018 Child Maintenance and Access Act. However, the OECS Model Child Care and the OECS Model Child Justice bills have not been adopted. There is also reported progress in terms of violence against children, consistent with similar progress made in terms of violence against women. But gaps remain around probation legislation and protocols, the protection of children in contact with the law, and particular constraints in terms of diversion³⁶. The Social Protection Policy can support the National Child Protection Action Plan by contributing to improved inter-sectoral governance, data collection and sharing and case management, and comprehensive disaster risk management to protect the well-being of children and families.

The Virgin Islands Social Protection Strategy will be implemented with due consideration given to the **Social Inclusion and Social Protection Strategy for the OECS: Vulnerability to Resilience** launched in April 2023 (the document is not yet available online). The regional strategy provides recommended actions for the implementation of policies and programmes to increase social inclusion and adherence to human rights to ensure that all OECS residents, especially marginalised persons, are able to enjoy a decent standard of living.

[Suggest we include alignment with recent acceptance of the UK report]

The Virgin Islands is also guided by relevant **international conventions**³⁷ that have been extended to the Territory, including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights³⁸, the 1976 International Covenant on

³⁵ GoVI (2019). *National Child Protection Action Plan. An Action Plan to Guide Implementation of Recommendations in the OECS/UNICEF Child Justice Assessment Report*, prepared by the Government of Virgin Islands with support from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Road Town, Tortola, British Virgin Islands. <https://www.oecs.org/en/our-work/knowledge/library/social-development/child-protection>

³⁶ See the update provided in <https://www.oecs.org/en/our-work/knowledge/library/social-development/child-protection>

³⁷ Through its territorial status, the Virgin Islands has a wide range of international treaties and conventions extended to it, although these do not necessarily require that the Territory formally take up a convention or treaty. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Treaties_extended_to_the_British_Virgin_Islands. There are also several labour-relevant conventions that the Territory is a party. See https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11200:0::NO::P11200_COUNTRY_ID:103651

³⁸ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights³⁹, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (extended to the Virgin Islands in 1986)⁴⁰, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (extended to the Virgin Islands in 1994)⁴¹; the Territory is not yet a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁴². More attention is needed to these international obligations, in particular the disabilities convention, but also various optional protocols and normative agreements. This has been highlighted as part of the legal and policy reform noted under the priorities below.

Overall, responding to poverty, vulnerability, and inequality requires actions across all sectors of government and society intended to expand economic opportunities and improve livelihoods (responding to economic vulnerabilities), expand social protection coverage (responding to social vulnerabilities), and reach those who are socially excluded (responding to those who are especially vulnerable, including the elderly, unemployed youth, persons with disabilities, and persons with low skills sets).

2.4 POLICY STATEMENT

Given social protection's central role in helping the Territory to advance towards several Sustainable Development Goals, the work done in developing a cohesive social protection system is instrumental in achieving the objectives of the National Sustainable Development Plan. Through this Policy, the Virgin Islands *commits* to the integration of social protection services across social assistance, contributory programming, and labour market planning and implementation, with links to social services and livelihoods. This includes strengthening the legal framework and mechanisms for policy cohesion and coordination, as well as the institutional arrangements for inter-agency and cross-sector collaboration. Having learned from the successes and limitations of post-disaster and COVID-19 recovery, the Virgin Islands also commits to further strengthening the role of social protection in disaster risk management.

The Vision and Goal focus on the *intent* of the Policy, and the desired end state to be achieved. The Mission and Objectives focus on the *means* to achieve this.

The **vision** of this Policy is the attainment of improved living standards through *Universal Social Protection* that ensures basic needs are met and opportunities for growth and prosperity are available to all.

The **goal** of this Policy is to *reduce all manifestations of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, and enhance economic security and social stability* in the Virgin Islands.

The social protection **mission** of the Virgin Islands is to provide equitable access to social protection services through sustainable social protection systems that are inclusive, adaptive, and responsive to changing needs over time.

The **overall objective** of this Policy is to build an *efficient, integrated system of social protection aligned with high professional and ethical standards* that is capable of progressively achieving Universal Social Protection.

Specific objectives are:

1. To improve governance by increasing transparency and accountability through a cohesive, responsive, and effective framework for the delivery of social assistance, social insurance, and labour market programming, with strong links to social services and livelihoods.
2. To progressively expand coverage through effective design, efficient service delivery, and adequate financing of social protection.
3. To strengthen the resilience and adaptability of core social protection functions to ensure responsiveness in the face of shocks and crises.

The policy objectives are consistent with the commitment to achieving SDG 1.3 by 2030, through the implementation of 'nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable'. It aims to align social policy and delivery with international good practices and a human rights-based approach to social protection. This includes

³⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

⁴⁰ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

⁴¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

⁴² https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/COP/crpd_csp_2017_2.pdf

understanding and addressing gendered risk over the life course and providing support in situations of poverty, vulnerability, and crisis. It also plays a vital role in protecting women and men, and girls and boys from poverty and insecurity, helping individuals, households, and communities to cope with risks, recover from shocks, and ultimately support gender, youth, and green economy objectives. It also incorporates child-sensitive social protection programming and service delivery that addresses the specific patterns of poverty and vulnerability that disproportionately affect children, and supports the long-term developmental potential of children.

