OUTREACH AND AWARENESS OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS

CHAPTER 3

Generating Social Protection Program Awareness

CONCEPT AND CORE ELEMENTS OF OUTREACH

Outreach is defined as “deliberate efforts to reach and inform intended populations and vulnerable groups about social protection programs and delivery systems in ways that they will comprehend so that they are aware, informed, able, and encouraged to engage.”

This definition has several elements:

1. **Purpose**: to inform people about social protection programs and delivery systems;

2. **People**: the focus is on the intended population, including ensuring that the underserved or vulnerable groups are reached; and

3. **Proactive approach**: the efforts are deliberate and tailored to ensure that the intended population is reached and that they promote understanding, awareness, and ability to engage.

Successful outreach requires identification of challenges faced by intended populations. Within those populations, several vulnerable marginalized groups require some proactivity and tailored efforts. Human-centered, deliberate, and tailored approaches ensure that the intended population is reached, and that outreach promotes understanding, awareness, and the ability to engage. For example, children are dependent on parents and guardians for access; the elderly may have limited literacy, digital access, or mobility; women may have mobility issues, domestic violence, or stigma; and people living in remote and isolated areas may lack transport, mobility, or physical access. Therefore, mitigating these challenges is important for the outreach phase.
Outreach strategies are tailored to the program’s objectives and its intended populations. Once core stakeholders or intended populations are identified, proactive and tailored strategies are developed to reach them. Ideally, outreach strategies are shaped and informed by diagnostics. Diagnostic tools can include situational analyses, communication needs assessments, and stakeholder assessments. While these may be carried out in advance, they can also be helpful during implementation to help provide feedback and support mid-course corrections to improve understanding, verify that intended population groups are being reached, and clarify myths and misperceptions. The approach and ambition are to be tailored according to the size and characteristics of the intended population.

Outreach modalities should be tailored to specific population groups to encourage poor and vulnerable groups to engage with social programs by building in adaptations. Diagnostics clarify the communication habits and capabilities of the intended population groups to tailor better the channels that would reach specific stakeholders. For example, children-focused programs should adopt an outreach strategy that includes parents or guardians who would be the designated beneficiaries; and the elderly may rely more on direct communications or mass media, less on internet-based.
Institutional arrangements for outreach can be diverse because so many modalities are used.

Some of the variations include the following:

- **Direct versus community actors or intermediaries**: Program administrators may conduct outreach efforts directly, or they may work through communities, peers, or other intermediaries to implement outreach.

- **Single program versus multiprogram outreach**: In some modalities, program-specific actors (e.g., outreach officers) implement outreach efforts on behalf of the program. In other modalities, outreach agents will implement outreach on behalf of multiple programs or social registries.

- **On-demand versus administrator-driven approaches**: On-demand systems depend extensively on people being informed enough to take the initiative to apply for programs. If outreach efforts are inadequate, intended populations may lack the awareness or ability to seek aid and may be missed. All modalities for outreach can be used with on-demand methods. Administrator-driven approaches bring intake and registration to communities and even to households directly. As such, outreach is implicit—but still proactive and includes reaching out to communities, disseminating information, and taking measures to adapt to linguistic or cultural differences.

- **Budgets and administrative considerations**: Outreach is often neglected, particularly when assigning resources, supplying qualified staff, and making logistical inputs.

- **Local actors, including central or local government actors, or outsourced providers**: They are typically responsible for client-facing implementation at the outreach phase.