ESCAP
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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Training package on Social Protection in the Maldives: Basic concepts and design features

Guide for Trainers

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SECTION I

Introduction

This manual is designed as a practical and adaptable resource for conducting social protection training programs that aims to build understanding of key principles and strategies for delivering inclusive and comprehensive social protection systems. It provides guidance on using the training materials of structured content, training methods which reflect adult learning principles. It aims to support capacity building and knowledge management, thereby promoting a proactive social protection mindset and enhancing capacity to implement more inclusive and comprehensive social protection systems. Full session outlines can be made available by contacting the Social Development Division, ESCAP at escap-sdd@un.org.

Since the first introduction of formal social protection schemes in the 1990s in the Maldives, the Government of the Maldives had made significant advances towards achieving comprehensive and adequate social protection coverage. Notably, it had made steady progress on social protection coverage through its universal multi-pillar old age pension system and universal health coverage system. Reforms had been achieved and consolidated through legislating social protection schemes, including through the Pension Act (8/2009), Disability Act (8/2010), and Social Health Insurance Act (15/2011), Social Protection Act (2/2014) and the Decentralization Act (24/2019). These legislations aim to increase the welfare of the citizens through managing the cost of living, alleviating poverty and reducing inequality, particularly among the vulnerable groups.

Currently, the social protection system in the Maldives includes:

1. Multi-pillar old age pension system comprising the contributory Maldives Retirement Pension Scheme and tax-financed non-contributory old-age basic pension, which is administered by the Maldives Pension Administration Office. Under the Pension Act (8/2009), The Capital Market Development Authority is entrusted with the responsibility to supervise the Maldives Retirement Pension Scheme including investment of pension assets ;
2. Universal health insurance that covers all medications, and diagnostics and treatments, consultations and admissions for all locals, full at government facilities and partly at empaneled private facilities. The National Social Protection Agency determines the policy and is administered by the Aasandha Company and;
3. Poverty-means tested non-contributory social assistance programmes, such as the single parent and foster parent allowance and food assistance as well as universal non-contributory schemes including the disability allowance, financial aid for assistive devices, and medical welfare and COVID-19 income support allowance;
4. Subsidies on fuel, electricity, food and water.

In 2022, a national framework for social protection was developed that identified reforms to meet ILO minimum standards and institutional pathways to strengthen coordination of social protection schemes and programmes. Nevertheless, significant coverage gaps persist, particularly for informal sector workers, people with disabilities, and those living in remote atolls.[1] Efforts are underway to further strengthen the social protection system, including its digital infrastructure. As part of these efforts, the Government of the Maldives is working to digitalize social protection systems, and the Maldives Pension Administration Office has also been digitalizing its pension management infrastructure to support a seamless and interoperable system. To ensure the effective implementation of these measures, it is important to ensure all practitioners and stakeholders across line ministries develop a good grasp and understanding of social protection.

To support this capacity development, UNESCAP collaborated with MPAO and Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSFD) to conduct a 2-day training on social protection in October 2024.[2] The training drew on ESCAP's online training module and also served as a pilot for a standard social protection training to be provided to other government and state officials working in the area of social protection in the Maldives. As a follow up to the training and for supporting continued training on social protection in the country, ESCAP supported the development of this facilitator's manual.

[1] National workshop on social protection and leaving no-one behind in the Maldives. https://www.unescap.org/events/2025/national-workshop-social-protection-and-leaving-no-one-behind-maldives ; Leaving No One Behind: Advancing Evidence-Based Social Protection in the Maldives. https://maldives.un.org/en/296590-leaving-no-one-behind-advancing-evidence-based-social-protection-maldives

[2] Introductory training on social protection in the Maldives. https://www.unescap.org/events/2025/introductory-training-social-protection-maldives

Purpose

This manual has been developed to help the training facilitators with the necessary information, skills, and tools to deliver high-quality training using the social protection training modules to different stakeholders of social protection policy planning, implementation and monitoring in the Maldives.

Specifically, the manual aims to:

1. Equip social protection training facilitators with technical knowledge on social protection
2. Provide training materials aligned with international standards and principles on social protection.
3. Equip facilitators with the ability to tailor content for diverse target audiences and teaching methods that promote adult learning.

SECTION II

Social protection

What is social protection?

Globally, social protection is governed by the 1952 Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention (No. 102) of ILO.[3] Since then, the concepts of social protection has evolved beyond the minimum standards and in 2012 ILO produced the Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202).[4]

The ILO defines social protection as the "set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability across the life cycle. Social protection includes nine main areas: child and family benefits, maternity protection, unemployment support, employment injury benefits, sickness benefits, health protection, old-age benefits, disability benefits, and survivors' benefits. Social protection systems address all these policy areas by a mix of contributory schemes (mainly social insurance) and non-contributory tax-financed schemes (universal/categorical schemes and social assistance)." [5]

[3] Social Security (Minimum Standards) 1952. https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:312247

[4] Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012. https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB%3A12100%3A0%3A%3ANO%3A12100%3AP12100_INSTRUMENT_ID%3A3065524%3ANO

[5] World Social Protection Report 2020-222. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@soc_sec/documents/publication/wcms_817572.pdf

At the regional level, governments in Asia and the Pacific adopted the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection in 2020, which serves as a shared vision and platform to promote more inclusive and comprehensive social protection. Under the Action Plan, social protection is defined as:

> "nationally defined policies and programmes that provide equitable access to all people and protect them throughout their lives against poverty and risks to their livelihoods and wellbeing. This protection can be provided through a range of mechanisms, including cash or in-kind benefits, contributory or non-contributory schemes, and programmes to enhance human capital, productive assets and access to jobs. It includes, but is not limited to, child benefits; benefits and support for people of working age in case of maternity, disability, work injury or unemployment; and old-age pensions. It does not cover areas such as health services and education. "

Why social protection?

