

ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME



ITP: 322/10

Social Protection for Sustainable Development

Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Zimbabwe
October 2025 | March 2026 | May 2026

Application
deadline:
extended until
➤ **23rd July 2025**

Welcome

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), *Arbetsförmedlingen* (the Swedish Public Employment Service) and the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI) hereby invite and welcome you to nominate candidates for this *International Training Programme on Social Protection for Sustainable Development*. Trusting that this training programme will contribute to the development of the social protection system in your country, we would like to invite your institution to nominate qualified candidates for participation in the programme.

In this brochure, you will find information on the specific objectives for this particular programme, its content and structure, how and when to apply, as well as an application form. The programme is specially designed for persons qualified to participate in reform processes and holding a position in their home organisations with mandate to conduct a process of change. It offers support to strengthen, adapt and maintain capacity over time in order for the participant's organisation to define and achieve goals both short and long term. Participants from each country will work together to implement progressively a medium-term change programme that strengthens the capacity of the national social protection system to work more effectively.

The aim and overall objective of the International Training Programme (ITP) is a long-term and sustainable contribution to a more inclusive and equal society by improving the function of the social protection systems that tackle poverty, vulnerability, inequality (both gender and economic) and exclusion while strengthening delivery of inclusive social development, productive employment and equitable economic growth.

The programme has the objective to increase knowledge and provide participants with opportunities to implement development projects that they have prioritised together with their organisations. The methodology used is based on the assumption that the participants' organisations wish to carry out changes and are willing to invest their own efforts and resources to achieve these changes.

The ITP specifically aims to reinforce the competence of participating strategic individuals to carry out necessary reforms and policy, programme, and organisational changes within the partner country's social protection systems while building developmental linkages to other policy sectors. Participants from the public sector and civil society will work in teams drawn from partner countries and learn to identify, design, finance, implement, monitor and evaluate social protection policies, strategies and programmes. The systems approach to change management, which this International Training Programme adopts, will also strengthen cooperation and partnership among key stakeholders, particularly social and economic ministries and agencies, contributing to broader societal changes and strengthening developmental synergies in the participating countries.

The platform for the International Training Programme is the **Swedish Policy for Global Development** and the global **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, in which both social protection and employment are important priorities. Goal number one, Eradicating poverty in all its forms highlights a vital role for social protection systems. Goal number eight, Decent work and economic growth, is particularly important for *Arbetsförmedlingen*, The Swedish Public Employment Service, and social protection systems support this goal both directly and indirectly in both short and long-term timeframes.

Arbetsförmedlingen, The Swedish Public Employment Service, is well acquainted with the systems approach to change management including challenges, best practice and solutions. EPRI's global mission has supported the design and implementation of social protection policies, programmes and systems in forty-seven countries around the world. Both organisations have extensive experience in developing and managing capacity building programmes internationally and aim to deliver a comprehensive International Training Programme, equipping participants with the tools to implement change in their countries.



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Programme objectives

Globally, social protection represents one of the fastest growing policy sectors—in part, because its main aim—tackling poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion—strengthens the foundations for positive change around the world. Severe deprivation, unmitigated risk and discrimination create social problems that can paralyse action. Providing the most deprived households with income support makes both consumer markets and labour markets work better for the poor. Protecting people against the worst consequences of shocks enables productive risk-taking, including job search, one of the highest yielding investments for households living in poverty. Social inclusion opens the door to vital opportunities and offers a platform on which change agents can build better policies, programmes and systems. A global evidence base today demonstrates social protection’s powerful role supporting inclusive social development, decent and productive employment and equitable economic growth.

The International Training Programme will aim to expand and improve the effectiveness of national social protection systems, tackling exclusion, promoting gender equality and strengthening developmental impact. The programme builds the capacity of teams integrating multiple government ministries, public agencies and non-governmental organisations in the partner countries to identify, design, finance, implement, monitor and evaluate change programmes. The programme aims to better deliver social protection to meet the identified objectives of national policy stakeholders, including tackling poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion while strengthening opportunities for decent and productive employment. In five years, country teams will work on the change programme in sequence with the ambition to fully operationalise the programme after five years for the long-term. The adopted approaches will align with Swedish guiding principles for development cooperation and include values for human rights and the integration of a gender perspective for equal rights of men and women.

PROGRAMME BENEFITS

- › **Knowledge and enhanced capacity on social protection systems and their role in tackling poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion while strengthening inclusive social development and decent and productive employment**
- › **Knowledge of the value of building inter-ministerial and inter-agency initiatives as instruments for more effectively integrating social protection with other developmental sectors, including health, education, employment and others.**
- › **To initiate and manage sustainable reform processes building more effective social protection systems**
- › **Capacity and knowledge to plan and implement a project for change**

The programme will provide the participants with an in-depth understanding of:

- the role of comprehensive social protection systems in promoting social and economic development,
- how integrating social protection instruments with developmental interventions in health, education, livelihoods and other sectors can tackle complex problems and achieve comprehensive outcomes,
- knowledge of policies and tools for more effectively designing and integrating social protection policies, programmes and systems,
- the potential of comprehensive social protection systems to support decent and productive employment,
- cross-cutting perspectives, including gender equality, anti-corruption, sustainable livelihoods and environmental/climate issues,
- the ability to identify and analyse challenges and problems in the social protection system in the home country and to suggest corrective measures,
- the ability to initiate, organise and implement a sustainable project for change based on development priorities,
- an established network for exchanging experiences and support between participants.

