

SOCIAL PROTECTION

SOCIAL SECURITY FUND OF NEPAL

A CAPACITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING PLAN

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Report



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Organization



Social Security Fund of Nepal: A capacity needs assessment and Learning Plan

Report by

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Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Executive Summary.....	3
Background	4
Scope and Objectives	5
Approach and Methodology	5
Findings	7
Challenges and opportunities for coverage extension.....	7
Societal and institutional level.....	7
Organizational level	8
Individual level.....	9
Capacity Development Needs.....	10
Strategic priorities	10
Staff Survey	10
Organizational Capacity Needs.....	11
Societal Capacity Development.....	15
Barriers to Capacity Development	15
Recommendations.....	17
Learning Plan	20
Overview	20
Proposed Activities.....	21
Annex 1 Competency Framework	22
Annex 2 Stakeholders consulted	23
Annex 3 Survey results.....	24
Annex 4 Social Security Fund Organizational Chart	26

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Executive Summary

This study assessed the multiple dimensions of capacity, and the competencies required to effectively implement a contribution-based social security system under the Social Security Fund (SSF) in Nepal. This research was conducted through mixed-methods, participatory approach including desk research, key informant interviews and a survey administered to all SSF staff. A Task Group composed of SSF Senior Executives and Managers and ILO staff was established to guide and input to the work and the findings and recommendations were validated with a broad group of stakeholders also including Government representatives and social partners.

A contextual analysis helped identify key challenges and opportunities for the extension of contribution-based social security in Nepal at the societal, organizational and individual level. Some of the challenges identified included: low awareness and conceptual knowledge of contributory social security (i.e. “literacy”); an “understanding gap” among both employers and workers due to the introduction of new social security schemes on top of existing schemes provided by Provident Funds in the “old system”; legal and implementation barriers faced by most workers (especially informal and self-employed workers) to accessing the new schemes, compounded with weak implementation of labour laws and increased economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic effectively preventing most workers to fulfilling their constitutional right to contribution-based social security; fragmented legal framework, coupled with weak coordination of social security legislation with other policy areas and a fragmented social protection system; finally, a lack of legal and regulatory provisions at the Provincial and Local level preventing the geographical expansion of the new contribution-based schemes. Despite considerable challenges, the study found that Nepal’s strong constitutional guarantee for the right to social security, the fact that this is a strategic priority for the Government of a young democracy, driven to achieve social justice, with a dynamic economy and a burgeoning Social Security Fund, all constitute significant opportunities. Enhancing social security “literacy” at the societal level and overcoming legal, regulatory, administrative and cultural hurdles will require a strong collaborative effort between all social partners with the SSF.

Capacity gaps and learning needs were benchmarked against a Competency Framework for Social Security, developed by the ITCILO with input from the International Social Security Association. Competency dimensions requiring specific strategic attention by the SSF were highlighted and technical gaps were identified. Competency dimensions focusing on core principles and values as well

as governance and strategic planning were singled out as especially beneficial to SSF staff as well as broader audiences including social partners, with a view to advancing the social security agenda at all levels. In addition, competency dimensions focusing on investment and fund management, member services and service excellence were also singled out as well as supporting the ongoing drive to digitalise social security delivery in the country.

Specific needs relating to investment of social security funds and fund management were: the analysis of financial markets, identifying opportunities and priorities for investment, developing a sustainable investment model and sustainable fund management, informed by robust actuarial modelling. Accounting and compliance were also identified as areas needing to be strengthened further. Some of the priority technical needs identified by informants under member services and operations were: strengthening standard operating procedures; learning to determine contribution rates and benefit packages following best practices and guidance; improving claims handling with a focus on health; enhancing grievance mechanisms; improving contribution collection and compliance, especially in view of the geographical expansion of the schemes.

Recommendations covered the following areas: aligning the training offer with SSF's strategic plan; offering multi-year learning pathways to enhance staff social security competencies over time; meeting staff learning needs; and broadening social security awareness to other strategic stakeholder groups.

Background

The 2015 Constitution of Nepal established social security as a fundamental right of the citizen (Article 43) and the Government has committed to achieve 80 percent coverage by 2030. The Social Security Fund (SSF) was established in 2011 as an autonomous government agency responsible for the implementation of contribution-based social security schemes (enshrined in Article 34 of the Constitution) for workers in the formal sector initially and the whole work force eventually. The SSF is an affiliate body of the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (MoLESS).

In July 2020, the Board of Directors of the SSF approved the first Strategic Plan covering the period 2020 to 2025. The new organizational structure of the Social Security Fund was also recently approved and to date a total of 79 staff have been recruited.

The Contribution-based Social Security Act (CBSSA) of 2017 (2074) made the provision of social insurance to all workers mandatory and provided the legal framework for covering eight of the nine contingencies set out in the ILO's Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention n.102 (1952). The SSF plans to implement the provisions of the Act in a phased manner. Four new social security schemes were launched in July 2019. These include a Medical and Health Protection scheme, a Maternity Protection scheme, an Accident and Disability Protection scheme, a Dependent Family Protection scheme and an Old Age Protection scheme. More schemes are contemplated over the coming years.

However, the challenges faced by the SSF in implementing the provisions of the CBSSA to extend social security to all workers are manifold. To date, coverage of the schemes is persistently low¹ although there are signs that uptake may slowly be increasing. Despite mandatory requirement for formal sector employers to register with the SSF, non-compliance remains high. Employers and workers have found making the shift to the new contribution-based system difficult due to knowledge, economic and regulatory barriers compounded with unclear scheme design. Employers and workers alike have sought clarifications from the Ministry and SSF about contribution rates, benefits and

¹ Based on NLFS there are 1.1 million workers in formal employment and 6 million informal employment. Total contributors from formal sector were 200,376 as of 29/4/2021.

administrative requirements before committing to join the schemes. Early implementation also highlighted regulatory gaps and faults in product design that have needed to be addressed by SSF.

Going forward, human resource development and capacity building support will be paramount to provide impetus to streamline administrative processes leading to improved administration, outreach and communication for the incremental expansion of the schemes.

Scope and Objectives

This study was conducted by the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITCILO), which is the training arm of the ILO. The Centre is dedicated to the pursuit of learning and training to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8: *“Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all”*. The Centre offers learning, knowledge-sharing, and institutional capacity-building programmes for governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations, and development partners. It aims to be a forum where development intersects with all forms of knowledge in the world of work.

In order to implement an effective and sustainable capacity development plan and subsequent trainings that are responsive to the needs of the SSF, this study aimed to first assess the capacity needs of the organization. This study assessed the multiple dimensions of capacity, and the competencies required to effectively implement a contribution-based social security system under the SSF in Nepal. This encompasses:

- Individual capacity, including relevant competencies, skills and abilities.
- Organizational capacity, including issues regarding the governance, structures and processes involved in the delivery of social protection schemes under the SSF.
- Broader contextual issues required to create an enabling environment for the organization to function effectively (societal capacity).

