

In the context of climate change, how can maladaptation be addressed in social protection?

To address the risk of maladaptation in social protection, the inclusive deliberation of adaptation goals and barriers is the starting point for any initiative that, simultaneously, needs to be aware of its broader context which is affected not only by a changing climate but also by multiple drivers and other actors' responses.

The risk of maladaptation involves the potential of initiatives, inadvertently, leading to negative consequences, such as increasing vulnerability to climate change or reducing people's capacity to adapt.

In social protection, the issue of maladaptation has been raised due to the dynamic and often uncertain impacts of climate change. The exacerbation of development issues, such as poverty and food insecurity, in addition to the increase in climate-related hazards, require an integrated approach. Since SP already addresses multiple risks and vulnerabilities, it has received growing attention for its potential to contribute towards adaptation. But for social protection to integrate adaptation, the risk of maladaptation needs to be considered, to avoid making people *more* vulnerable to climate change.

This paper seeks to understand how social protection can address the risk of maladaptation. This is done through the conceptualisation of maladaptation *as a socio-political process that is influenced by multiple drivers and involves various temporal and spatial scales.*

Through the case of World Food Programme and empirical data collected through interviews, the findings show that organisational adaptation goals for social protection must first be defined to assess maladaptation. Such goals will reflect the desired level of climate change integration in social protection, which will result in inherent trade-offs, reflecting the values and assumptions behind such decisions. The historical role of World Food Programme was found to shape current adaptation framing, resulting in the prioritisation of specific drivers of vulnerability to climate change. Multiple political processes, within the organisation and across the broader context of initiatives, shaped the potential for cumulative impacts. Thus, an inclusive negotiation of what constitutes adaptation and maladaptation is suggested to enable alternative perspectives and emancipatory opportunities for groups, generally, subjected as vulnerable. Therefore, starting any social protection initiatives with a process-oriented approach to maladaptation can clarify which processes and outcomes are perceived as important to avoid in a given context.

Most scholars have focused on avoiding 'clear' maladaptation outcomes. Contrastingly, this study explores the ubiquitous role of power and politics in maladaptation. Understanding vulnerability to climate change, as both climatic and non-climatic related, proved particularly useful in the case of social protection.