Rights, as expressed through Government’s commitment to a human rights-based approach, mean that these rights are universal (rights are held by all), indivisible (all rights are held, and none can be excluded from any person) and equal (rights are held without discrimination).

2.5 POLICY COMMITMENTS

Through this Policy, Government commits to addressing the social and economic risks faced by vulnerable groups, such as the poor, the elderly, and those with disabilities, by cohesively implementing a range of measures, including cash transfers, targeted subsidies, social security and health insurance, education, workforce development, employment programmes, labour market policies and programmes, housing assistance, and social care. This will be achieved by embracing the following approaches:

Table 1: Policy Commitments

Area	Commitments
Governance	Ensure transparent, accountable, effective, and properly monitored and evaluated policy formulation and implementation.
	Develop suitable social protection legislation, institutional arrangements, and standard operating procedures to enable this Policy.
	Build robust mechanisms to ensure that the people of the Virgin Islands are engaged in the policy process, and can influence the direction of social protection programming and delivery.
Coordination, Integration, Coherence, and Collaboration	Ensure coherence with other public policies and between social protection programmes through robust institutional coordination mechanisms and shared administrative systems.
	Develop partnerships and ensure regular and effective collaboration among all relevant stakeholders (including governmental, private sector, and civil society actors) and encourage corporate social responsibility.
	Commit to a multi-sectoral approach to integrated social policy design, delivery, monitoring and reporting.
	Support continued alignment with normative frameworks and developmental objectives, including the National Sustainable Development Plan.
Resource Mobilisation and Use	Ensure the efficient allocation of human and financial resources, and establish adequate financing mechanisms to sustainably deliver social protection programmes, including in times of crisis.
	Deliver evidence-informed, cost-effective and efficient social protection programmes, eliminating duplication of effort and waste and enhancing value for money.
	Develop and implement a transparent, fair and equitable system for access to services for all eligible residents in a manner consistent with respect for human rights and impartiality.
	Deliver a well-designed social protection system that can help drive economic growth by reducing poverty and supporting human capital development.
Achievement of Improved Social Outcomes	Proactively address the nature and patterns of poverty and vulnerability that affect various residents differently at different points in their lives.
	Support positive socio-cultural norms and strengthen the role of family and community in society.
	Follow a gender-responsive, child-sensitive, and disability-inclusive approach to social protection.
	Provide adequate social protection instruments and benefits to reduce poverty and vulnerability, and mitigate risks throughout the life cycle.
	Ensure the continuation and adequacy of social protection in times of crisis through shock-responsive social protection programming that builds on successes.

To ensure transparency and accountability, Government will report regularly on Social Protection Policy implementation against these commitments, and against the vision, goal, objectives, and priority actions. This includes reporting on delivery and results based on robust evidence, soliciting inputs from rights-holders and duty-bearers, and identifying roadblocks and avenues to solve problems. It also includes strengthened and regular reporting against international commitments.

2.6 PRIORITIES FOR SOCIAL PROTECTION

Consultations held during the development of this Policy identified a series of priority actions aimed at improving the operations and outcomes of social protection delivery in the Virgin Islands. The findings and recommendations of the comprehensive Review of Social Assistance Benefits and Grants Administration Systems conducted in 2022 have also been instructive. The conclusions drawn reinforced the notion that reforming the social protection system is imperative, and should include further streamlining of procedures for allocating social assistance benefits, and employing modern Information Technology to make administrative processes simpler and more transparent. The Review also highlighted the need to bridge several gaps in the social protection system (thus lessening the caseload for social assistance) and to enhance its inclusiveness and shock-responsiveness.

Priority actions have been organised under two *Policy Priorities*, while specific actions referenced below are detailed in the Action Plan.

The two priorities are set out below. Each includes both sector strengthening and delivery elements:

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Strengthening an inclusive approach to social protection2. Building a robust, integrated social protection system |
|---|

2.6.1 PRIORITY 1: STRENGTHENING AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

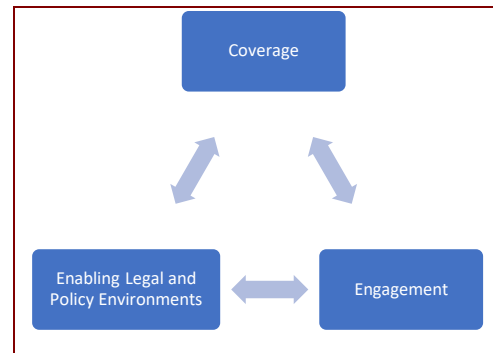
<p><i>Policy Statement:</i> Individuals at every stage of their lives should be covered by a form of social protection appropriate to their situation, be it tax-financed subsidies or social benefits, contributory social insurance schemes, or labour market programmes. The Virgin Islands will expand the reach and impact of social protection programmes and ensure the design and delivery of fair, equitable, and appropriate services that adapt to the needs of different groups in society, as they evolve over time. This will contribute significantly towards the progressive achievement of Universal Social Protection.</p>
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The Situation: The Virgin Islands has demonstrated that it can deliver services to those in need, including in times of emergency and recovery, and that it is committed to doing so equitably and impartially. Socio-political obstacles to fair and effective social protection delivery are understood, and the role of the Policy in advancing the sector in this regard is recognised. Obstacles include 1) divergences between sectoral priorities and policies; 2) inadequate coordination across agencies involved in the delivery of social protection, in particular between different state actors as well as with civil society and community-level entities, magnified in times of emergency; 3) delivering social protection in a manner that strengthens family, community and community-based entities that give voice to people and reduce risk and vulnerability; 4) expanding social assistance to ensure that people in need are not excluded and that people advance their rights; and 5) understanding and responding to the different situations facing rights-holders across citizenship, belongingship and residency.