Social protection is a right under several UN human rights conventions.



Key terms in social protection

It is encouraged to familiarize yourself with key terms in social protection that would be relevant for the concepts shared in the training course. In particular, it would be helpful to understand the following terms:

- Active contributors
- Basic schemes
- Beneficiary
- Contributory benefit
- Lump sums
- Means-tested benefits
- Non-contributory benefit
- Periodic cash benefits paid on a regular basis
- Provident fund
- Public works programmes

A more comprehensive list of terms and their definitions can be found at WEIGO and ILO social protection glossaries.

The life course approach

The life course approach is a comprehensive way to account for the different risks that individuals face at different stages of their life, which will disrupt income security. It ensures that individuals do not have to fall into poverty when faced with costs or income disruptions due to events that may naturally occur across the life course, such as raising a child, falling sick, becoming unemployed, or becoming old or having a disability. A life course approach also allows tailored interventions depending on that life contingency, as needs of each stage in the life course will differ. As we grow older our needs change, our exposure to, as well as our ability to, deal with risks may differ and our potential to contribute financially waxes and wanes.

Some aspects of social protection should be available across the entire life course, such as access to healthcare, disability benefits, social care and support services. Others should depend on the stage of life, such as maternity and paternity benefits for pregnant women and parents, child benefits and education-fee waivers for children, employment schemes for the youth and working age, and old age pension schemes. The Universal non-contributory schemes are one way to ensure that all people are provided this basic income guarantee at these different stages of life.

It should be highlighted to participants at the outset of the training that the training is based on a life course approach and reflects the structure of life course contingencies. Social protection schemes are presented according to child, working age and old age contingencies. This highlights how these schemes address and complement the different life contingencies across the life course and ensures that the majority of population are protected from falling into poverty as a result of these events.

SECTION III

Training package

The training package is based on the UNESCAP SPOT E-learning course. It is customised to the Maldives context based on a training conducted in 2024 in Male. The package includes a suggested agenda for a 3-day training on Social Protection with a pre- and post-test assessment, session plans with slide sets for each module with quizzes and suggested group work activities.

The training covers the following modules:

1. **Why social protection?**
   This module introduces the rationale for social protection and key underlying concepts, including:
   - What is social protection (SP)?
   - Overall SP coverage and expenditure in the Asia-Pacific region
   - Social protection as an investment for inclusive growth
   - Social protection and social outcomes
   - Key concepts
   - Quiz and group work

2. **Social Protection design features**

   This module introduces core design features of social protection systems, including:
   - Instruments: Contributory and non-contributory schemes
   - Elements: Breadth vs depth; Adequacy
   - Types of benefits: Monetary and in-kind; mandatory vs. voluntary
   - Funding models
   - Redistributive impact of tax-financed schemes
   - Resource mobilisation options
   - Quiz and group work

3. **Social protection in the Maldives**

   This module provides an overview of the Maldivian social protection system, including:
   - Legislation for social protection
   - Overview of the social protection system
   - Stakeholders
   - Opportunities and challenges
   - Quiz and Group work

4. **Social protection parameters and SPOT Simulator**

   This module introduces the SPOT simulator and includes:
   - Introduction to basic and advanced dashboards.
   - Key parameters of schemes and their potential impact on economic outcomes.
   - Quiz and group work

5. **Key enablers**

   This module covers enabling factors for effective social protection systems, including:
   - Coordination mechanisms
   - M&E systems
   - Digitalized systems
   - Quiz and group work

6. **Child benefits**

   This module focuses on social protection for children and covers:
   - Key child benefit models
   - Benefit adequacy for children
   - Quiz and group work

7. **Working age benefits**

   This module focuses on social protection for the working-age population and covers:
   - Key working age contingencies
   - Key working age instruments and their key features
   - Overview of Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP)
   - Just transitions, shock response and climate change impacts.
   - Quiz and group work

8. **Old age benefits- Pensions**
   This module focuses on old age benefits in the form of pensions and covers:
   - Contributory pensions
   - Non-contributory pensions
   - Multi-pillar pension systems
   - Gender-sensitive pensions
   - Quiz and group work

The modules are designed to be interactive, and trainers are encouraged to use participatory methods during session delivery. Each module is assessed with a short quiz.

Agenda, preparation and checklist

The agenda and timings are a guide to the trainer. The trainer may alter these based on the training objective and trainee target group. For example, for complete beginners, more time may be spent on the introductory sessions, or for those with a basic grasp of social protection, more time may be spent on groupwork and schemes.