The study includes concrete recommendations as well as a detailed Learning Plan encompassing a range of capacity development options tailored to different audiences in SSF and beyond, based on the specific learning needs that have emerged. The Learning Plan is envisaged to support the implementation of SSF’s Strategic Plan for 2021-2025. Please note this assessment builds on and deepens the findings relating to capacity and learning needs first identified by Mr. Paguman Singh² and it should be read in conjunction with his thorough technical assessment of the operating environment and the challenges facing SSF.

Approach and Methodology

This study was conducted using a participatory approach, in collaboration with key staff from the SSF and ILO Nepal officials responsible for delivering the Project on ‘Enhancing Social Protection System: Towards Investments for Results in Nepal’ (SP&PFM Project) (with EC-INTPA). Due to ongoing constraints relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, the assessment was primarily conducted online with very limited scope for face to face consultations other than meetings between ILO officials and SSF and government representatives. Nonetheless, a Task Group comprising senior managers from the SSF,

² *“Improving technical capacity of Social Security Fund Nepal to better support the implementation of schemes and mechanisms”*, May 2020.

ILO officials and the ITCILO was established in order to provide technical input at the inception and validation phase of the study³.

The analysis was conducted through a mixed-methodologies approach combining desk research, participatory consultations with key informants, semi-structured interviews with key internal and external actors, and a survey questionnaire that was administered to all SSF staff. A total of 17 interviews were conducted between February and April 2021 with a range of stakeholders including: SSF Board members; Senior Executives and Managers; representatives from the principal workers and employers associations; one representative from the Ministry of Labour; Employment and Social Security; external technical experts and informants; and ILO staff⁴. To the end of conveying the voices of informants, *anonymised* direct quotations, extrapolated from the notes of the semi-structured interviews, are interspersed in the 'Findings' section of this report.

A Competency Framework for Social Security⁵, based on international good practices and the Guidelines from the International Social Security Association (ISSA), served to guide and inform the development of the investigative tools for the assessment (i.e. interview questions and the staff survey questionnaire). The Framework also helped to systematically map and benchmark core functions and competencies in the SSF in order to identify gaps and priority areas for capacity strengthening.

The findings were validated through an open multi-stakeholder consultation process involving the study's multi-disciplinary Task Group and a broader group of key actors engaged in the delivery of social security in Nepal. The following stakeholder groups⁶ were involved:

- Members of the SSF Board
- SSF Senior Executives and Managers
- SSF Staff
- Representatives from workers' associations
- Representatives from employers' associations
- Representatives from the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security
- External technical experts and informants
- ILO staff

³ See Annex 2 for a list of members of the Task Group.

⁴ Please see Annex 2 for a list of all interviewees

⁵ Please see Annex 1.

⁶ Please see Annex 2 for a list of participants at the validation workshop.

Findings

Challenges and opportunities for coverage extension

Input was sought from informants on the main challenges and opportunities for delivering contribution-based social security in Nepal. This provided important contextual information for better understanding the social, cultural, political, legal and economic factors affecting the delivery of SSF's mission, and frame the assessment of its learning needs. This section summarises key challenges and opportunities highlighted by respondents at the societal and institutional, organizational and individual level.

Societal and institutional level

Nepal is a relatively young country with a long tradition and history. The Constitution was adopted in 2015 and the establishment of a comprehensive, modern and inclusive social protection system only recently got underway. The adoption of the Contribution-based Social Security Act (CBSSA) in 2017 was a key milestone, following the establishment of the Social Security Fund in 2011, to provide the legal framework for the provision of contributory social security in the country.

Social security “literacy”

This study has confirmed that what was referred to as social security “literacy” by some informants (i.e. awareness and conceptual knowledge of social security) is still relatively low in Nepal. This is true both geographically, with knowledge and experience in social security being perceived to be concentrated at the central – Federal – level and somewhat lower at Provincial and Local level, and structurally, affecting actors from the top political level down to the grassroots. The introduction of new contributory social security schemes in addition to existing schemes under the previous system centred on Provident Funds has required a significant *“paradigm and cultural shift”*. This has led to some resistance among both employers and workers: *“there is a general conception that social security is the responsibility of the Government”* and *“Nepalese workers are used to severance pay from the Provident Fund, they are familiar with insurance and paid sick leave but they are not familiar with the new system implemented by SSF”*. It was noted that given the novelty of the legislation, even some government actors may not have full understanding of the policy and its regulatory implications.

Informants from all stakeholder groups, however, agreed that strengthening Nepal's social protection system to *“Secure the right to social security for every worker and self-employed person by making contribution-based social security universal, accessible and sustainable”* (SSF's mission) is a shared priority as well as a government imperative. More broadly, government actors acknowledged that: *“social justice and economic growth are closely related to extending social security coverage”*. Moreover, as one respondent put it, creating full and productive employment in a country with an already healthy proportion of economically active population (57 percent) will be good for both tax-funded and contributory social security schemes. The effort towards demonstrating the benefits of social insurance is shared by all stakeholder groups and should therefore be actively supported through a comprehensive awareness raising and capacity building plan coordinated by the SSF and MoLESS.

Legal, regulatory and institutional framework

The Constitutional guarantee for social security, cemented with the adoption of the Social Security Act, has not been sufficient to overcome problems linked to the fragmented legal framework and the complex institutional architecture of social security in Nepal. Aligning policies and programmes in other areas of socio-economic development with current social security legislation has also proven to be a challenge.

The need for an “Umbrella Act” covering the different policies regulating the delivery of social security has been accepted at the political level but there are no legal provisions as yet and buy-in from all stakeholders will need to be secured.

As reported by informants from workers’ organizations, weak implementation of existing labour laws and regulations results in many workers not receiving adequate or regular salaries. This has been one of the barriers preventing workers from joining SSF’s contributory schemes. In addition, there have been legal barriers preventing informal, self-employed and unorganised workers from accessing social insurance schemes. Nevertheless, SSF is working with the government to reform current policies and regulations in order to correct this. As expressed by one informant: *“The programme is new and there are lots of opportunities for reform”*.

Furthermore, the geographical expansion of social security coverage is currently thwarted by the lack of legislation (by-laws) at the Provincial and Local level. It was reported, that, to date, only two out of Nepal’s seven Provinces have adopted by-laws for the implementation of social protection. This poses huge regulatory and administrative challenges for local authorities as well as employers and workers wishing to join the schemes. Although SSF has mobilised staff to support geographical expansion, they have not yet established offices dislocated at the Provincial and Local level, resulting in limited outreach and weak coordination with Local authorities.

There is a multitude of actors involved in the provision of social security in the country, some of whom have been in existence for decades. In specific, actors involved in the implementation of contribution-based social security measures include the Employment Provident Fund, the Health Insurance Board, the Citizen Insurance Board, and the Electricity Board among others. The role and functions of each of these institutions, relative to the role of the SSF within the new legal framework, may need to be clarified as it appears to have created significant confusion among employers and workers. However, some informants felt that working with other existing social security providers and Provident Funds could help SSF leverage their local knowledge, reach and networks, to help extend coverage beyond the Kathmandu Valley.