Actions: Specific activities included in the Action Plan revolve around three action areas:

1. Coverage
2. Engagement
3. Legal and Policy Environment

Improving *coverage* refers primarily to delivering against Social Protection Floor objectives, including in times of emergency and recovery. It means ensuring that those in need are reached by social assistance, that those who are working/earning income are consistently paying into contributory insurance and retirement schemes that insure against an appropriate range of risks, that those in need of skills upgrading and retooling and training are reached with requisite services and have the opportunity for employment and income generation (including youth and those of working age who are living with physical or mental disabilities, persons at risk of isolation, etc.), and that livelihoods support is provided to those who need it. It means ensuring that social assistance is efficiently delivered to those most in need in times of emergency and recovery. It also means following an inclusive, life-cycle approach to social protection that serves to mitigate various risks that people face over the course of their lives.



Strengthening *engagement* means ensuring that people can meaningfully participate in processes that define the developmental approach to and content of social protection services, that rights-holders have the means and mechanisms to make their voices heard, and that there are procedures in place for managing grievances and appeals. It means ensuring that programming is done in a participatory and open manner while taking care to ensure necessary confidentiality, working as relevant through community-based organisations, with civil society organisations, and with local leaders as well as official service providers (such as police, health, other social services, and education authorities). It entails having a cadre of social protection officers, and other social service providers, with the requisite technical and soft skills to recognise when support may be required. It also requires well-functioning referral channels, as well as responsive means of consultation and reporting systems that give voice to rights-holders and duty-bearers.

Enabling *legal and policy environments* focuses on enacting and amending laws that bridge coverage gaps in social protection and systematically applying policy instruments that strengthen social protection delivery. This refers to laws and policies directly relevant to contributory programming, social assistance, labour markets, and factors such as humanitarian assistance eligibility criteria. It involves considering legislation that would improve results for children as rights-holders. It also entails recognising policies and legislation across all sectors that intersect with social protection, and in so doing strengthening social protection performance (e.g., gender policy, youth policy) and social protection’s contribution to broader development efforts (including the National Sustainable Development Plan).

2.6.2 PRIORITY 2: BUILD A ROBUST, INTEGRATED SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

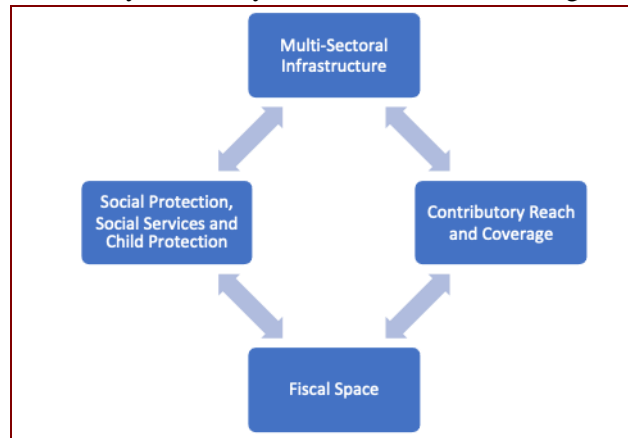
Policy Statement: Social protection yields a positive return on investment, from social assistance to social security, from effective labour market functioning to the ability to expand services during and after disasters. It does this best when delivering coherently.

The Situation: Much has been learned about the Territory’s capacity to collaboratively deliver effective social protection services, particularly in responding to the 2017 disasters. However, various deficiencies and abuses highlighted in recent audits of social assistance and grants programmes that were delivered through various governmental entities (outside of the Ministry of Health and Social Development) have underscored the need for consistent coordination and credible systems of checks and balances in the management of public funds. The result is that stakeholders are in clear agreement that a robust, integrated social protection system, implemented in a fair, transparent, consistent, predictable and reliable manner is required to meet agreed obligations, achieve SDG 1.3, and make progress towards Universal Social Protection. The consolidation in mid-2022 of several social assistance grant programmes under the Ministry of Health and Social Development (which also has responsibility for the Social Security system) provides an opportunity to ensure that the social protection system develops in a manner that is coherent, synergistic, and sustainable.