Time	Session content	Training Objectives: Participants will…
Day 1		
08:00-08:30	**Breakfast and registration**	
08:30-09:00	**Session 1: Introduction** (30 min) Participants and trainer(s) introductions (10min) Ice breaker (10 min) Online pre-assessment (10 min)	• Identify different skillsets of participants • Complete short online individual quiz.
09:00-10:00	**Session 2: Why social protection?** (60 min) Interactive Presentation and quizzes (45 min) Group discussion or exercises (15 min)	• Clarify definition of social protection. • Understand the role of social protection to support economic and social development. • Understand key social protection concepts and why they are important.
10:00-10:15	Break	
10:15-11:45	**Session 3: Social Protection Design Features** (90 min) Interactive Presentation and quizzes (50 min) Activity Break Group discussion or exercises (40 min)	• Able to explain the difference between contributory and non-contributory schemes and understand their different considerations and implications in terms of coverage, adequacy, risk pooling, financing, administering. • Understand why breadth and adequacy are important design considerations • Understand the different ways SP is delivered (monetary and in-kind) • Identify key funding models and resource mobilisation options.
11:45-13:00	Lunch	

Time	Session content	Training Objectives: Participants will…
13:00-14:00	**Session 4: Social protection in the Maldives** (60 min) Interactive Presentation and quizzes (40min) Group discussion or exercises (20 min)	• Identify the legal frameworks for social protection in the country • Understand the SP system and the varied actors that are involved • Describe some of the gaps in the current SP system and the opportunities for strengthening in the country
14:00-16:00	**Session 5: Social protection parameters and SPOT Simulator** (120 min) Interactive Presentation on SPOT Simulator and quizzes (60 min) Group discussion or exercises (60 min)	• Able to use the SPOT Simulator to explore different policy scenarios • Understand key parameters of schemes and their potential impact on economic outcomes
Day 2		
08:00-08:30	**Breakfast**	
08:30-09:00	**Session 6: Recap of Day 1** (30 min) Gallery walk (10 min) Icebreaker Activity 2 – understanding vulnerability (20 min)	• Refresh knowledge on key design features • Understand vulnerability leads to exclusions
09:00-10:15	**Session 7: Key Enablers** (90min) Interactive Presentation and quizzes (30 min) Resource person presentation on a SP scheme's IT systems or coordination mechanisms (15 min) Group discussion or exercises (30 min)	• Identify key elements of coordination mechanisms and M&E systems • Understand key principles in the design of digitalised systems
10:15-10:30	Break	
10:30-11:15	**Session 8: Child benefits** (75 min) Interactive presentation and quizzes (30 min)	• Identify different child benefit models • Understand different factors in determining benefit adequacy for children

Time	Session content	Training Objectives: Participants will…
	Resource person presentation on Single/Foster Parent Allowance evaluation findings (15 min) Group discussion or exercises (30 min)	• Understand different designs such as universal and quasi universal child benefits
11:15-12:00	**Session 9: Working age benefits** (150 min) Interactive presentation and quizzes (45 min)	• Identify different working age social protection schemes (unemployment, worker injury, maternity, paid sick leave and disability) • Identify key features for different working age schemes • Understand implications of social insurance and employer liability models • Understand key examples of ALMP •
12:15-13:00	Lunch	
13:00- 14:30	**Session 9: Working age benefits continued** Interactive presentation and quizzes (45 min) Resource person presentation on MRPS informal sector challenges (30 min) Group discussion or exercises (30 min)	• Understand working-age related issues (informality, climate change, gender etc).
14:30-16:00	**Session 10: Old age pension benefits** (90 min) Interactive presentation and quizzes (30 min) Resource person presentation on Basic Pension evolution (30 min) Group discussion or exercises (30min)	• Understand overview of main design features of contributory schemes • Understand role of non-contributory pensions and importance of multi-pillar pension systems • Understand how pensions can be made more inclusive, such as through gender-sensitive pensions

Time	Session content	Training Objectives: Participants will…
Day 3		
08:00-08:30	**Breakfast**	
08:30-08:45	**Session 11: Recap of Day 2** (15 min) Facilitator summation of key elements of enablers, child and working age schemes (10 min) Participant summation of day 2 group works (5 min)	• Refresh knowledge on key design features for target groups and enablers
08:45-12:00	**Session 12: Field visit** (195 min) Field visit to observe the process of benefit transfer	• Understand how benefit transfers are made.
12:00-13:00	Lunch	
13-00-14:30	**Session 13: Practical applications** (90 min) Group work – 4 groups (45 min) Plenary presentations • Presentations (30 min) Discussion (15 min)	• Use SPOT Simulator to present different policy scenarios • Apply overall understanding gained to discuss, design and present a social protection scheme.
14:30-15:00	**Session 14: Recap** (30 min) Key reflections (5 min) Post assessment (5 min) Evaluation (5min) Certificates (15 min)	• Share one takeaway from training and relevant to work. • complete individual online short assessment and evaluation • issue certificate of participation

Pre-training material

Pre-training material may be shared 1-2 weeks in advance of the workshop that participants may wish to review to familiarise themselves with basic concepts for the course, including:

- A comprehensive list of terms and their definitions under WEIGO and ILO social protection glossaries.
- An overview of social protection in the Maldives:
    - Readiness to Implement the Action Plan to Strengthen Regional Cooperation on Social Protection: Maldives (2023)
    - Stepping Stones towards Social Protection and Climate Resilience in the Maldives (2024)
- Self-guided online SPOT tutorial available under Module 5 of the ESCAP SPOT e-learning modules.

Training logistics and set-up

Trainers must make sure everything, from participants to training venue and materials, is ready prior to the training. These include training venue, training materials, other teaching resources, participants and participant groups, other trainers and facilitators.

