



PRESS RELEASE

NASSCO in Collaboration with the European Union and the International Labour Organization Works Towards a Shock Responsive Social Protection Framework in Nigeria.

The National Social Safety Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO) in cooperation with the International Labour Organization and the European Union is launching the project: "Strengthening and Expanding the National Social Registry (NSR) as a shock-responsive social protection system in Nigeria".

Designed for an initial period of 12 months, the project brings a suite of technical support packages, funded by the European Union. The technical assistance to NASSCO and the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development is aimed at maximizing utilization and operability of Nigeria's National Social Register to reach vulnerable populations dealing with the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and situations requiring humanitarian assistance and social protection.

The partnership between the Ministry, ILO and the EU comes at a crucial time in which Nigeria is taking large steps to fortify social protection. The economic impact of the pandemic has severed incomes and hurt businesses around the country, stretching social protection systems and mounting pressure on the government to come up with temporary income support. It has further emphasized the urgent need to have a comprehensive database in place to coordinate and harmonize all social protection interventions of federal, state and development partners.

Strengthening the NSR is the central feature of this project. Currently, Nigeria's National Social Register (NSR) holds 4 million poor and vulnerable households nationwide and provides a gateway for the poor to access basic income support. The NSR links to the Unified Register of Beneficiaries (URB) with records of internally displaced persons and will soon host a large data subset in the form of a Rapid Response Register that will target 2 million urban households impacted Covid-19. Nonetheless, the database still shows gaps in coverage and a limited flexibility. These challenges need to be addressed in order for the NSR to live up to its potential as a main vehicle for immediate relief and longer-term income support.

Strengthening and expanding the NSR with the support of this project will go a long way to ensure that the poor and vulnerable Nigerians are fully registered and improve their access to social protection benefits. A comprehensive database can inform the design of appropriate interventions that target poor and vulnerable households and make them more effective and efficient. A NSR with wide coverage could also help to generate the funding streams needed to realize the President's commitment of lifting 100 million people out of poverty. Finally, by strengthening linkages with the humanitarian and early recovery nexus, as well as health insurance, the NSR can grow to become the tool for rapid and comprehensive income support and access to basic services. In the end, a strong NSR can be the catalyst in creating a comprehensive social protection floor for Nigerians that is shock responsive and consists of both contributory and non-contributory schemes. Speaking on the partnership the representatives of NASSCO, EU and ILO said:

The Ambassador of the European Union to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ketil Karlsen: *"The COVID 19 pandemic has brought with it an unprecedented human development crisis and it is essential to unite efforts to tackle poverty and inequality. I am proud of this joint effort with ILO and NASSCO as Nigeria has a strong social protection system and this collaboration will strengthen it so it can respond quicker and more efficiently to crises."*

NASSCO National Coordinator, Iorwa Apera: *"In the longer term, a comprehensive NSR will be able to bridge the gap between social assistance, humanitarian responses, social assistance and social security (including health insurance) and smoothen collaboration to enhance the handshake between these sectors in graduation strategies, where individuals are able to move from being dependent on relief or monthly income support to (partly) contributing to their own social protection."*

ILO Representative David Dorkenoo: *"Strong social protection systems cannot be achieved without investment in data infrastructures, providing a record of all individuals or households that are potentially eligible for social benefits. The ILO is very happy to offer its support to the government to take the necessary steps towards this goal as an important step in building a social protection floor for Nigerians."*