Organizational level

Uneven knowledge (conceptual and/or practical) of contributory social security, or “literacy”, also affects the SSF both at the management and operational level. New staff were recruited from private organizations and government departments to cover various roles but most do not have a background in social security⁷ or any practical experience in delivering contributory social security schemes. Although a number of basic and technical training courses were offered to staff, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 posed serious logistical constraints to the delivery of further capacity building activities as staff were forced to work from home.

Limited resources, infrastructure and staff time were also identified as barriers to building the capacity of the organization. Nevertheless, as one respondent put it: *“The team is so young, they are not civil servants – they are newly recruited, they have energy and dynamism. Working spirit is the greatest strength for us”*. Leveraging these opportunities to foster staff motivation and performance while offering institutionalised upskilling pathways to enhance their social protection competencies over time will be crucial.

Using the fund sustainably and investing funds responsibly to ensure financial sustainability – a core strategic priority for SSF that was confirmed by all informants – has proven to be even more challenging in the midst of the financial, monetary and economic turmoil triggered by the pandemic.

The limited use of information and communication technology (ICT) and data management in SSF’s business processes was widely acknowledged by informants. This was thus considered to be another

⁷ The survey showed that 87 percent of respondents have less than two years of experience in social security.

key priority for investment as the benefits on the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery are obvious. In this regard, the integration of contribution collection through the banking system was cited as an example of technological synergy and innovation enhancing the delivery of the schemes.

SSF has invested significantly in awareness raising and outreach work with key stakeholder groups since the adoption of the CBSSA 2017. They are now starting to reap the benefits of this work: *“a few months ago we used to go to the public trying to get them [employers and workers] to join, now we are getting more and more calls from people who want to join”*. Nevertheless, problems remain with the design of existing schemes, which as argued by workers’ representatives interviewed, do not meet the needs of the target populations, especially poor informal and self-employed workers.

Policy reformulation and improved product design are required to address these issues and for enrolment to pick up. Moreover, some respondents also felt that the SSF can play a role in working with employers and trade unions to resolve labour disputes that pose a further barrier to worker registration.

Individual level

Creating trust among workers and employers and managing the expectations of contributors was widely identified as the key challenge faced by SSF. The societal paradigm shift required to secure buy-in for the new contributory social security schemes is reflected at the individual level, as voiced by representatives of the workers and employers interviewed for this study.

The implications of switching from a Provident Fund model to an SSF scheme are unclear to most workers, as are the benefits of paying into a scheme to receive a monthly pension at retirement rather than a lump sum. Moreover, as argued above, if *“people’s jobs and salaries are not stable, it difficult for them to maintain contributions; the system is onerous for the workers and people are not willing to join”*. In addition, it is difficult for workers in more geographically remote locations to join the SSF as there are no dedicated units or staff for this at the Local level. Provisions will need to be made by the Government in order to address this issue. For example, Employment Service Centres could support the SSF’s outreach efforts as they have data on labour force.

The study confirmed that the *“understanding gap”* applies to both workers and employers: *“it is a tough job to persuade workers of the benefits of the new scheme as employers also don’t understand the new provisions”*. Informants representing employers’ associations reported that employers have misgivings about the new schemes as *“they need to contribute from day one and in uncertain times, they don’t know what liabilities they may have if their business goes down”*. Additional barriers apply to private sector employers as the government does not contribute to the schemes.

Capacity Development Needs

Capacity needs and gaps were assessed by applying the Competency Framework for Social Security (see Annex 1). Key competency gaps identified through the semi-structured interviews and the survey are outlined in this section.

Strategic priorities

The SSF's organizational priorities are outlined in the Strategic Plan for 2021 to 2025 that was approved by the Board in July 2020. The interviews confirmed strong alignment to the agreed strategic priorities.

1. Securing worker involvement and enrolment:

Extending worker enrolment through public awareness campaigns and financial and social security "literacy" activities is the top priority. *"We need to create awareness that the new system is good for all, it is good for employers and good for workers"*. Extending coverage to informal sector workers, 20 percent of whom are in agriculture, was deemed to be pivotal, coupled with the geographical expansion of the schemes to the Provincial and Local level. This will entail greater coordination with local authorities, Ministries and stakeholders.

2. Ensuring financial sustainability:

Expanding and improving social security schemes while increasing enrolment is essential in order to ensure the sustainability of the fund, balancing contribution rates and benefit schemes. The fund ought to *"fix the benefit levels based on actuarial analysis – if we are not able to increase the level then how can we manage the benefit"*. To this end, developing a sustainable investment portfolio is also regarded as a priority.

3. Enhancing service delivery:

Enhancing institutional capacity and strengthening standard operating procedures for improved contribution collection, service delivery and efficient claim handling are deemed essential because: *"without effective services we cannot deliver our mission...[we need] Reliable credible services to attract potential contributions"*. Developing customer friendly services and increased use of ICT to *"move away from paper"*, and enhanced product development to meet the needs of different beneficiary groups will also be fundamental in striving for excellence in service delivery.

Staff Survey⁸

A survey questionnaire was developed as part of the study and administered online to all Social Security Fund staff. Out of 79 staff, 31 responses were received, indicating a response rate of 39.2 per cent. Out of the 31 respondents to the survey: 16 (52 percent) work in the Fund & Investment management department and 11 (35 percent) in the Human resources & Information management department. The remaining four respondents are either Executives or they work in the Secretariat or in the Internal Audit department. Nineteen respondents (61percent) are Officers, or Middle Managers, while seven (23 percent) are assistants and three (10 percent) are Senior Managers⁹. Two respondents (6 percent) did not reply to the question regarding their position in the fund. Most of the respondents (87 percent) have less than two years of experience in social protection.