Checklist for training preparation:

Training Venue

☐Enough space for all participants

☐Seating arrangements (preferably in groups)

☐Space for activities

☐Walls for displaying group work

☐Registration desk

Training Materials

☐Slide deck

☐Trainer notes on sessions

☐Audiovisual material (e.g., handouts, agenda)

☐Assessments developed in a digital tool

☐Quizzes developed in a digital tool

☐Flipcharts

☐Post-it notes packs

☐Pens

☐Markers

☐Masking tape

☐Blue tack for sticking materials on the wall

Other Resources

☐Projector

☐Microphones and sound system

☐Laptops

☐Applications (e.g., Mentimeter, Kahoot)

☐Internet

☐Wi-Fi

☐Stationery

☐Registration badges

Participant Groups

☐Participants (20-40)

☐Allocate participants to groups (6–8 participants in each group)

☐Ensure diversity in knowledge levels on social protection

☐Mix participants from different agencies, age and gender

☐Promote peer learning during group work

Trainers, Resource persons and Facilitators

☐Identify lead trainers

☐Identify facilitators (e.g. from government institution)

☐Identify resource persons for specific session presentations

☐Assign facilitators(s) to provide assistance during group work

☐Collaborate with NSPA, MPAO, Aasandha Company and relevant Ministries

☐Assign group work tasks to identified technical persons/facilitators

☐Hold preparatory meetings with group work facilitators

☐Inspect the training venue prior to the training

Field visit

☐ Identify departments/scheme to be observed

☐ Get formal approval from the departments/scheme to be visited

☐ Identify the onsite focal person confirmed (the person who will guide the participants at site)

☐ Confirm visit schedule (time, number of participants)

☐ Confirm transport and other logistics

Session Plans

The session plans are developed to allow for trainer's flexibility in how they use the material provided. Hence, the trainer may choose to skip some content depending on participant profiles. For instance, if participants are directly involved in designing and implementing social protection instruments (e.g. pensions, child benefits), they are likely to have a general understanding of social protection. In such situations, the trainer may spend less time on the general content slides. The pre-test will guide the trainer in making these decisions. However, if the participants are a mix of stakeholders with varying levels of knowledge, it is prudent to use the content in its entirety.

Session-specific preparation

In addition to the overall logistical preparations for the training, the trainer needs to prepare for each session in detail. The following outlines the key tasks that must be completed in preparation for the sessions. The trainer may adapt these tasks based on time and resource availability.

Session Preparation Checklist

- ☐Go through the session slide sets for all sessions (full slide deck) and familiarize yourself with the content
- ☐Prepare assessment in a digital tool (e.g., Mentimeter, Kahoot, Google/Microsoft Forms)
- ☐Prepare quiz questions in a digital tool (e.g., Mentimeter, Kahoot, Google/Microsoft Forms)
- ☐Generate a separate QR code for each assessment/quiz
- ☐Add each QR code to the relevant session slide
- ☐Decide which activity will be assigned to each group
- ☐Identify group-level facilitators
- ☐Brief facilitators on the group activities

Materials for group work:

- ☐Laptops (with chargers)
- ☐Post-it note packs
- ☐Flipcharts with stand
- ☐Markers
- ☐Sticking material for putting up flipcharts on the wall
- ☐Printed handouts (if required for the group work)
- ☐Printed group activity instructions

Materials for icebreaker activities

☐Notes of group activity

☐Hat/bowl – a container

☐Paper strips for role/group allocation

☐Activity statements printout for the facilitator

IT equipment

☐Internet/Wi-Fi,

☐Sound system are working

☐Mikes

☐Projection of training materials

☐Projection of quizzes and assessments

Process:

The general process for the sessions is as follows. The trainer may make some changes based on time and resource availability. Where the session process differs (e.g. introductory session), specific instructions are provided in the details for that session.

- Use the slide set to guide the delivery of the content
- Be interactive with the participants. The trainer may choose to ask questions and clarify concepts during the content delivery or at the end.
- Use the assessment/ quiz slide, with an added QR code, to test knowledge
- Introduce group activity and provide clear instructions
- Facilitate group activity (monitor and keep time).
- Facilitate group activity feedback (if time permits)
- Wrap up the session

Trainer tip
The trainer may want to use Mentimeter to develop the quizzes and assessment. Through subscription, the trainers/trainers can exchange notes, easily navigate through different sessions and run quizzes with instant demonstration of results.

Group activities:

There are several group activities in this training. When allocating the participants to the training the trainer must ensure they are organized in a way that enables learning and sharing among the participants without one or two participants dominating the conversation.

Trainer tip

Including a person with subject matter expertise - more experienced or knowledgeable - in each group so that the knowledge is spread across groups and mix participants from different institutions and gender.

Most group activities have more than one activity. It is at the discretion of the trainer to assign group activity to one or more groups. The group activities for each sessions should be carried out simultaneously. It is up to the trainer to adjust group activities based on the number of participants in each group during the training. For example, if there are six groups, Groups 1, 3 and 5 can both work on Activity 1 while Groups 2,4 and 6 both work on Activity 2. It is up to the trainer to decide which activity to allocate to each group.

Trainer tip

Time keeping in group work is important. If there is not enough time for groups to feedback to the group, the trainer may decide to just let the group to display their work on the walls for a walk through at a later stage. Or just get one message from each group. The trainer may decide the best course of action during the training.

Field visit:

A field visit is included in the training. This requires prior planning with the government social protection partners. The trainer must consult with the relevant government agency (NSPA, Assandha Company or MPAO), the most practical and appropriate scheme to observe during the training.

