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WFP's Work in Enabling Social Protection Around the Globe

Highlights of the World Food Programme's Contributions to Social Protection in a New Normal **February 2021**



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WFP's enabling work in social protection at a glance

This report looks back at WFP's work in social protection after an unfathomably complex and tumultuous year. At the beginning of 2020, chronic and acute hunger had been on the rise for several years, driven largely by conflict, climate shocks, and economic downturns. The arrival of COVID-19 and the ensuing socio-economic fallout of the pandemic combined with that already toxic mix put more than 270 million people directly at risk of acute hunger. An additional 83 to 132 million people were also at risk of entering the ranks of the chronically undernourished, which prior to the pandemic counted nearly 690 million people. Now, as the COVID-19 crisis becomes protracted, it is increasingly challenging to

separate the food security needs generated by COVID-19 from the aggravating and compounding impact that the crisis has had on pre-existing drivers of hunger.

Governments around the world responded promptly to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic and protect the most vulnerable segments of their populations. Countries expanded their social protection programmes, increased their coverage and payment amounts, suspended conditionalities, and put in place new measures to meet the needs of those populations not covered by existing social protection systems. By December 2020,



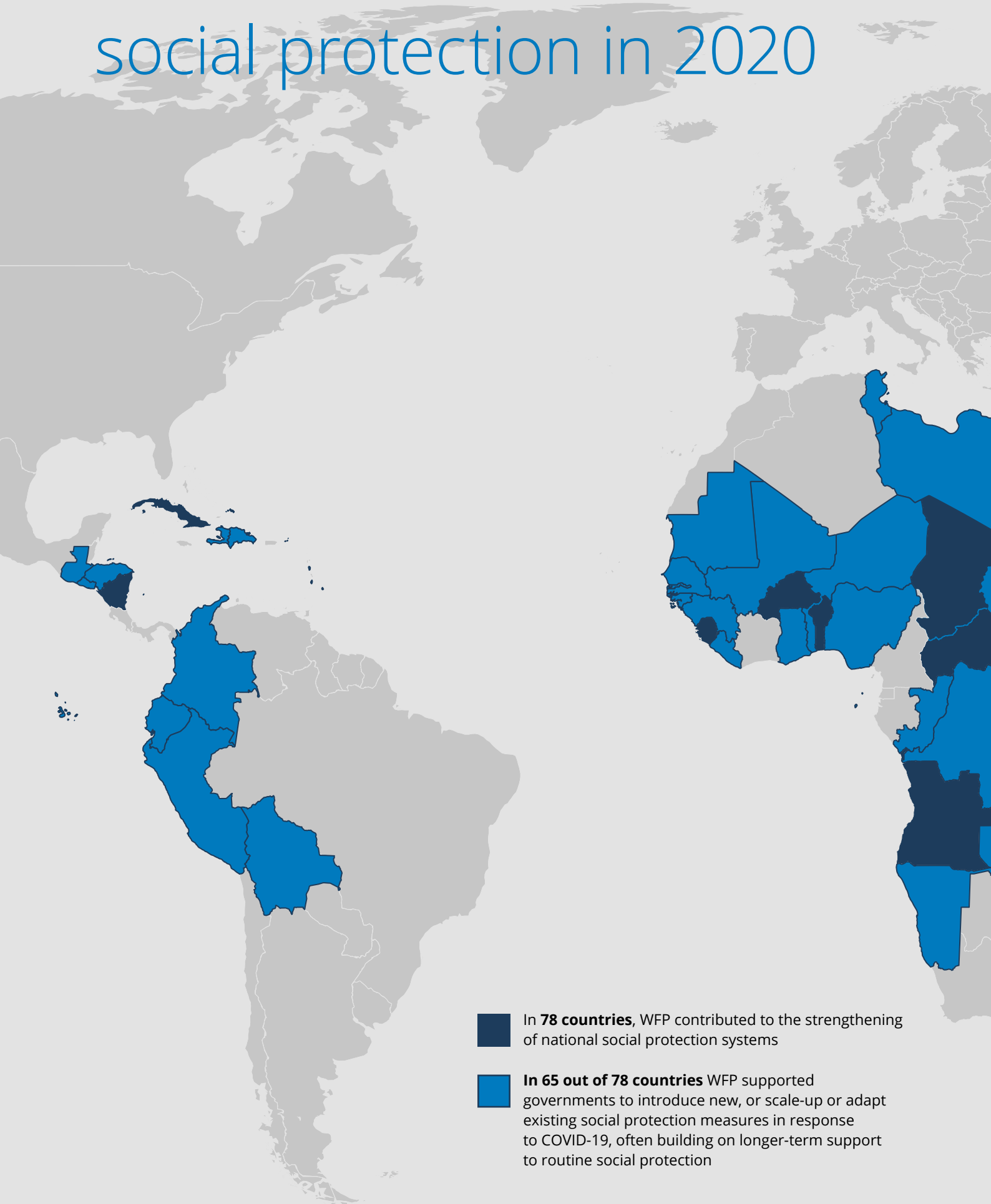
some 1,414 measures had been adopted by 215 countries and territories to cushion the shock. Most of these were in the form of social assistance, such as in-kind or cash-based transfers.

Despite the leadership of governments and strong collaborative efforts with the international community, it is clear that most countries' social protection systems were not ready for this pandemic. Faced with a disaster on a scale unprecedented in most of our lifetimes, even countries with the most sophisticated and well-funded formal social protection systems have inevitably been unable to accommodate all needs; for those with less mature systems and/or facing greater resource constraints the challenge has been even more daunting.

The world's reliance on national systems to deliver responses of an unprecedented scale also brought social protection to the forefront of WFP's work. WFP's ability to provide immediate support to governments' social protection responses in this unique situation has been made possible by our long-standing engagements with national actors. WFP has supported government-led social protection effectively for decades, providing technical expertise to enable governments to design and deliver social protection solutions that meet people's essential needs and strengthen their resilience to shocks and stresses. In 2020, WFP contributed to strengthening national social protection systems in 78 countries, and supported governments in 65 of these to introduce new, or scale-up or adapt existing social protection measures in response to COVID-19.



WFP's contributions to social protection in 2020





WFP supported national social protection in

78 COUNTRIES



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