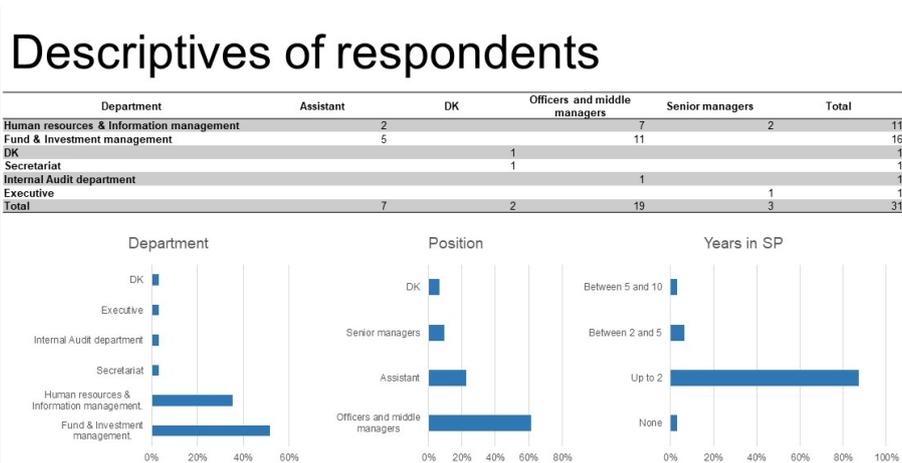
Respondents were tested over 60 to 70 questions, depending on their position in the Fund. This was aimed at gauging their attitudes towards the six dimensions of the Competency Framework using a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5, where 1 denotes strong disagreement and 5 denotes strong agreement with a set of statements for each dimension. Forty percent of question items were proposed as *reverse*

⁸ See Annex 3 for a summary of findings from the survey

⁹ See Annex 4 for an organizational chart of the Social Security Fund.

items (using negatively worded items) to reduce response bias. Middle managers, officers, and assistants (MMOA) were posed tailored questions regarding the “Governance and strategic planning” of their respective departments. Senior Executives and Managers and MMOA from the Internal Audit department answered the entire set of questions. The results of the survey are outlined in the section below.

Fig. 1 Survey Respondents



Organizational Capacity Needs

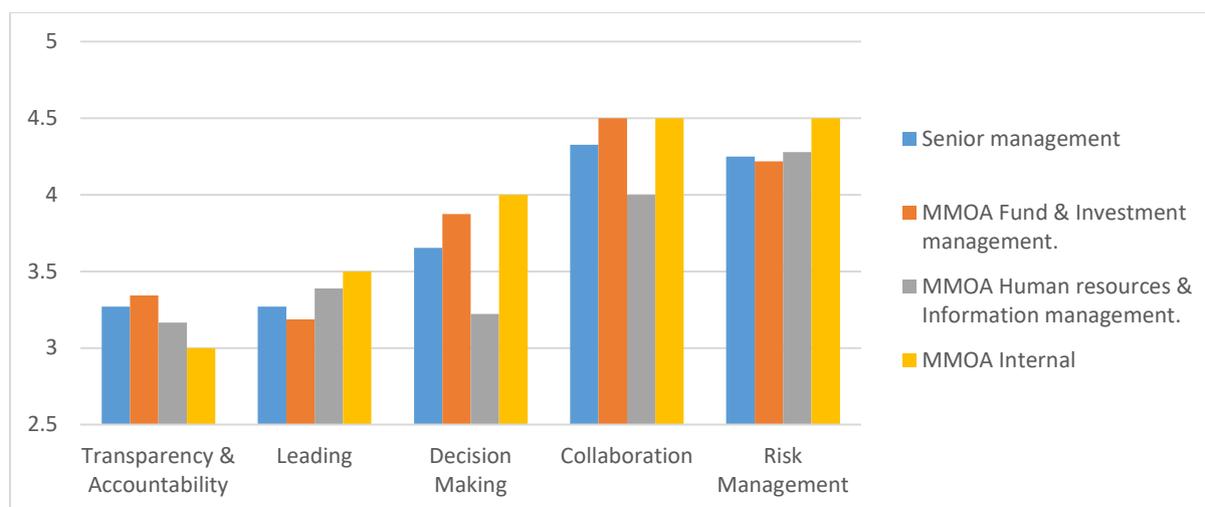
Core principles and values

- *Applying the core governance principles (accountability, transparency, predictability, participation and dynamism)*
- *Risk-management*
- *Demonstrating leadership*
- *Fostering collaboration*

Core principles and values are cross-cutting and underpin all other competency areas. Ensuring all staff share fundamental principles and values at the heart of public service and the delivery of social security was considered essential by interviewees.

This competency dimension was tested in the staff survey across five categories of questions including: Risk Management, Collaboration; Decision Making, Leading, and Transparency & Accountability. Overall, the four categories of respondents (Senior Managers, Human Resources and Information, Fund Investment and Management and Internal) answered with similar patterns. The outlying category was Human Resources and Information Management, with slightly lower scores in Decision Making and Collaboration. Overall, Risk Management and Collaboration were the highest scoring items. On the contrary, Decision Making, and especially Leading and Transparency & Accountability attained lower scores. It will be important to take stock of this when developing the training programme for staff.

Fig. 2 Levels of agreement on Core Values and Principles



Governance and Strategic Planning

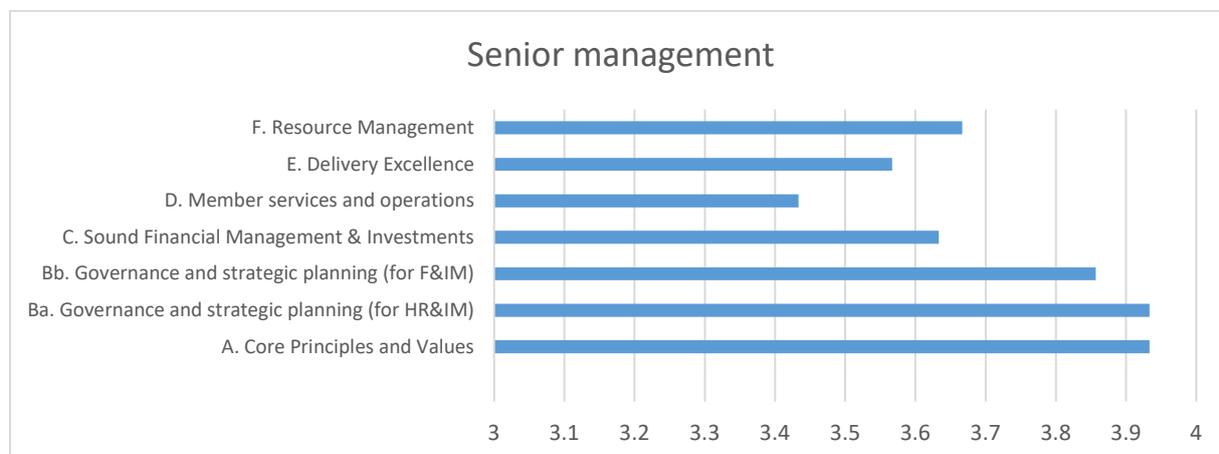
- *Seeing the big picture*
- *Making risk-informed, effective decisions*
- *Continuous improvement*

This dimension was identified as a key learning priority by informants. Senior Executives and Managers in SSF are tasked with developing a conceptual model for the delivery of contribution-based social security in Nepal, implementing the provisions of the Contribution-based Social Security Act, while also supporting policy reform, the reformulation of existing schemes to improve their effectiveness, and developing new schemes to meet the needs of target groups. This is a tall order. Enhancing leadership skills while also strengthening knowledge of effective governance of social security schemes, financial governance, and policy formulation in order to implement the Fund’s mission will be crucial.