Actions: Specific activities included in the Action Plan address four action areas:

1. Multi-sectoral Infrastructure
2. Contributory Reach and Coverage
3. Fiscal Space
4. Social Protection, Social Services and Child Protection

There is broad-based agreement that social protection can best be delivered if *multi-sectoral social protection infrastructure* is in place that is robust, powerful, active, and led by a ministry and with access to the highest levels of government. Central to this is the political will that allows this multi-sectoral social protection infrastructure to function, incentives that encourage its operation and discourage siloed approaches, and the allocation of adequate human and financial resources that allow it to perform. It also requires legal and policy frameworks that enable sector integration and performance, as well as a powerful evidence base and reporting system that reinforces national and international commitment to a coherent social protection response. It includes consideration of unemployment insurance, expansion of social security to cover informal workers and those in the gig economy, introduction of non-contributory social pensions, and redesigning social assistance programming to improve efficiency and strengthen linkages to social services such as long-term care. This was recognised in the 2022 Review.



There is also widespread agreement that the more coverage is offered by *contributory programming*, the less systems and budgets will be strained by social assistance expenditure, and the more resilient the country and its residents will be. The Virgin Islands recognises that social protection system sustainability can best be delivered through contributory programmes such as social security coverage for retired persons and workers who become disabled, pensions that can be drawn for retirement or at specified junctures, unemployment insurance (including buy-in by the self-employed and family-employed), life insurance, health insurance, housing insurance, and protection from loss in catastrophes (including through parametric micro-insurance). The Virgin Islands is fortunate to have made considerable progress in contributory programme coverage, including social security and national health insurance. The aim is therefore to take advantage of this solid foundation and expand coverage further.

To ensure continuous predictable social protection delivery, sustainable financing is required. This entails the efficient utilisation of resources while expanding *fiscal space* for social protection programming, including through engagement in regional initiatives. For instance, the opportunity could be taken to establish direct linkages between disaster risk financing mechanisms (such as the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF)) and the social protection system to reduce the effects of shocks. This focuses on social assistance financing, but also includes building sustainable systems for financing labour market programmes, and cross-subsidy tools within contributory programming. And finally, there is agreement that social protection can yield better value for money if it is better *integrated with social services and child protection service delivery*. This is consistent with a life-cycle approach to social protection that recognises different needs at different points in people’s lives, different opportunities, and varied vulnerabilities.

SECTION 3. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

This section describes the existing and envisaged implementation structures for social protection delivery, the legal basis for delivery, and how sector coordination will take place and cooperation encouraged.

These structures and approaches are intended to deliver social protection efficiently and effectively, to strengthen means of accountability, and to deliver in a manner consistent with a human rights-based approach to social protection.

3.1 STRUCTURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Premier's Office** is the lead entity responsible for cross-ministerial coordination and policy leadership⁴³ on various subjects that intersect with social protection, and spearheads the planning and coordinating mechanisms established under the National Sustainable Development Plan. The NSDP included the formation of thematic groups focused on each National Goal, which includes Goal 1 under which falls National Outcome #3 - *Adaptive and Shock Responsive Social Protection Systems, Leaving no one Behind*. Under the current dispensation, the Premier's Office is also responsible for fisheries and agriculture, which are central to sustainable livelihoods and resilience.

The **Ministry of Health and Social Development** is responsible for coordinating social protection, mainly at a policy level, working in collaboration with other relevant ministries and departments. The Ministry directly oversees the Office of Gender Affairs, the Housing Recovery Assistance Programme, and the Safe Haven Transitional Centre, which works with homeless persons and families, and provides temporary accommodation, psycho-social support, life skills training, employment assistance, education assistance, housing assistance and vocational training.

The **Social Development Department** leads the delivery of Public Assistance and other delegated social assistance programmes. Social assistance benefits include income support, support for day care, housing, legal aid, and a range of family, aged care, disability, and community services initiatives. The Department covers the delivery of social welfare services and oversees child protection programming.

Social Security and National Health Insurance are administered by the **Social Security Board**, under the direction of the Ministry of Health and Social Development. The Social Security Board is a statutory body charged with the management of the Social Security Fund, collection of contributions and payment of benefits. The Fund itself is a compulsory insurance plan to which employers, formal sector workers and the self-employed are required to contribute on a regular basis. The National Health Insurance Division of the Social Security Board administers the National Health Insurance system and Fund, which provides coverage against the cost of a defined benefits package of primary and secondary healthcare services, and tertiary care (including overseas treatment and care) upon referral. The Social Security Fund covers sickness, maternity, employment injury, invalidity, old age, funeral support, and benefits for survivors. There is no national unemployment insurance system.

Labour market interventions are overseen by the recently created **Ministry of Financial Services, Labour and Trade**, and are mainly delivered through the **Department of Labour and Workforce Development**,⁴⁴ with parallel employment support schemes being implemented by the Premier's Office and Ministry of Education through its Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, and H. L. Stoutt Community College. Pension policy is overseen by the **Ministry of Finance** and regulated by insurance oversight agencies and others.