Contents

The programme will combine theory with practice to provide participants with knowledge to strengthen a sustainable national social protection system. This programme adopts the Results Based Management (RBM) model as the monitoring strategy that focuses on performance and the achievements of results. RBM shifts the focus from activities and outputs to outcomes and impacts. The core modules of the ITP will include training in seven main areas:

1. Rights-based and life cycle frameworks for social protection systems,
2. The design and implementation of social protection systems to ensure social inclusion,
3. Strengthening developmental impacts, by integrating inter-sectoral initiatives to multiply social protection impacts and support the SDGs (“Social Protection Plus”), with a particular focus on decent and productive employment,

4. Enabling social protection to promote gender equality,
5. Financing and co-financing social protection reforms, expansion and integration, and
6. Monitoring and evaluating social protection systems to enable evidence-based change.
7. Social protection responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and lessons from the global crisis.

In addition, the ITP will innovate specific modules and training components to support the specific change programmes identified by partner country teams and will include four cross cutting themes – (1) gender equality; (2) good governance, anti-corruption and integrity; (3) environment and sustainability; and (4) sustainable livelihoods development;

Programme structure

THE PROGRAMME CONSISTS OF EIGHT PHASES:

Phase 1, Inception phase (June 2025):

The ITP organisers will meet with the countries' steering committees to review the aims of each country's change programme. This process will include working with the preceding group of participants to identify the change programme's needs for the next training cycle.

Phase 2, Recruitment phase (June 2025- July 2025):

Based on national steering committee nominations and self-nominations, the ITP organisers will interview candidates and meet virtually with partner organisations and embassies in the participating countries. Sida will approve the team of participants from each country, and the organisers will agree on a Memorandum of Agreement with the participants and their employers.

Phase 3, Regional phase 1 (October 2025):

The organisers plan to host a regional workshop (3-4 days) for the selected ITP 8 and 9 cohorts. This will also include some representatives of the alumni and steering committee. Through plenary sessions by international experts, the workshop will build their capacities on social protection and Results Based Management to help them develop, improve and plan the implementation of their country's change programme.

Phase 4, Intermediate phase (October 2025- March 2026):

Country experts and mentors will meet virtually with participants in their respective countries to follow up and provide support to the work process of the change project. The participants disseminate the acquired information from the regional phase, initiate work on implementing their programmes for change and prepare individual reports for presentation during phase five.

Phase 5, Swedish phase (March 2026):

During this in-person phase in Sweden, the participants will be exposed to different methods to address the issues and experiences from other countries and the international society. The course will include three main components: (1) core modules in change management facilitated by Arbetsförmedlingen and in social protection systems facilitated by EPRI, (2) advanced modules drawing on Swedish experience facilitated by Arbetsförmedlingen and other public agencies, and (3) team-work managed by the country teams with support from mentors (drawn from Swedish Public Agencies and EPRI).

Phase 6, Project phase (March 2026- May 2026):

By applying the acquired knowledge with support from the course team, including experts from Arbetsförmedlingen and EPRI, the country team will prepare the hand over of the programme document to the next group. Country-specific social protection experts and mentors will support teams.

Phase 7, Regional phase 2 (May 2026):

The country teams will participate in a regional workshop (3-4 days), where they will report the progress of their implementation and their strategies for sustaining the change programme impact in long-term. If there is an immediate successor group, the country teams will hand-over the process of implementing the medium-term change programme to them.

Phase 8, Final phase (May 2026):

Working with the steering committee, alumni and the successor group of country teams, the participants will complete their intervention and submit their final reports. The participants will then graduate to become the alumni of the programme.

TRAINING/PEDAGOGICS

Leveraging lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, the ITP adopts a hybrid learning approach including flexible online learning experience. The conveners have integrated e-learning elements so the participants can learn at their own pace, set individual goals, and align workshop and mentoring sessions with the country-specific context and project. Through relevant design and effective delivery, the programme builds upon the integrated collaboration of Sida, Arbetsförmedlingen, EPRI, and social protection experts to convey complex concepts in the most comprehensible way. With in-person workshops, complemented by virtual webinars and a rich set of interactive elements, online discussions, and participatory activities, the ITP aims to provide the participants with real time, applicable insights.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

Sida has mandated Arbetsförmedlingen (the Swedish Public Employment Service) and the Economic Policy Research Institute to organise and execute the programme. The programme will be executed in partnership with Skatteverket (The Swedish Tax Agency) and Pensionsmyndigheten (The Swedish Pensions Agency). All international and Swedish lecturers, teachers and mentors have extensive experience within their respective expert areas.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR CHANGE

Before applying to the programme, each applicant should consult with their employer to ensure the appropriateness of their role in supporting the aims of the social protection change programme in their country. It is essential that the participant's organisation supports the medium-term change programme as agreed by the national ITP steering committee. In the application form, the participants will need to explain how their work can potentially contribute to the success of the medium-term change programme and the overarching development goals in their respective countries.