In the survey, middle managers, officers, and assistants (MMOA) answered tailored questions regarding the “Governance and strategic planning” of their respective departments. Senior Managers were instead asked to answer all questions on this dimension. Results for Senior Managers show the lowest attitude towards “Member services and operations” and “Delivery excellence” perhaps highlighting a slight form of disconnect of senior level managers from the more operative functions of the Fund. This is not surprising, but it may need to be addressed in staff development as thorough knowledge of business processes and operative functions are a prerequisite for effective management. On the contrary, Senior Managers scored the highest on “Governance and strategic planning” and “Core Principles and values”, showing a higher alignment with the institution’s mandate.

It will be important for governance and strategic management not to be solely linked to the work undertaken at senior management level but for all staff to be trained in basic governance principles, how to risk-inform their work and being open to continuous improvement.

Fig.3 Levels of agreement on competency dimensions by Senior Managers



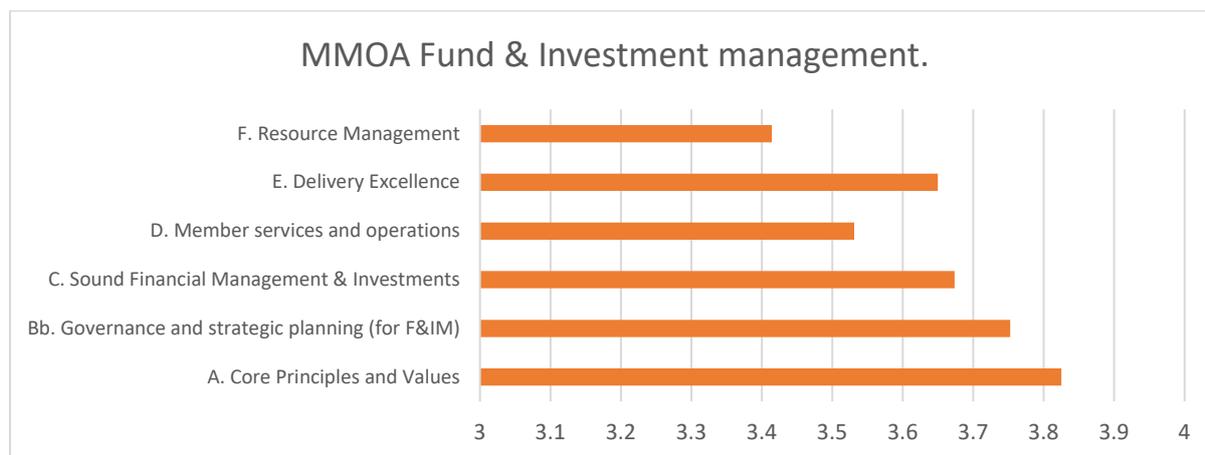
Sound Financial Management and Investments

- *Achieving financial sustainability*
- *Making sound investments*
- *Robust management and monitoring*

Developing the SSF’s competencies in financial governance, investment and resource management is a priority, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Informants indicated capacity gaps in the analysis of financial markets, identifying opportunities and priorities for investment, developing a sustainable investment model and sustainable fund management, informed by robust actuarial modelling. Accounting and compliance were also identified as areas needing to be strengthened further. All relevant administrative staff will in fact need to be made aware of, and trained in, exerting financial responsibility in approving benefits and fraud prevention and management.

Survey results for respondents from the Fund and Investment Management Department denote lowest attitudes towards “Resource Management” (building capability for all, deploying resources effectively, and enhancing IT & data management) and “Member services and operations” (delivering inclusive and adequate coverage, developing business processes, and delivering services at pace). Again, this may indicate a slight disconnect between technical experts working in this department and the institution’s overall human resource policies and general operations. Conversely, respondents scored highest on “Governance and strategic planning” and “Core Principles and values” showing good alignment with the institution’s mandate.

Fig.4 Levels of agreement on competency dimensions by the Fund and Investment Management Department



Member Services and Operations

- *Delivering inclusive and adequate coverage*
- *Developing business processes*
- *Delivering services at pace*

This is the beating heart of the Social Security Fund and strengthening capacity in this dimension will be paramount. Exposing SSF staff to international best practices in order to benchmark contributory schemes in Nepal against international standards and guidance was considered necessary for SSF to design and implement effective and sustainable schemes. Some of the priority technical needs identified by informants under this dimension were: strengthening standard operating procedures; learning to determine contribution rates and benefit packages following best practices and guidance; improving claims handling with a focus on health; enhancing grievance mechanisms; improving contribution collection and compliance, especially in view of the geographical expansion of the schemes.

Delivery Excellence

- *Fostering a service culture*
- *Heeding the voice of the participant*
- *Delivering value-led services*

Improving the quality and effectiveness of the products delivered by SSF is a prerequisite for coverage extension. As previously noted, the existing schemes, or products, have not met the needs of many target groups, especially vulnerable and poor workers. However, the reformulation of policies, regulations and products will need to go hand in hand with delivery excellence. Ensuring a service culture is fostered at all levels across the institution, reaching out to, listening to and integrating participant feedback in product design (or re-design) in order to ensure to meet their needs, the delivery of value-led services and powerful communication, will be essential. Without this, trying to persuade employers and workers to join the Fund will be ineffective.

Although most survey respondents demonstrated relatively positive attitudes to this dimension, it should be noted that Senior Managers and staff from the Human Resource and Information Management department scored lower than other groups. Going forward, the institution may wish to redouble its efforts to foster a service culture.

Resource Management

- *Building capability for all*
- *Deploying resources affectively*
- *Enhancing the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and data management.*

The use of ICT was identified as a shared priority for capacity development by all SSF interviewees. The SSF has invested heavily in ICT infrastructure development with a focus on data management and security. Over the past months, they have benefited from the assistance of a technical expert managing to enhance the use of ICT across the organization as it is beginning to digitalise business processes and procedures. There is still a long way to go and better use of the ICT will benefit all operational areas.

Staff development, motivation and performance were also considered priority areas, especially in light of the pandemic. Informants agreed that people are one of the organization's key strengths. Harnessing the dynamism and energy of staff, while building their technical expertise through a comprehensive staff development plan, and providing clear and robust standard operating procedures will be key.

Societal Capacity Development

Although informants from the Social Security Fund indicated that capacity strengthening should be initially focused on SSF staff, focusing efforts on SSF Board members representing employers and workers as well as political actors should also be considered in order to nurture strong tripartite consensus on social security.

In essence, building awareness and capacity among key political actors and parliamentarians, will be strategically important to foster greater understanding of the need for reform of the Act and Regulations and to identify champions who can sustain political will for social security while seeking better coherence with other policy areas across the whole of Government. In view of the geographical expansion of social insurance, informants also recognized the significance of local authorities and political actors at the Provincial and Local level, who will play a key role in the identification and registration of workers and in some aspects of service delivery. For example, it was noted that grievance handling might fall under the responsibility of Deputy Mayors at the Local Level. Similarly, strengthening the capacity of leaders among workers and employers' associations will also help amplify SSF's messaging on social security schemes as well as ensuring capillary outreach across the country.