In terms of shock-responsive programming and emergency relief, all ministries are required to coordinate their efforts with the **National Disaster Management Council (NDMC)** in respect of climate-related and other large-scale emergency events. The **Department of Disaster Management** serves as the secretariat of the NDMC. The Health and Social Services Committee under the NDMC is chaired by the Ministry of Health and Social Development, while the Disaster/Emergency Fund Committee is managed by the Ministry of Finance. The Disaster/Emergency Fund was set up to aid qualifying applicants who were greatly affected by any major emergency/disaster and are unable to recover rapidly. Relief assistance is disbursed for essential items only and may take the following forms: food relief; shelter or emergency accommodation grant; material or equipment for livelihood such as in Fisheries and Agriculture; medical assistance; and limited financial grants.

⁴³ <https://bvi.gov.vg/ministry/premiers-office-0>

⁴⁴ See the expansive Labour Code issued in 2010 for a discussion of directives around labour markets in the Virgin Islands. https://bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/resources/new_labour_code.pdf

The Territory's response to epidemiological crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, is led by the **Ministry of Health and Social Development**. The response to economic shocks is coordinated through the Premier's Office and the Ministry of Finance. All agencies responsible for social protection service delivery are required to provide relevant expanded services to those affected by such a crisis. As part of the Government's economic stimulus programme, the Social Security Board issued unemployment/ underemployment benefit payments in 2020, and the Social Development Department was granted special funding to implement an Income Support Programme in 2021. Various labour- and employment-related policies and services were also temporarily adjusted to accommodate emerging needs during this period.

There are a few large **civil society organisations** and several smaller ones, most prominent among them the BVI Red Cross which was established in law as an auxiliary to the Government in the humanitarian field. With assistance from the British Red Cross, the organisation was instrumental in disaster relief in 2017 and 2018 through the implementation of a Joint Cash Platform in partnership with the Social Development Department, along with international non-governmental organisations. Several other international agencies also mobilised for disaster response and recovery, including the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), service clubs such as Rotary and Lions, and faith-based organisations. There are other Non-Profit Organisations such as the Family Support Network and Unite BVI that are actively involved with various community initiatives. The Territory itself is assisted by the Government of the United Kingdom as well as international development agencies in times of need.

3.2 MEANS TO ENABLE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND INTER-SECTORAL COLLABORATION

The Cabinet-appointed **Council on Human and Social Development** (COHSOD) seeks to improve well-being and the achievement of desirable social outcomes for the Virgin Islands by facilitating cross-sectoral social policy coordination. Its main purpose is to enhance institutional coordination and strengthen the planning and implementation of social policy among key actors. The body is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Social Development, with the Deputy Chair from the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs, and Sports. Other members include the Chief Medical Officer, Chief Social Development Officer, Coordinator of Gender Affairs, Chief Education Officer, Director of Culture, Director of Youth Affairs & Sports, Commissioner of Labour, and the Chief Executive Officer of BVI Health Services Authority.

COHSOD does not include representation from the Social Security Board, nor entities responsible for agriculture, natural resources, climate change, disaster risk management, or immigration. To enable this Policy, **the operations and mandate of COHSOD will be reviewed to enable it to serve as an effective mechanism for social protection sector integration. Membership will be reviewed to consider gaps in contributory social protection programming and labour markets overseeing the Social Protection Floor, and improve planning for crisis response.** This body may eventually be subsumed under the institutional structure required for the effective implementation of the NSDP.

To strengthen the implementation and oversight of the Social Protection Policy and Action Plan the Ministry of Health and Social Development will assign a *Monitoring and Reporting Officer (MRO)* for three years from the start of Action Plan implementation. The MRO would be responsible for leading all efforts around monitoring and reporting against the Policy and the Action Plan and would undertake other duties as per agreed actions under the Action Plan. The MRO would report to the Permanent Secretary of MHSD, and provide regular progress reports to the COHSOD for all social protection matters, including all cross-sectoral matters. The MRO would engage with the Public Assistance Committee operationally, and would share information, but would not report to the Committee.

To support the sustainability of the social protection response, the Ministry of Health and Social Development will review this Policy every three to six years and the associated Action Plan every three years. It will work with COHSOD and the MRO in this regard.

3.3 ACCOUNTABILITY

Under current legislation accountability in social assistance is through the Public Assistance Committee reporting to the Ministry of Health and Social Development. Emergency programming in terms of disaster relief is coordinated by the Department of Disaster Management⁴⁵ while social protection service delivery is spearheaded by the Social Development Department. Programming related to social housing, including the Housing Recovery Assistance Programme that was implemented following the 2017 disasters, is spearheaded by the Ministry of Health and Social Development. Accountability for contributory schemes rests with the Social Security Board, and through the Board to the Ministry of Health and Social Development. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Labour and its Department of Labour and Workforce Development hold primary responsibility for labour market programming.

There is a five-member Public Assistance Appeal body which hears appeals against negative decisions of the Public Assistance Committee, and an Appeal Tribunal which hears and determines appeals from decisions related to Social Security and National Health Insurance.