TIMETABLE

WHERE: The Swedish phase will be held in Stockholm, Sweden, if travel is possible. The two regional phases, 3-4 days per phase, will be held in East/Southern Africa. If travel is restricted or if there are any unforeseen logistical constraints, courses will be offered remotely.

WHEN:

Phase 3: October 2025

Phase 5: March 2026

Phase 7: May 2026

The duration and timelines are subject to change based on the logistical feasibility for the organisers.

Admission requirements

INVITED COUNTRIES

The following countries are invited:

ITP 10: Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Zimbabwe

TARGET GROUPS

This ITP aims to include government officials and others who work at a strategic level on change in their organisations and for the public good. Participants can apply from ministries, government agencies and departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Participants must be able to participate in the reform processes in the social protection sector in their countries. They should have the power and resources to initiate and implement development projects that result in change furthering the goals of this ITP.

Qualifications are university or other post-secondary education and relevant work experience. Participants must be officially nominated by their own organisations and in some cases by authorities. Nominating organisations and the selected candidates must ensure their commitment to participate in all phases of the programme. A Memorandum of Understanding will be signed by the participants organisations and the Economic Policy Research Institute.

In order for the participants to be fully dedicated to the programme, family members are not allowed to accompany participants to the programme.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

The training programme will be organised and conducted in English. Participants are expected to make both oral and written presentations. Candidates from countries where English is not an official language should do a language test with an official body in their home country. Proficiency in English shall be certified on the Application form.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Good health and full working capacity, potentially, are conditioned due to an intensive programme and international travel. It is therefore recommended that candidates undergo a medical examination before filling in the Medical statement in the Application form.

VISA

Participants are responsible for obtaining all visas necessary for their journey and stay during the training programme. The visa should be valid for the whole period in Sweden and the passport should be valid for three months longer than the entry visa.

INSURANCE

In case of travel, all participants are covered by a group insurance while in Sweden and on organised tours during the programme including the initial regional seminar and regional follow-up seminar. This insurance includes costs for medical care in the event of acute illness or accident. Medical and dental check-ups are not included. This insurance does not cover delays, lost baggage or theft of personal property.

COSTS

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) will cover all costs such as tuition fee, board and lodging (single room including breakfast and all other meals), roundtrip economy flight tickets between the international airport in the participant's home country and Sweden and the location of the regional seminars, some activities and local transportation within the programme.

Participants must pay for all visa fees, personal expenses and travel to/from the international airport in their home countries. The programme does not pay a per diem to participants. Neither the organisers nor Sida will finance the participant's change programme.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application should be submitted through Sida's ITP platform, found through the following [link](#). The course can also be found on Sida's webpage for ITP-programmes.

After registration in the ITP-platform, all information regarding the recruitment process will be sent by e-mail.

Should you have any problems with the application portal, please contact itp@epri.org.za

Applications submitted after closing date will not be considered.

Closing date for applications: **23rd July, 2025**

SELECTION PROCESS

Preliminary selected candidates will be notified by e-mail not later than 24th of July, 2025. Once selected, the candidate must confirm participation. A letter of Acceptance will be sent to your organisations. Both the selected candidate and her or his organisation must confirm the commitment to participate in all phases of the programme, and to support the work for the programme for change. Both women and men are encouraged to apply. We strive for a gender balance among participants.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) offers, as part of its bilateral development assistance, capacity development activities in areas of strategic importance to the social, environmental and economic development in the participating countries. The purpose of the Advanced International Training Programmes is to provide resources and develop knowledge, skills and expertise to organisations with strong legitimacy in relation to target groups, democracy practices etc. in areas given priority in Swedish development cooperation, are based on identified priorities and needs and in which Swedish expertise is in demand.

ORGANISERS



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Arbetsförmedlingen, the Swedish Public Employment Service, contributes to a well-functioning labour market in Sweden through facilitating more effective matching of vacancies and job seekers, prioritising those who are furthest removed from the labour market and helping to permanently increase employment in the long term.

Arbetsförmedlingen has a long tradition of international cooperation through provision of support to government agencies and organisations in countries with development needs in the labour markets, particularly with regard to active labour market policies, labour market institutions and social dialogue, result-based management information systems, labour market and forecasting and analysis and methods to promote employment to marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

The Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI), a global organisation based in Cape Town, South Africa, works to better enable governments, their development partners and civil society institutions to design, implement, monitor and evaluate strategies, policies and programmes that support inclusive social development and equitable economic growth. EPRI specialises in research, capacity building and policy advisory services strengthening comprehensive and integrated social protection systems.

EPRI is a not-for-profit institution incorporated under section 21 of South Africa's Companies Act. A globally top-ranked research institute, EPRI brings twenty-six years of experience in best practice solutions to strengthening social protection systems and integrating them with effective and equitable policies for sustainable development, decent work and equitable economic growth.

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

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