Finally, engaging and coordinating with other entities providing social security in Nepal may help SSF leverage their knowledge and networks also contributing to extend SSF's schemes beyond the Kathmandu Valley.

Barriers to Capacity Development

Limited resources, including time, staff, infrastructure and finances were seen by most as primary barriers to expanding training.

The need for practical guidance to provide staff with concrete learning they may directly apply to improving service delivery, was clearly expressed. To this end, balancing theoretical, conceptual knowledge with local know-how was highlighted: *"many trainers and experts have knowledge of international good practices but they do not understand the local context, the local attitudes of*

employers and workers, they lack the knowledge to adapt the learning to the local landscape". This is especially important as: *"Staff lack practical knowledge as they have been recently recruited and have little experience"*. Integrating a training of trainers component in the staff development plan might help address this issue, developing a cadre of local social security trainers who can collaborate with international experts.

In addition, informants voiced the concern that local technical experts in social security are hard to come by, and when they can be found *"it is difficult to get resource people to work with us longer term"*.

Finally, negotiating with multiple stakeholders to achieve tripartite consensus on all matters relating to social security was also raised as an issue requiring more attention going forward.

Recommendations

Aligning the training offer with SSF's strategic plan

1. A Staff Professional Development Plan developed by SSF should take stock of the priorities that have emerged from this study, as well as in previous reports, and be fully aligned with the institution's Strategic Plan.
2. To this end, priority ought to be given to trainings aimed at strengthening the following competence dimensions:
 - a) member services operations (with a focus on maximizing the use of ICT) and delivery excellence;
 - b) sound financial management and investments;
 - c) governance and strategic planning, as a basis for the institutional strengthening of SSF.
3. Due attention will need to be given to ensuring that adequate resources are allocated to staff development and learning given the barriers to capacity strengthening identified by this study.

Offering Multi-year Learning Pathways

4. In order to increase staff motivation and empowerment, it is recommended for integrated learning pathways to be offered. These aim to build staff competencies incrementally over a number of years.
5. For the training offer to be relevant to different audiences in SSF, it is recommended for this to be structured on three levels and for staff to be segmented according to seniority and function in the organization, as outlined below. The training offer is further detailed in the Learning Plan.
 - **Level 1: Foundation** and cross-cutting training courses will be open to all staff, regardless of seniority or function, as well as social partners. Topics may include: fundamental social security concepts, principles and values; comparative basic training on all schemes and benefit packages and standard operating procedures; contribution collection and compliance; introduction to IT systems and data management; service quality.
 - **Level 2: Technical** courses will be aimed at technical specialists in SSF who wish to sharpen their knowledge and competencies in the following areas: actuarial modelling; investment of social security funds; impact assessment; ICT for social security; awareness raising and communication; Pension design and implementation; digital health; digital social protection.
 - **Level 3: Executive** training courses are aimed at senior executives and managers in the organization and would focus on the following areas: good governance; leadership for social protection; executive e-coaching for social protection.
6. Staff should be able to embark on a knowledge development path taking them from Level 1 to Level 2 as they consolidate their skills and competencies. They may, over time, also progress to Level 3 depending on career development opportunities in the organization.
7. It is also recommended for staff to be allowed to embark on a multi-year learning pathway to obtain a professional recognition in social protection. The ITCILO, for example, offers participants the opportunity to obtain Diplomas for Social Protection Analysts or for Social Protection Managers upon completing a set number of eligible courses and a thesis (Capstone Project) over a maximum of five years. Most trainings offered as part of the Learning Plan for SSF will be eligible for one or other Diploma.
8. In order to help structure and monitor staff learning and professional development, it is recommended for the Social Security Fund to develop customized digital platform where staff can access all online training courses, store digital credentials and track their progress. The ITCILO has experience of this and would be willing to assist the SSF, if and as required.

Meeting staff learning needs

9. Staff consulted for this study indicated certain needs and preferences with regard to training. It should be noted that face to face training courses are preferred by most staff, followed by

workshops and seminars. This has implications for the organization of learning courses while the health emergency persists and will need to be given due consideration. These preferences are not inconsistent with the provision of online learning, but they are rather a reminder that a combination of learning modalities (online, blended and face to face) may be ideal.

10. The most suitable time for participants to take part in learning activities, as indicated in the survey, appears to be in the evening between 6.00 to 8.00 pm. It will be important to take note of this when scheduling training courses.
11. Participants envisage being able to devote around four hours per week to learning activities. This information should help inform the development of course curricula and weekly learning activities, especially with regard to tailor-made courses in presence.
12. With regard to language needs, the majority (86 percent) of respondents declared that learning in English would be suitable for them. This broadens the range of courses that can be offered to staff.
13. In relation to remote learning, the survey revealed that 96 percent and 89 percent of respondents have access to the internet during and outside office hours. However, only 61 percent of respondents declared to own a device for reading, writing, and for doing online research outside of office hours. This may have IT and resource implications when organising e-learning courses for staff out of office hours. It may also constitute a barrier to the participation of social partners and it will thus need to be further explored with them.
14. The use of local technical experts and trainers is recommended for training activities wherever possible in order to respond to the need for contextualised, practical learning. However, the possibility of using *both* international and local experts for training activities in order to draw on international best practices while using real scenarios and case studies based on local knowledge, should be considered.
15. Integrating a training of trainers component in the staff development plan is recommended in order to gradually build a cadre of selected local trainers in social security who will be able to provide additional trainings benchmarked against international standards as well as integrate online learning courses offered by the ITCILO with practical, contextualised assignments.
16. Learning from the experiences of other comparable countries in the region and further afield was clearly indicated by informants. The following ways of achieving this are recommended: integrating case studies and examples in training courses, inviting guest speakers from relevant countries to share their experiences, organising study tours for SSF staff, political actors and other stakeholders when the circumstances will allow it, and finally organising tailored multi-country learning courses and workshops. Countries of particular interest to SSF staff include: Malaysia, Thailand, India, Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines, New Zealand and South Korea.
17. Senior Executives and Managers indicated an interest in receiving bilateral coaching and technical assistance from social security experts. This would provide them with tailored on-the-job practical learning over a longer period. Participation in the ITCILO's Executive E-Coaching Initiative for Social Protection is recommended to help meet this need.
18. It is also recommended for other modes of knowledge exchange to be explored including: an exchange programme for social security technical experts from comparable Asian countries to spend a limited time period (i.e. two weeks) in Nepal coaching SSF staff in a range of technical areas based on their experience.