Redress for grievances can also be sought through the Office of the Complaints Commission, which is an independent organisation that receives, investigates, and resolves complaints from individuals or groups about the actions or decisions of public authorities. The Complaints Commissioner may also make recommendations for improvements to policies, procedures, or systems to enhance accountability and transparency.

Through this Policy, Government commits to enhanced transparency and accountability in the design and delivery of social protection programmes and services. These measures are specified under the Action Plan.

⁴⁵ <https://www.bviddm.com/about/>

ANNEX A: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

What gets measured gets done – P. Trivedi⁴⁶

Policy development is important, and policy implementation is more so. Government commitment, reflected in the adoption of the Social Protection Policy, is also reflected in this Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework. This is a commitment to measuring progress but also identifying and addressing any weaknesses in implementation. It is a commitment to measuring what works and what does not. In so doing learning can thrive, and programming can be improved.

Through this MEL Framework, the Government of the Virgin Islands commits to the systematic measurement of the implementation of this Policy, and through the associated Action Plan to the measurement of activities and outputs at the programme level. The Government also commits to sharing evidence of progress, and gaps, through various means at national, regional and international levels.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring refers to the regular and systematic collection of information to track progress in the implementation of a policy, a programme or similar mechanisms. Evaluation refers to the assessment of progress against a series of criteria elaborated by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) and agreed upon across development agencies, including the United Nations (elaborated below).

In general, Policy and Plan monitoring vary in purpose and, as a result, vary in approach. *Plan* monitoring tracks activities and outputs, and often focuses on the quantification of delivery against planned activities. It normally uses standardised tools and quantitative aggregation through databases or management information systems. *Policy* monitoring, on the other hand, tends to employ qualitative approaches to gather insights and evidence from a range of informed stakeholders, including both duty-bearers and rights-holders. It is also informed by the monitoring and evaluation of actions linked to the policy.

Policy monitoring is the subject of this MEL Framework. It indicates how Government will proceed with tracking progress (and lack of progress) against relevant items in the Policy itself. This is discussed in Section 2 below. *Plan monitoring* is covered under the Action Plan.

Policy evaluation, on the other hand, considers the overall efficacy of the delivery of a set of actions across all social protection delivery, from sector integration to social protection service delivery, from expanding contributory social protection programme reach to efficient and effective social assistance delivery.

Programme evaluation considers progress made against the objectives of a specific programme. For example, a cash transfer programme intended to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, or the evaluation conducted following the cash transfer programme supporting those affected by the three disasters of 2017. In this respect, programme evaluation is often linked to items contained in action plans.

Learning

Learning refers to the systematic aggregation of quantitative and qualitative information that influences implementation and informs an understanding of the actions by stakeholders. Employed as a development term, learning can be defined as *the extent to which a programme or policy gains and uses knowledge in an effort to help influence policy, strategy, plans and actions*. This includes learning from information directly arising from implementation, but also other knowledge.

⁴⁶ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4401682?seq=1>

SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Introduction

This MEL Framework guides the collection and reporting of data and information that will effectively track progress in Policy implementation. In this section, procedures to accomplish this are outlined, and means of measurement are specified. This covers approaches to monitoring, reporting, and evaluation.

Organisational Structure for Implementing Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The Council on Human and Social Development (COHSOD) or a similar body will assume responsibilities for reporting on inter-sectoral progress covering social transfers, contributory social protection programming, labour market programming, and the social protection crisis readiness and response. For this purpose, they will be enabled by the appointment of a Monitoring and Reporting Officer (MRO). The MRO will report to the subject officer for social protection, currently the Deputy Secretary of Social Development. The MRO will report regularly to the COHSOD or similar body on all social protection matters, including all cross-sectoral matters. The MRO would engage with the Public Assistance Committee operationally, and would share information, but would not report to the Committee.

As per the content of the Policy, social assistance is administered and coordinated by the Ministry of Health and Social Development, working in collaboration with other social sector service delivery ministries and agencies. At this juncture, this includes the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs, and Sports, health under the MHSD, and disaster planning and response under the Department of Disaster Management.

The Public Assistance Committee is responsible for reporting on social assistance delivery, as per the 2013 Public Assistance Act⁴⁷. The MRO will take information assembled by this Committee and will include this in the annual report on social protection delivery. The Committee will meet with sufficient frequency to discharge their duties, including overseeing the delivery of social assistance programming under the Action Plan.

Consistent with the scope of the Policy across social assistance, social security and labour market interventions, the MRO will also take information from the Social Security Board, and from the Department of Disaster Management, to be included in the annual report on social protection delivery.

The MRO will work with the Central Statistics Office in the Premier's Office in fulfilling official duties. The MRO will also call upon the support of the Macro-fiscal Unit in the Ministry of Finance to provide information of relevance to assessing social protection delivery and impact.

Approach to Monitoring

Three approaches to Policy monitoring will inform key stakeholders of progress made towards desired accomplishments as specified in the Policy:

1. Routine and results data collected by tracking the Action Plan
2. Assessment of progress towards desired accomplishments through direct engagement of stakeholders, including both rights-holders and duty-bearers
3. MRO working with the Central Statistics Office and the Ministry of Finance to consider evidence and report accordingly

Monitoring Matrix

The Action Plan includes an extended table covering priorities, outcomes, main issues, activities, outputs and indicators. There are two priorities expressed in the Policy and included in the Action Plan: 1) strengthening an inclusive approach to social protection; and 2) building a robust, integrated social protection system.