Trainer tip

In preparation of the field visit the trainer must work out the detailed scope of the observations to be made during the visit. This includes decisions on whether the observations will cover end-to-end process, IT systems such as application portal, case management systems, user roles etc. The trainer must discuss with the government counterpart and conform the scope before the training.

Pre- and post-training assessment:

A pre-training self-assessment is recommended to assess the participants' knowledge on key social protection concepts both before and after the training to help review and refine content for further trainings.

Workshop Evaluation Questionnaire:

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the usefulness of the training in terms of

- Relevance (content)
- Effectiveness (knowledge and practice)
- Efficiency (time, instructions)

Trainer tip

The evaluation questions provided are samples. The trainer should tailor the questions to the needs of the institution in terms of its relevance, effectiveness and efficiency.

Prepare the evaluation questions in print format or in a digital tool such as Google/Microsoft forms and generate a QR code. If in digital format, add the QR code to the session 12 slide set. Complete this evaluation at the end of the training, after the post-test, and after the recap in the last session.

These questions are suggestions for evaluating the training.

1- Please tell us the capacity in which you completed the training. I am
   ☐ a government technical staff
   ☐ a government political appointee
   ☐ from academia (university, college) or a research institute
   ☐ from a non-government organization
   ☐ a private technical person (individual consultant)
   ☐ from business sector (private and State-Owned Enterprises)
   ☐ from an independent state institution (parliament, independent commissions)
   ☐ from an auxiliary body to the government (Maldivian Red Cresent)

2- [Relevance]. Do you believe that the topics presented during the training provided you with a basic understanding of key concepts and strategies for delivering effective and inclusive social protection systems?
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Somewhat disagree
   ☐ Somewhat agree and somewhat disagree (neither agree nor disagree)
   ☐ Somewhat agree
   ☐ Strongly agree

3- [Effectiveness]. Do you believe that the training effectively demonstrated the use of SPOT simulator to assess the impact of different policy decisions in providing social protection benefits?
   ☐ Strongly disagree
   ☐ Somewhat disagree

☐ Somewhat agree and also disagree (neither agree nor disagree)
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Strongly agree

4- [Effectiveness]. Do you believe that the training improved your capacity to design social protection benefits using different design features and assess impact using SPOT simulator?
☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Somewhat agree and also disagree (neither agree nor disagree)
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Strongly agree

5- [Effectiveness]. Do you believe that the group activities allowed you to effectively engage with others in exploring different designs of social protection programmes?
☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Somewhat agree and also disagree (neither agree nor disagree)
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Strongly agree

6- [Effectiveness]. Do you believe that the filed visit allowed you to improve your understanding of enablers and barriers of social protection programmes?
☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Somewhat agree and also disagree (neither agree nor disagree)
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Strongly agree

7- [Effectiveness]. Do you believe that the time allocated for the training was adequate?
☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Somewhat agree and also disagree (neither agree nor disagree)
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Strongly agree

8- [Efficiency]. Do you believe that the mode of delivery (interactive presentations, quizzes, group activities, and SPOT simulator exercises) for the training was useful?
☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Somewhat agree and also disagree (neither agree nor disagree)
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Strongly agree

9- Do you have any suggestions for us to improve this training in the future?

Trainer reflections to be integrated at the end of each day:

The purpose of reflections is to assess the usefulness of the training manual for the trainers and facilitators in conducting the training. The feedback will inform future revisions of the manual.

Prepare these questions in a digital tool such as Google/Microsoft forms. Generate a QR code and share the QR code with other trainers. If possible complete this at the end of each session or during breaks or at the training after the last session.

Session – specific reflections.

1- Were the instructions provided in the manual easy to follow?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ Somewhat difficult
   ☐ No
2- If No or Somewhat difficult, what specific instructions are needed for which segment.

3- Were the training materials adequate to provide with a basic understanding of key concepts and strategies for delivering effective and inclusive social protection systems?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ Somewhat
   ☐ No
4- If No or Somewhat, what specific topics need to be added.

5- Did you use the group activities as they were suggested in the manual?
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ Somewhat, with small changes
   ☐ No
6- If No or Somewhat changes were made, what was changed.

General reflections.

7- What changes in the manual would make it more useful for future trainers and facilitators
   ---
8- Are there any changes you would suggest to the agenda? If so, please specify
   ---

SECTION IV

General concepts of facilitation

What is facilitation?

Facilitation is a process whereby facilitators guide meaningful discussions through interactive learning activities, enabling participants to develop knowledge, practical skills, confidence, and competence in a specific area/topic. Rather than receiving information passively from an expert, effective facilitation empowers participants to learn and grow through their own active participation and reflection.

Key principles of facilitation:

- Create safe and inclusive spaces, where participants feel comfortable sharing their opinions and/or experiences.
- Foster active participation and manage group dynamics.
- Approach sessions as co-learners rather than experts.
- Listen actively and respond without judgment, while remaining flexible and responsive to participants' needs.
- Maintain cultural sensitivity and respect different perspectives.
- Embrace feedback and continuously improve their skills.

Tips for Effective Facilitation

Setting the Tone

Facilitators should create a warm and welcoming environment for participants from the very beginning of the training. This can be achieved by:

- **Using engaging activities**: start with introductions; use icebreakers and community-building activities during the first day of training to help participants feel comfortable and connected. Continue using team-building activities and energizers throughout the rest of the training to maintain engagement, strengthen connections, and build trust.
- **Using interactive technology**: interactive methods facilitate learning. Flip charts and post-it notes can be used in group activities. In addition to power point presentations and slide shows and videos, SPOT simulator can be used. There are several opensource application that can be used for quizzes and training assessments. Some interactive applications that can be used include Mentimeter, Kahoot and any other the facilitator is familiar with.
- **Demonstrating positive body language:** use appropriate gestures and facial expressions, maintain eye contact, and adopt an open and approachable body posture. Move purposefully around the space to maintain engagement and connect with all participants. Be mindful of any cultural norms around eye contact and personal space; ensure your body language conveys warmth and approachability.