Broadening social security awareness to key stakeholder groups

19. Mindful of the need to sustain a broad tripartite consensus for the reform and extension of contribution-based social security schemes, it is recommended for learning and awareness raising activities involving Government and political actors, as well as leaders from workers' and employers' organizations to be organized, possibly in partnership with the ILO and other international partners.
20. To this end, it is also recommended for supplementary training in social dialogue and negotiation to be made available to Senior Executives and Managers from the SSF.
21. A knowledge sharing workshop/conference focusing on the reform of current social security policy, regulations and schemes could be organized with representatives from the Government, key parliamentary committees and other legal actors. This would help raise awareness of the issues while broadening political support for the extension of social security coverage in Nepal. Government actors from other countries in the region could also be invited to share their experiences.

22. The SSF should collaborate with workers' representatives to integrate learning about social security into financial literacy courses aimed at workers, leveraging existing training programmes where possible. A similar option could be explored for employers. The ILO and other development partners might also be willing to support these activities.
23. It is recommended for the SSF, in coordination with tripartite partners, to develop a comprehensive strategy for awareness raising and communication to change public perception of contribution-based social security.

Learning Plan

Overview

The proposed Learning Plan for the Social Security Fund sees the development of a portfolio of training courses and learning activities over a number of years, aimed at SSF staff and key actors from other stakeholder groups that will play a central role in extending social security coverage in Nepal. As outlined in the recommendations, different levels and types of courses are proposed, aimed at different audiences within, and outside of, the SSF.

The portfolio should include a range of local face to face training courses, blended courses (partly in presence and with input from international expert tutors in online live sessions), as well as online and face to face ITCILO courses. A training of trainers component is included in the Learning Plan in order to build capacity in social security among local technical experts and trainers, who will be able to deliver courses either independently or in collaboration with international technical experts. This will help to ensure the sustainability of capacity strengthening efforts coordinated by the SSF. Foundation level activities, especially those providing basic training on social security fundamentals, may need to be repeated on an annual basis in order to cater to the needs of new actors, or to refresh and update conceptual learning on social security for existing audiences.

The Learning Plan includes both tailor-made and ITCILO open courses. It is envisaged for tailor-made courses to be developed specifically to meet the needs of the SSF and other stakeholders in Nepal. These courses will be delivered either in a face to face modality or in a blended (or fully online) modality, depending on the circumstances, by local trainers in close collaboration with international social security expert trainers. Open courses are delivered exclusively by the ITCILO at set times during the year both online and in presence (in Turin, Italy) and they are available to participants from all around the world. Facilitated participation by SSF staff to ITCILO open courses (either online or in presence) can be arranged as part of the Learning Plan.

The proposed phased approach to capacity building would see SSF staff and other key actors build their competencies and skills in social security over time. Multi-year learning pathways will enable SSF staff to progress both vertically through the three proposed levels of training, or horizontally across technical areas. If appropriate, SSF staff will also be able to work towards obtaining one of two ITCILO Diplomas in Social Protection, aimed at social protection analysts or managers. These recognitions will enable participants to have their enhanced social protection competencies validated by completing a set number of eligible ITCILO courses as well as a thesis over a maximum of five years. A number of the training courses included in the proposed Learning Plan are eligible for one or both Diplomas.

A tentative timeframe for the Learning Plan for the year 2022 is proposed. This is partly based on the timeframe of the annual ITCILO open courses. It is envisaged for the courses in the Learning Plan to be made available to SSF staff and partners on an annual basis for a period of three years initially, in order to foster the progression of staff through multi-year learning pathways. This proposal is of course open to further discussion as a follow up to this study.

Finally, it is suggested for courses and activities specifically aimed at key stakeholders, including government representatives and social partners to be undertaken as they will be critical to enhancing social security “literacy” in Nepal. Some of these activities are included in the Learning Plan, but it is recommended for more to be delivered beyond the scope and timeframe of this Plan.

Proposed Activities

Activity	Strategic Objective	Type (ITCILO Open, ITCILO Tailor-made, coaching)	Eligible for ITCILO Diploma in Social Protection (for Analysts / Managers)	Audience	Timing
Level 1 Foundation					
Training of Trainers		Tailor-made (local)		Local experts and trainers	First Quarter 2022
Social Security Fundamentals	1,2	Tailor-made, online		All staff and partners	First Quarter 2022
Digital Transformation in Social Security	1,3	Tailor-made (regional), online		All staff	First Quarter 2022
Comparative Social Security Systems in Asia	1,2,3,	Tailor-made workshop (local)		All staff and partners	Second Quarter 2022
Service Quality	1,3	Open, online & residential	Managers	All staff	Second Quarter 2022
E-Academy in Social Security	1,2,3	Open, online & residential	Both	All staff and partners	Third Quarter 2022
Level 2 Technical					
Actuarial Modelling	2	Open, online & residential	Analysts	Fund & Investment Management	Second Quarter 2022
Investment of Social Security Funds	2	Open, online & residential	Managers	Fund & Investment Management	Second Quarter 2022
Contribution, Collection and Compliance	2	Open, online & residential	Managers	Fund & Investment Management	Second Quarter 2022
Impact Assessment	2,3	Open, online & residential	Analysts	Fund & Investment Management	Fourth Quarter 2022
Executive E-Learning on Pension Policy and Management	2	Open, online & residential	Analysts	Fund & Investment Management	Fourth Quarter 2022
ICT for Social Security	2,3	Open, online & residential	Managers	Human Resource & Information Management	Second Quarter 2022
Human Resource Management for Social Security	2,3	Tailor-made (regional), online	Managers	Human Resource & Information Management	Third Quarter 2022
Level 3 Executive					
Advanced Social Dialogue	3	Tailor-made, online		Board of Directors, Executive & Senior Managers	First Quarter 2022
Good Governance	3	Open, online & residential	Managers	Board of Directors, Executive & Senior Managers	Second Quarter 2022
Leadership for Social Protection	3	Open, online & residential	Managers	Board of Directors, Executive & Senior Managers	Third Quarter 2022
Executive e-Coaching Initiative	3	Tailor-made, online		Board of Directors, Executive & Senior Managers	Always available

