

# \* SPARCS \*

## Social Protection Assessment of Results and Country Systems

**Brief Concept and Invitation to Partner:** February 8, 2013

*Across countries today, approaches to social protection and labor (SPL) are often fragmented and uncoordinated, reducing their effectiveness at providing resilience against shocks and pathways out of destitution and poverty. Leading to duplication and inefficiency in the use of scarce resources, fragmentation creates large coverage gaps and undermines both efficiency, and effectiveness of SPL policies and programs.*

*Countries are increasingly focusing on coordinated systems approaches to SPL to better address societies' growing risks. A systems approach to SPL focuses on how policies, programs, and instruments can work together to deliver the three core SPL functions of resilience, equity, and opportunity in a more coherent and cost-effective way.*

*Reducing fragmentation, however, not only needs concerted action among agencies and actors, but crafting a shared understanding of SPL system goals and metrics. A common vocabulary and conception of system configurations would enhance the ability of countries to design and implement SPL systems. And the ability to have common ways to assess, measure, and benchmark the performance of SPL systems and system components would be an important catalyst in bringing stakeholders together to share knowledge and support the ambitious goal of increased coverage of functional SPL systems.*

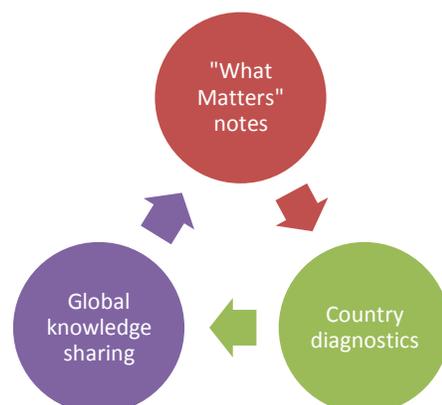
*The Social Protection Assessment of Results and Country Systems (SPARCS) exercise aims to improve the performance of SPL systems by creating an "open source" platform for collaboration, based on defining and assessing key system metrics and outcomes. SPARCS proposes to develop common instruments and methodologies for the assessment of key SPL system components, building on existing work by the World Bank and other agencies, so as to move towards a more standardized approach to assess country SPL systems. The outcome will be a*

set of assessment tools and assessment data that can be used by client countries, bilateral and multilateral organizations to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of SPL systems and to guide their improvements.

*The expected results of SPARCS are to:*

- Identify what elements matter most in systems design, implementation, and performance.
- Develop a common methodology and indicators for assessing core elements of system design, implementation and performance.
- Provide "open source" assessments of system elements that can be used by country clients and partner organizations, to contribute to the global SPARCS effort.
- Guide system design and implementation options within countries.
- Facilitate global knowledge sharing and provide a platform for collaboration and dialogue.

### ELEMENTS OF SPARCS:



The SPARCS exercise is proposed to encompass three inter-related pillars:

- (i) *"What Matters" guidance notes* for assessing and benchmarking SPL system design, implementation and performance, building on established evidence and expert knowledge;
- (ii) *Country diagnostics instruments*, of three types:
  - ⇒ a *core diagnostic systems assessment* instrument to provide an overview of key SPL systems elements in a country;
  - ⇒ a suite of *administrative assessment* instruments, such as identification, eligibility payments, etc.;
  - ⇒ a suite of specific *program assessment* instruments, such as for public works, cash transfers, skills training, etc.
- (iii) *Global knowledge sharing* to support learning and collaboration across client countries, partners, and stakeholders and to improve the SPARCS process. Specific products will include a database on SPARCS elements (linked to the ASPIRE database of social protection statistics) and the next South-South Learning Forum on social protection and labor systems, planned for Fall 2014.

## **SPARCS PARTNERSHIPS AND PROCESS**

*SPARCS is designed as a multi-year, programmatic platform for global collaboration on SPL.* A central element of SPARCS is the establishment of strong links across experts, donor partners and key stakeholders, between governments and donor agencies, and across staff within the World Bank and other agencies working on SPL operations.

To serve this design purpose, SPARCS tools and data—the "What Matters" guidance notes, diagnostic instruments, SPARCS data and other core SPARCS products—will be publicly accessible and available for broad application, in line with the World Bank's open data policy and the existing commitment within the development community to collaborate on developing SPL systems and promote the Social Protection Floor.

*Partners interested in SPARCS are invited to collaborate with the World Bank in the development and country applications of these instruments, including in taking a leadership role in developing instruments, financing knowledge generation and in knowledge sharing.* Initial efforts will concentrate on the core diagnostic and selected administrative assessment instruments.

*A launch meeting is planned for Spring 2013 in Washington, DC, hosted by the World Bank, to engage SPARCS partners and validate the SPARCS initiative.* This will be followed by:

- Individual workshops in calendar year 2013, hosted by lead agencies, to develop and finalize SPARCS instruments and guidance notes
- Country-based engagements in 2013-2014, including pilots for initial SPARCS instruments.
- Early results will be discussed in the South-South learning forum in Fall 2014, to share lessons from SPARCS implementation and adjust the instruments and process as needed.

*Each SPARCS activity will be subject to a thorough quality assurance process.* This includes peer reviewers for each SPARCS product; a commitment to validate every SPARCS "What Matters" guidance note and assessment instrument in workshops that would engage the team members primary responsible for developing the module, external experts and potential users of the module; pilot testing in at least three countries; and a commitment to making the tools, country reports and assessment data publicly available.

There will be periodic reviews of SPARCS deliverables and proposed tasks within the World Bank. Annual reports and mid-year updates will be produced for review of the overall program, with proposed activities for the following fiscal year in the annual reports. The first annual report will be at the end of FY13.

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