- **Speaking dynamically:** avoid speaking in a monotone, by modulating your pitch, tone and volume to maintain engagement. Speak clearly at an appropriate pace, use pauses for emphasis and adjust your speaking style to match the energy of different activities. Be mindful of participants who may have hearing difficulties.
- **Demonstrating enthusiasm and relatability:** use appropriate humor, relevant metaphors, and concrete examples to make your content relatable and meaningful.

Opening & Closing Circle

Facilitators should make seating arrangements so that participants feel comfortable and engage with each other easily. Avoid the traditional classroom seating style of tables/chairs in rows, which can feel formal.

Instead, consider the following seating arrangements:

- Closed circle seating: arrange chairs in a complete circle, without tables.
- U-style seating: create a horseshoe shape with tables and chairs that allows facilitators to move within the group.
- Banquet style seating: arrange small round tables with 4-6 participants seated around each table.

When planning the training, schedule circle time at the beginning and end of each day:

- **Opening Circle:** Begin with a brief energizer of 5-10 minutes, to get participants ready and engaged for the day. Ask participants to recap what they did/learned the previous day. This helps clarify participants' understanding so far and sets expectations for the current day. Use this time to encourage participants to practice their facilitation skills (e.g., each day's recap can be allocated to a different group, allowing each group to choose how they want to carry out their recap).
- **Closing Circle:** Wrap up the day by asking participants to share one key takeaway using prompts: *"Today, I liked/learnt/explored/discovered..."* or *"Tomorrow, I hope..."*. After everyone is done sharing, conduct a brief energizer if time permits to end the day on a positive note.

Managing Group Dynamics

- **Encouraging group participation:** use multiple techniques to ensure everyone can contribute comfortably such as:
    - small discussion groups created through group divider activities that can also serve as energizers. These smaller groups allow all participants to share their thoughts in a comfortable setting before presenting them to the large group.
    - round robin technique, where participants take turns sharing ideas in a structured sequence. This is particularly effective when you want to avoid groupthink and ensure equal participation from all participants.

    - silent brainstorming, where participants write one idea per Post-it notes and place them on flipcharts for the facilitator to read and categorize. This technique encourages honest input regardless of confidence level and is especially valuable for controversial topics.
- **Managing dominant personalities:** when one person over-contributes or is extremely vocal, focus your efforts on encouraging other group members to participate more, rather than trying to control the dominant person directly. Avoid statements like *"Excuse me ___, you are taking up a lot of the group's time"* or *"Do you mind if I let someone else take a turn"*. Instead, use techniques such as redirecting questions to others by asking *"Who else has an opinion on this issue?"* or summarizing their point of view to make them feel heard, then moving the discussion along.
- **Supporting quiet participants:** avoid forcing participants to share by asking direct questions like *"___, you haven't said much today, is there anything you would like to add?"* as this often makes shy/quiet members feel put on the spot and may withdraw further. Instead, create safer opportunities to contribute by using general statements such as *"I'd like to hear from those who haven't talked for a while"* or by using techniques such as small group discussions, pair sharing, and silent brainstorming.
- **Managing disagreements and conflicts:** when two people are engaged in a prolonged disagreement and are not willing to come to a consensus, invite other group members to share by asking *"Who else has an opinion on this issue?"* or saying, *"Let's step back for a minute and see if there are other issues that need to be discussed"*. Remember to focus your attention on engaging the broader group rather than getting drawn into the conflict between the two dominant personalities.
- **Handling disruptive behavior:** when participants engage in side-conversations, whispering, or other disruptive behaviors, you may be tempted to ignore the behavior in the hope that it will disappear; however, it often gets worse. Instead, address the behavior with warmth and humor by stating *"as you know, those who don't hear the joke often wonder if someone is laughing at them"*. If the issue continues, assume that there is an underlying reason such as the topic being boring, participants needing a break, or participants needing time for small group discussions.
- **Creating opportunities for peer-to-peer learning:** facilitate meaningful interactions among participants by creating space for them to share their own knowledge and experiences; encourage participants to share by asking *"Does anyone else know or have any thoughts about…?"*. Use the Think-Pair-Share technique where participants first reflect individually, then discuss their ideas with an assigned partner, before sharing with the larger group. The Jigsaw method can also be used, whereby small groups are assigned different topics/thematic areas which they discuss and prepare posters on, before sharing their findings and ideas with the larger group.
- **Managing sensitivities specific to social protection**: facilitate constructive debate. For instance, in social protection the debate between universal or targeted approaches. Facilitator could highlight that both have a purpose, and if there are differing views from participants, acknowledge both views and highlight the need for robust and recent data to enable effective targeting, whilst also the need to balance budgets and political priorities.

Addressing Harmful Points of View

When participants engage with sensitive topics (e.g., gender equality, violence, mental health, and substance use) it is likely that participants may find it challenging to understand some of the concepts discussed within the group. It is also possible that some participants may hold negative attitudes and beliefs; these views can be harmful and must be addressed by the facilitator promptly.