Annex 1 | Competency Framework



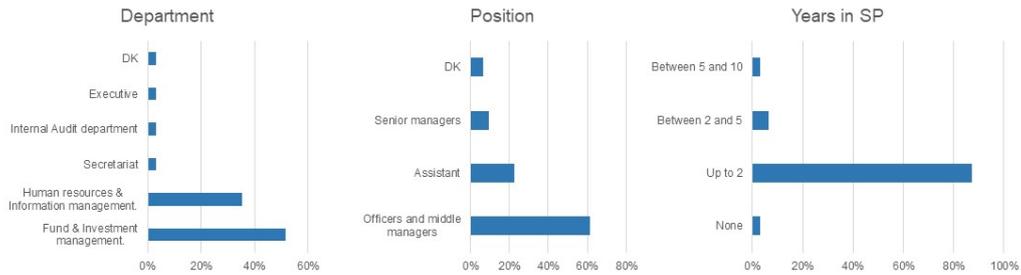
Annex 2 | Stakeholders consulted

Name	Title/Organization	Task Group	Interview	Validation meeting
Mr. Kapil Mani Gyawali	Executive Director, SSF	✓	✓	✓
Mr. Bibek Panthee	Deputy Executive Director, SSF	✓	✓	✓
Mr. Krishna Adhikari	Director, Fund & Investment Management, SSF	✓	✓	✓
Mr. Roshan Koju	Director, Information management Department, SSF	✓	✓	✓
Mr. Uttam Raj Nepal	Director, Human Resources Department, SSF	✓	✓	✓
Mr. Binod P. Singh	Joint-Secretary, Labour Relation and Social Protection Section, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security		✓	✓
Mr. Pushkar Acharya	SSF Board representative for workers/ President, Nepal Trade Union Congress		✓	✓
Mr. Ramesh Badal	Vice President (Foreign Affairs), General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)		✓	
Mr. Krishna Acharya	President, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal		✓	✓
Mr. Hemanta Bashyal	Financial Analyst/ Financial Risk Specialist		✓	✓
Mr. Hansa Ram Pandey	Senior Expert, Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industries		✓	✓
Ms. Shreejana Rana	Owner, Hotel Annapurna/ President, Hotel Association of Nepal		✓	
Mr. Paguman Singh	Social Security Expert		✓	
Mr. Prakash Sharma	National Programme Coordinator, Skills for Employment Project, ILO	✓	✓	✓
Mr. Saurabh Shah	Project Officer, Skills for Employment Project, ILO	✓	✓	✓
Ms. Suravi Bhandary	National Project Coordinator, Enhancing Social Protection System: Towards Investments for Results (SP&PFM), ILO	✓	✓	✓
Mr. André Bongestabs	Project Officer, Enhancing Social Protection System: Towards Investments for Results (SP&PFM), ILO	✓	✓	✓

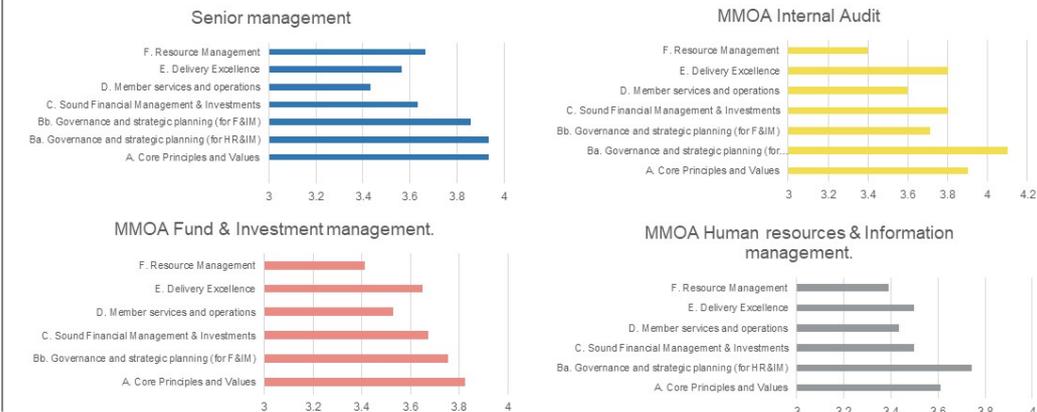
Annex 3 | Survey results

Descriptives of respondents

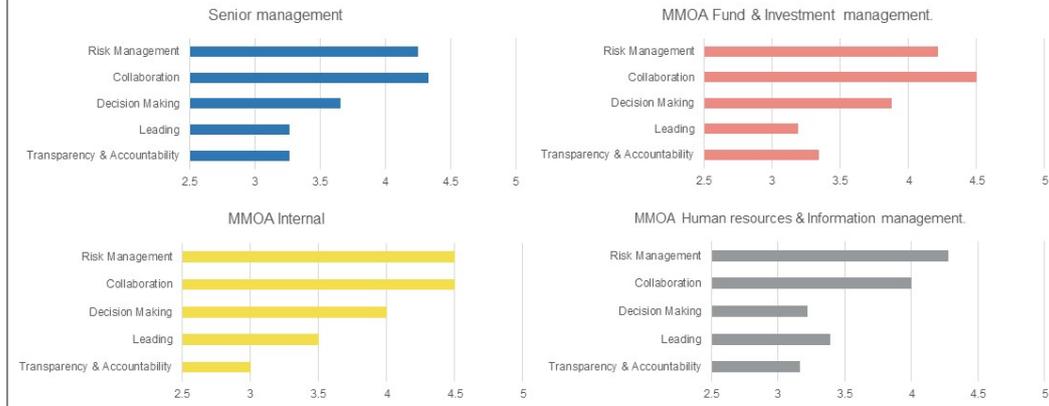
Department	Assistant	DK	Officers and middle managers	Senior managers	Total
Human resources & Information management	2		7	2	11
Fund & Investment management	5		11		16
DK		1			1
Secretariat		1			1
Internal Audit department			1		1
Executive				1	1
Total	7	2	19	3	31



Levels of agreement with statements on the framework's dimensions

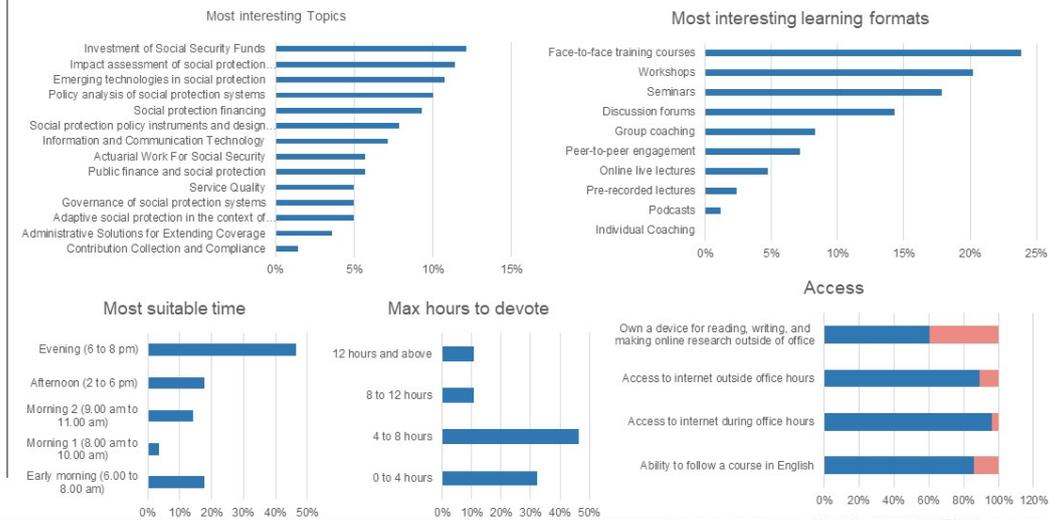


Levels of agreement with statements on Core Values and Principles



5

Wish List



7

Annex 4 | Social Security Fund Organizational Chart

