

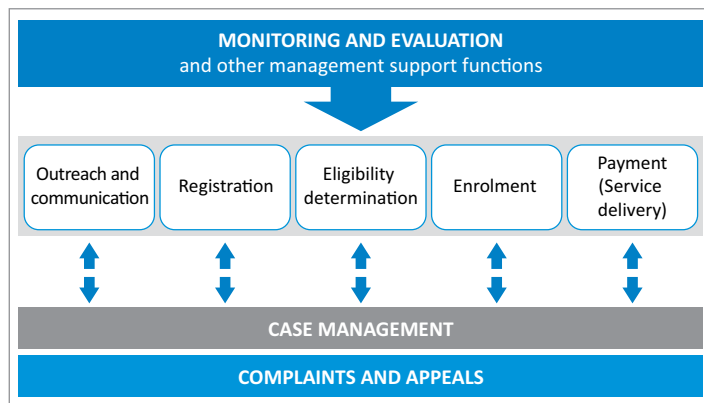
Focus on delivery: Administration

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Although often underestimated, administration is a key component in ensuring a systems-based approach to social protection. For example, countries that had invested in their social protection administration systems were better able to respond to the COVID-19 shock. Thus, administration and viewing administrative systems holistically is the focus of [Part 5 of the Handbook on Social Protection Systems](#). The spotlight is on a people-centric, integrated approach to delivery, underlining the potential of each step in the process to ensure that the multidimensional needs of individuals and households are well considered and integrated.

Administration goes beyond service delivery and entails various steps and different approaches in each stage—e.g., how to determine the eligibility or approaches in beneficiary registration—have their pros and cons regarding programme uptake (see Chapter 24 of the Handbook). Although steps such as outreach and communication are often considered ‘non-essential’, evidence shows they can play a key role in ensuring inclusiveness and wider coverage, encompassing difficult-to-reach target populations. Likewise, social accountability mechanisms should go beyond simply channelling citizens’ voices, striving to make them truly active participants in the process via, for instance, using other tools such as social audits or community implementation committees.

Figure 1. Administrative functions along the social protection delivery chain



Source: Barca and Hebar in Schüring and Loewe (2021).

The delivery of social insurance involves six common business processes—enrolment, contribution collection, benefits management, payments, complaints and appeals and monitoring, and evaluation. Beyond considering what each of these steps entails, these functions can be examined to see where similarities and differences between them can be integrated (see Chapter 25). For example, maternity benefits, unemployment and pensions are different schemes, yet all involve the payment of a benefit. Looking at the ‘payment’ function as a common business process allows for the development of a single,

common payment platform for several programmes, resulting in enhanced integrity, reduced costs and improved quality of service. On the other hand, technologies have led to a new form of inequality—the ‘digital divide.’ Many potential beneficiaries lack access to digital technology or digital literacy, or even access to formal banking. Various stakeholders using different, inclusive approaches play a crucial role in this process. In a similar vein, digital and integrated management information systems (MIS) are the backbone of administrative systems coordination (see Chapter 26), but they also require an adequate human resource capacity and institutional set-up to ensure that key risks and associated challenges—i.e., data protection—are fully addressed.

When administering social protection programmes within a systemic approach, the portability of entitlements must also be considered (see Chapter 27). Portability is usually limited to the continuity of social protection coverage across international borders, mostly concerned with long-term social insurance such as old-age, survivor, and disability pensions. The Handbook advocates for viewing portability as providing adequate protection needs during the different transitions throughout an individual’s life cycle: from school to work, across different jobs, and during maternity and other episodes of ‘leave.’ Portability should also be considered within national borders and across different institutions.

Moving to administrative governance, the extent to which implementation can and should be decentralised is a critical question, with important implications for the effectiveness of social protection systems. While mainstream debates on good governance promote decentralisation, countries rarely face a simple choice between centralised and decentralised approaches. Government ministers, their officials, advisers, and in some cases development partners find that their policy choices are constrained by a range of political, institutional, functional and capacity factors (see Chapter 28).

A [case study on capacity development for social protection in Zambia](#) (Chisanga and Miti 2021) demonstrates how the issue of capacity development was tackled, starting from an in-depth training needs assessment and focusing investment on local capacity building via a tailored curriculum offered by the University of Zambia.

Table 1. Expert voices in Part 5

Chapter	Page	Expert	Video/Podcast
Introduction: Administration	5	Valentina Barca	Introduction: Administration

Note: The videos can be found in the multimedia version of the Handbook.

References:

- Schüring, E., and M. Loewe (editors). 2021. *Handbook on Social Protection Systems*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Chisanga, B., and J. J. Miti. “Case Study N: Capacity development for social protection in Zambia”. In *Handbook on Social Protection Systems*, 481-487. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.