The main issues covered under these two priorities comprise:

Inclusive Approach

1. Coverage
2. Engagement

⁴⁷ http://www.bvi.gov.vg/sites/default/files/resources/Public%20Assistance%20Act%2C%202013_0.pdf

3. Legal and Policy Environment

Integration

4. Multi-Sectoral Infrastructure
5. Contributory Reach and Coverage
6. Fiscal Space
7. Social Protection, Social Services and Child Protection

Each of these has a core output that will be tracked, as well as activities and activity-level indicators. Routine monitoring means the collection of data on delivery against activities and outputs achieved, while results monitoring means the collection of data on what has resulted because activities have been implemented. Results monitoring will take place through additional data and information collection led by the MRO.

The precise means of monitoring are determined at the programme level for specific programmes falling under the Action Plan but are reported to a Social Protection Monitoring and Reporting Officer (MRO) who coordinates monitoring and reporting for the Action Plan on a monthly or less frequent basis (depending on the indicator) through a means identified by the MHSD. Quarterly reports are then prepared by this MRO and presented to the Minister for MHSD and COHSOD. The fourth quarterly report will be more substantive and focused on findings around results and will be issued as an Annual Report against the Action Plan. These include action points needing attention, agreed actors, and timelines.

From this Annual Report, the MRO will also report against agreed measures in the Policy based on data and results coming from the implementation of the Action Plan. This will form part of the Annual Policy Progress Report.

Progress Assessment

The MRO, under the guidance of the Permanent Secretary for MHSD, will conduct or commission regular consultative exercises on various aspects of the Social Protection Policy.

The specific means will be elaborated in a brief Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy, and measurements of reach and engagement will be determined in that Strategy. This is expected to include social media engagement, radio and television, direct consultations (meetings with thematic activist organisations and community-based organisations, civil society, members of the public including target groups), and structured interviews (service delivery agencies, civil society, activists, international agencies involved in social protection in the Virgin Islands, etc.). The Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy would also indicate means of measurement for each of these approaches.

At the Policy level, the points of interest consider assessing progress, and lack thereof, against Policy Commitments, and less frequently to Policy Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives.

Evaluation

Evaluation considers progress and regress against the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability, as well as Cross-Cutting Issues. Cross-Cutting Issues vary by intervention but usually include gender and social inclusion, human rights and environmental footprint.

Evaluation occurs throughout the results chain and practically speaking there is an overlap between evaluation types and elements of the results chain. Nevertheless, evaluations that focus on how a programme was implemented, sometimes referred to as '*process* evaluation', focuses on inputs, activities and outputs. *Mid-term reviews* tend to do the same, although they also report on early outcomes, sometimes referred to as 'intermediate' outcomes. *Summative* evaluations, which take place at or near the end of a phase or a programme, focus on whether an intervention has met outcome objectives. *Impact* evaluation, as the name implies, focuses on impacts, often measured upon completion of a programme, or for a long-term programme, measured well into a programme (e.g., 7-10 years into the implementation of a continuing programme). In large-scale programmes where complex change is targeted, impact evaluation may take place 5 years or more after a programme has been completed. Types of evaluation against the results chain are indicated in the following figure:

Figure 2: Results Chain Elements Relevant to Evaluation



In terms of evaluation criteria, Relevance considers the extent to which the objectives of an intervention are consistent with target group requirements, country needs, global priorities and partner and donor policies. Coherence asks whether an intervention fits within the context of the national context and other interventions. Efficiency is defined as how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results. Effectiveness is defined as the extent to which objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, considering their relative importance. Impact is defined as positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. Sustainability concerns the measurement of whether the benefits of a set of activities are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn⁴⁸.

Better Evaluation (https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/impact_evaluation) defines *Formative Evaluation* as an evaluation aimed at improving the design and/or performance of a project/programme, or an evaluation aimed at improving follow-on programming. Normally formative evaluation takes place early in project/programme implementation and is usually timed with a critical decision point.

Better Evaluation notes that *Project/Programme Evaluation* focuses on the process of implementation, the delivery of outputs, and the extent to which these outputs led to progress against outcomes.

Finally, Better Evaluation notes that *Summative Evaluation* covers each area in the results chain, from inputs to activities, from activities to outputs, and from outputs to outcomes. The aim is to consider, *ex post facto*, the veracity of the hypotheses underlying a project/programme. Summative Evaluation sometimes offers insights into impacts, but this is normally limited due to the emphasis on understanding direct project/programme actions and consequences.

Better Evaluation notes that *Impact Evaluation* provides information about the impacts produced by an intervention.

Policy Evaluation

For this Policy, evaluations will be informed through two means: 1) the data collection discussed below; and 2) external evaluation. External evaluations will be summative, with one scheduled for Year 5 of Policy implementation.