Be prepared for participants to make harmful statements:

Topic Areas	**Examples of Harmful Points of View**
Victim Blaming	*"S/he is unemployed/poor because s/he doesn't even try to work"* *"S/he is a single parent because s/he really wanted to leave the family"* *"S/he has not one to take care of because s/he didn't want to migrate with their children"*
Abuse of benefits	*"They are poor because they use any cash they get on drugs."* *"They are poor so do not know any better"* *"They will remain poor no matter how much benefits are given"*
Socio-cultural Justifications	*"These are Western ideas about gender equality. This doesn't fit our culture"* *"Disabled people cannot work – they disrupt workplaces"* *"Expat workers are not really part of our households / society"* *"Older people don't have a right to complain – they stay at home and get money"*
Gender Stereotypes & Roles	*"Real men don't ask for help – they find their own way"* *"Women must manage the household"*
Age & Power Dynamics	*"Children people today mature faster"* *"Older workers must give way to younger – they should retire"*

Mental Health Stigma	*"Depression is just an excuse for being lazy"* *"People with mental health problems are just weak"* *"If they had faith, they wouldn't have mental health problems"* *"Drug users are bad people who deserve what happens to them"* *"Addiction is not a real disease"*

If a participant shares a harmful point of view, be mindful not to create a situation where you are in opposition to the participant and lecturing them. Instead, treat this as a learning opportunity for the whole group by saying "Let's talk about that statement for a minute" and doing any of the following:

- **Involve others:** ask other participants what they think about this viewpoint (*"I'm curious to learn what others in the group think about this?", "Let's hear from a few more people on this topic", "Let's explore this together. What might be some other ways to think about this?"*). By involving others in the discussion, the participant with the harmful point of view sees that people their own age have alternative perspectives. The participant is also more likely to receive and consider new information when it comes from peers rather than an authority figure (in this case, the facilitator). This approach allows the whole group to experience peer education in action within a safe, supportive environment. Your role as the facilitator is to guide the discussion and demonstrate to the group how different viewpoints can coexist and be discussed respectfully.
- **Clarify reasoning:** Ask the participant why s/he feels this way (*"Could you share why you feel this way?", "That's interesting. Can you tell us more about how you came to think about it this way?"*). By asking the participant why they hold this opinion, the facilitator demonstrates respect and curiosity about different perspectives, and thus, models the kind of positive behavior that peer educators should adopt in their own work. Instead of dismissing or rejecting the participant's point of view, the facilitator shows that they are willing to learn and understand where the participant is coming from. This approach often helps reveal the underlying experiences or beliefs that inform the harmful viewpoint, which fosters a more productive and compassionate discussion.
- **Offer another opinion:** If other participants do not share, you can offer an alternative point of view to the group and ask them what they think (*"There's another way to look at this…what are your thoughts on this?", "Some research shows that…Does that change how anyone thinks about this?"*). It is possible that participants may feel hesitant to offer an alternative perspective or may also agree to some extent with the harmful point of view. Your role as a facilitator is to present a different perspective and encourage participants to explore the reasoning behind these various points of view, helping them to develop critical thinking skills about complex issues.
- **Stick to facts:** Be clear and provide information for participants to understand the concept better while addressing the harmful point of view (*"Research shows that…" "According to*

our law…" "Experts tell us that…"). Present information in a non-judgmental way that allows participants to come to their own conclusions, rather than feeling lectured.

Essential Communication Techniques

Paraphrasing: actively listen to participants and repeat the content of what they have said through paraphrasing, to acknowledge that you have heard them. This helps you clarify and ensure you have understood what they shared. When paraphrasing, it is important for facilitators to use their own words instead of repeating what the participants said verbatim. Common phrases used when paraphrasing include "*So what you're saying is…*", "*It sounds like…*", "*What I'm hearing is…*", and "*Let me see if I understand…*". In order to check that you have accurately captured what they have said, ask "*Is that what you meant?*", "*Is that accurate/right/correct?*", or "*Did I capture that correctly?*". Paraphrasing also helps other participants engage with and better understand the ideas being discussed; it can prompt additional thoughts and insights from the larger group.

Asking questions: use open-ended questions to encourage discussion and input, while using close-ended questions to check in with the group and clarify understanding. Use probing questions such as *"Can you tell me more about that?"*, *"How might others see this differently?"* or *"What would happen if…?"* to promote reflection, challenge assumptions, and encourage critical thinking.

Using presentations and visuals: incorporate visual aids when facilitating the session, to enhance participants' understanding of the topic and retention of information. Visual aids help to emphasize key concepts and cater to different learning styles of participants.

- Flipcharts and markers are commonly used throughout the training by the facilitator to jot down ideas and draw diagrams; this encourages participants to actively engage and keep track of the group discussion. Flipcharts and markers also serve as an aid within small group discussions by the participants to illustrate their ideas and present to the larger group for feedback.
- Sticky notes are often used as an aid by facilitators to prompt participants to reflect on their own and encourage personal contributions. This ensures that participants who are hesitant to speak out in the large ground discussion still find a way to contribute their ideas and perspectives through an alternative format.
- Presentations or slide decks can be effective for introducing new concepts, sharing case studies, or presenting case studies. Keep slides simple with minimal text (to not overwhelm participants) and include relevant images or graphics.
- Multimedia content such as short videos, audio clips, or interactive online tools (e.g., Mentimeter, Kahoot) can enhance the learning experience for participants by presenting concepts in a visually appealing and engaging format. For instance, Mentimeter, though needs a paid subscription, allows presenters to access notes through the app on their phones. These tools are particularly effective with young people who are accustomed to digital media.