Learning

Learning will be primarily informed by the reporting and information sharing as described in the Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy. Here again, the MRO will play a critical role.

CORE QUESTIONS FOR ASSESSING POLICY PROGRESS

Core questions are set out below. The table indicates the topic of measurement, followed by ‘main issues’ to be investigated, and ‘sub-questions’ associated with offering a coherent response to the main question and covering all aspects.

⁴⁸ OECD (2010). Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Brussels, Belgium. This was updated in OECD/DAC (2019). Better Criteria for Better Evaluation. Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use. OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>. This included the new evaluation criteria ‘coherence’.

Table 2: Assessing Policy Progress

Main Issues	Sub-Questions
<i>Vision to progress towards Universal Social Protection</i>	
How has the country progressed towards Universal Social Protection in terms of universality and scope of coverage, in terms of scope of services and risks considered, and in terms of sustainable financing?	What progress has been made in terms of relevant laws, regulations, policies, reform processes, and similar commitments?
	What progress has been made in terms of relevant institutional reform and development, recruitment, training, and similar plans?
	What aspects are ‘on track’ and what are ‘off track’?
	What remedial actions have been undertaken to respond to ‘off track’ problems?
	How is progress towards meeting obligations agreed upon under the Social Protection Floor?
	How has progress towards Universal Social Protection been documented? How has it been reported locally, regionally, and internationally?
	How has progress towards Universal Social Protection been tracked against aligned goals, plans, conventions, protocols, and others?
<i>Mission to ensure equitable and universal access to services</i>	
How has the country progressed towards its mission of ensuring equitable and universal access to services to meet basic needs, and carry out its mandate?	How has it progressed in terms of human capital development?
	How has it progressed in terms of enhancing the capacity of the population to better manage their livelihoods and welfare?
	How has it progressed programmatically against Mission criteria?
	How has it progressed strategically against Mission criteria?
<i>Goal to alleviate poverty and vulnerability and promote social inclusion</i>	
How has the country progressed in alleviating poverty, and what role has social protection played in this regard?	How effective has social protection been in reaching those living in poverty?
	What progress has and has not been made in terms of vulnerabilities across gender, education status, household size, social exclusion, minority status and other factors?
	How has the Policy contributed to protecting those in poverty and at risk of poverty during times of crisis?
<i>Overall Objective to build an efficient, effective and integrated system of social protection</i>	
How has the sector progressed in building a strong and effective social protection system?	How well has COHSOD functioned with its expanded responsibilities?
	How effectively has the inter-agency engagement been managed?
	How well is system integration proceeding?
	In what ways has the delivery of social protection become more cost-effective?
<i>Specific Objective to provide efficient, effective, and coherent service delivery</i>	
Covered above	
<i>Specific Objective to expand efficient service delivery and expand fiscal space</i>	
How has the Government increased the fiscal space for social protection financing? What are the limitations?	How efficiently has social protection been delivered, and what is the scope for improvement?
<i>Specific Objective to ensure Policy alignment with best practice</i>	

Main Issues	Sub-Questions
How has Policy implementation proceeded against SDG 1.3 and signed conventions?	How has Policy implementation proceeded in terms of supporting relevant SDGs overall?
<i>Policy Commitment to a human rights-based approach to programming</i>	
How has social protection progressed against human rights commitments?	Has a human rights-based approach been employed in implementing social protection?
	Have rights-holders been actively engaged in design, implementation, assessment and implementation?
<i>Policy Commitment to effective governance</i>	
How well have governance mechanisms performed?	How transparent, accountable and effective has the implementation of the Policy been?
	Have social protection legislation as well as social protection standard operating procedures enabled the Policy?
	Have robust mechanisms to ensure rights-holder influence on the direction of social protection policy, programming and delivery been put into place?
<i>Policy Commitment to effective advocacy and collaboration</i>	
How effective has Policy implementation been in terms of advocacy and collaboration?	Have partnerships been put into place?
	Has effective coordination among stakeholders been properly promoted?
	Is there a clear commitment to a multi-sectoral approach in planning and delivery?
	Has Policy implementation continued to support alignment with normative frameworks and development objectives, including the National Sustainable Development Plan?
<i>Policy Commitment to resource mobilisation and use</i>	
How effective have resource mobilisation and efficient use been?	Are means in place to sustainably finance social protection
	How efficiently are social protection services delivered
	How fair and equitable are target groups identified and services delivered
	Has the return on investment from social protection been estimated? If so, has this been used for advocacy purposes and, if so, how has this been used?
<i>Policy Commitment to achieving social protection outcomes</i>	
How well has the Policy performed towards outcomes?	Has social protection advanced towards USP?
	Has the sector advanced towards meeting social protection needs, nuanced for citizens, belongers and non-belongers?
	Has the sector helped to prevent and respond to poverty and vulnerability?
	Has Policy implementation contributed to a more effective disaster preparedness and response effort?
	Has the sector advanced Government's equality and equity objectives?
	Has social protection helped to strengthen families and communities as the centre of society?
	Has social protection contributed to Government's overall development agenda?