Summarizing: use summarizing to recap key points briefly throughout the session to consolidate learning and provide a comprehensive summary at the end of the session. One technique is the

What? So What? Now What? framework which you can use to encourage critical reflection and close the session.

- **What?** questions will elicit descriptions of the activity and learning from participants.
    - *What happened?*
    - *What did you learn?*
    - *What did you do?*
    - *What did you expect?*
    - *What was different?*
    - *What was your reaction?*
    - *What stood out to you?*
    - *What surprised you?*
- **So What?** questions allow participants to discuss their feelings, analyze their experience, and explore deeper meaning.
    - *Why does it matter?*
    - *What are the consequences/implications?*
    - *What does this mean?*
    - *What patterns do you notice?*
    - *What insights does this give you?*
    - *How does this connect to previous sessions/your experience/your role as…?*
- **Now What?** questions encourage participants to consider future application and action.
    - *What are you going to do because of this?*
    - *What will you do differently?*
    - *How will you apply what you have learned?*
    - *What will you share with others?*

Guidance for Inclusion and Accessibility

When preparing for the training, ask participants about their accessibility needs during registration and at the beginning of the training. Gather specific information about the type of disability and how it may affect their participation/impact on their learning.

Prepare accordingly by making specific adaptations to the sessions and the venue set-up, and modify materials in advance, while coordinating with relevant professionals to ensure that the modifications are appropriate.

Specific adaptations that should be made for different disability types are as follows:

- For Persons with Visual Disabilities:
    - Use large font sizes (for documents/handouts: minimum 14 points; for presentations: minimum 24 points).
    - Use accessible fonts (e.g.: Calibri, Times New Roman, or Arial).
    - Use color palettes that provide sufficiently high contrast between the text and background (e.g., use a light background with dark text).
    - For multimedia content, provide captions or transcripts for videos, and ensure that audio is clear and at an appropriate volume. If the video does not have audio or

captions, ensure that the facilitator summarizes what is being shown in the video before they ask any follow-up questions or open for discussion. Ideally all video's that are used in the training to be accessible.
    - Use textured materials for activities to help participants differentiate (e.g., different textures to denote color of flag) or use different shape cut-outs (e.g., circles, squares, triangles) for sorting and identification.
    - Provide handouts in alternative formats (e.g., digital versions compatible with screen readers).
- For Persons with Hearing Disabilities:
    - Provide sign language interpreters. The facilitator should coordinate closely with the sign language interpreter, by sharing information on the activities within the session beforehand with the interpreter, so that the interpreter is able to share instructions and sign accurately.
    - Ensure clear line of sight between facilitator and participant. When a sign language interpreter is being used, ensure that the sign language interpreter stands or sits close to the facilitator, so that the participant(s) do not have to divide their attention between two different locations.
    - Use visual diagrams, flowcharts, and pictorial instructions alongside written text in presentations.
    - Provide visual demonstration of activities with your co-facilitator and/or a volunteer, before participants begin each activity.
    - Ensure participant handouts and other materials include diagrams and illustrations, instead of relying solely on written text.
    - Allow for extra time to process visual information, sign language interpretation, and for participants to formulate their responses and contribute to the discussion.
    - Check for understanding regularly through visual confirmation (making eye contact, nodding, and thumbs up).
    - Ensure that activities that involve participant discussion can be done through drawing, role play, and other physical demonstrations.
    - It is recommended that multimedia content, has subtitles (inquire on the preference of the participants in terms of English or Dhivehi language subtitles) so that the participants can follow it themselves.

- For Persons with Physical Disabilities:

    - Ensure that the training venue is physically accessible, with appropriate seating, ramps, with close access to bathrooms; identify alternative options and additional support required by the participant if the venue is not accessible. If the training venue is in a multi-story building, ensure that there is a working elevator that can accommodate a battery-operated wheelchair.
    - Arrange seating to ensure easy access and movement.
    - Schedule or allow for movement breaks.
    - Provide alternative methods for physical activities to accommodate participants with different abilities. For activities requiring movement such as moving to different corners of the room, standing up or raising hands, offer alternatives such as using

colored cards to indicate choices, verbal responses, and/or remaining seated while others move. For activities involving drawing or writing, offer alternatives such as verbal responses and/or asking participants to partner up for the activity.

- For Persons with Developmental Disabilities:
    - Prior to the training, gather information about the specific type of learning disability the participant has, to understand their specific needs and provide targeted support.
    - Assign a buddy to provide appropriate support based on the participant's needs.
    - Allow extra time for processing and discussion.
    - Check in regularly to ensure understanding of instructions and concepts.
    - Repeat key concepts through different examples, visual aids, and mind-maps.
- For Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities:
    - Check with participants before the training regarding preferences in venue set-up including lighting (e.g., brightness, type of lighting) and sound (e.g., adjusting speaker volume, minimizing background noise), and make adjustments where possible.
    - Offer regular breaks.
    - Provide mindful, quiet activities to decompress.
    - Check in privately with participants when needed.

Effective facilitation is a skill that develops with practice and reflection. The techniques outlined in this section provide a foundation for creating meaningful learning experiences. Remember that every group is unique and may require different approaches; remain open and flexible to new ideas and perspectives. Your role as a facilitator is to create the conditions needed for learning and growth, in order for participants to go through a transformative change on their own.



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