



EVALUATION OF SOCIAL PROGRAMMES

FOCUS ON RELEVANCE



RELEVANT POLICIES
FOR PEOPLE



BETTER TARGETING
BETTER USE OF RESOURCES



ADAPT AND RESPOND
TO CHANGING NEEDS



STRONGER IMPACT
FOR SOCIETY



INTOSAI WORKING GROUP
ON PUBLIC POLICY EVALUATION
MEETING



15–16 SEPTEMBER 2026

SAI ALGERIA

Introduction

From implementation to policy relevance



We share key lessons from our evaluation of social programmes in Algeria, with a specific focus on the **relevance of public policy**.



Beyond implementation and achievement of operational objectives, we asked a key question: *Are the objectives of the policy still adequately aligned with the needs of the population it was intended to serve?*



This presentation focuses on the **Solidarity Subsidy (AFS)** and its role in examining the entire policy chain.



In line with **INTOSAI GUID 9020**, evaluation must go beyond predetermined objectives and assess whether they remain appropriate in relation to the needs the policy was intended to address.



THE POLICY CHAIN WE ASSESSED



1 | The Solidarity Subsidy (AFS):

A core component of our social evaluation



The Solidarity Subsidy is a **social assistance scheme** designed to provide a **minimum level of financial support** to **vulnerable people** who have no sufficient resources.



It is one of the main instruments **examined** in our audit because of its scale, its **direct impact on beneficiaries**, and the complexity of its **targeting and management**.



The Solidarity Subsidy relies heavily on **local-level implementation**: social workers receive and assess applications, verify supporting documents and update beneficiaries' situations.



This **local dimension** was particularly important for our evaluation. It provided us with an opportunity to **look beyond the administrative delivery** of the subsidy and examine a **more fundamental policy question**:



Does the current design and targeting of the solidarity subsidy still correspond to the social needs it is intended to address?



THE POLICY CHAIN WE ASSESSED



2 Our starting point: relevance before effectiveness



One of the main lessons from our evaluation: **effectiveness cannot be considered in isolation from relevance.**



A programme may be efficiently administered, reach thousands of beneficiaries and distribute its budget regularly. But if the policy does not adequately identify the needs of the population, or if its eligibility criteria do not properly correspond to those needs, its overall value may remain limited.



This distinction is important: we cannot expect a robust impact if the policy is **not relevant in the first place.**

We therefore adopted the following reasoning:



- Relevance asks:**
Are the objectives of the policy appropriate to the needs?
- Effectiveness asks:**
Are these objectives being achieved?
- Impact asks:**
What changes has the policy actually produced?
- Utility asks:**
Taking into account the results, impacts, unintended effects and the needs initially targeted, was the policy worthwhile?

When relevance is weak, the entire chain is at risk

Poor understanding of needs



Needs are not well identified

Inappropriate policy objectives



Objectives do not match the real needs

Inadequate targeting



The wrong people or some people are left out

Limited results



Outputs are delivered but with limited value

Weak or uneven outcomes



Benefits are limited and uneven

Uncertain impact



It is unclear what has really changed

Limited utility



The overall value of the policy remains limited



Relevance is the foundation. Without it, effectiveness, impact and utility cannot be achieved in a meaningful and sustainable way.

How Were the Audit Criteria Defined?

The audit criteria were developed during the preparation phase through a combination of regulatory analysis, understanding of the policy objectives, risk assessment, stakeholder consultations and reconstruction of the intervention logic.

1

Starting from the policy objectives and the regulatory framework



We analysed the legal and regulatory framework governing the AFS and the CPS to identify:



The objectives of the policy



The categories of people intended to benefit



The eligibility conditions



The responsibilities of stakeholders



The mechanisms for identifying, assessing and monitoring beneficiaries



This provided the first reference point for determining what the policy was expected to achieve and how it was supposed to operate.



2

Identifying risks during the preliminary assessment



The preliminary work allowed us to identify areas presenting potential risks to the achievement of the policy objectives.

Particular attention was given to:



The identification and coverage of social needs



The targeting of vulnerable populations



The clarity and consistency of eligibility criteria



The role of local social workers and CPS



The updating of beneficiaries' situations



The availability and reliability of administrative information

4 Solidarity Subsidy Impact Model

From needs to lasting impact



SOLIDARITY SUBSIDY
BUDGET (2024 ONLY)
170 BILLION DA



OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Contribute to the reduction of poverty and vulnerability by providing regular financial support to households and persons with no or insufficient income.

1. NEEDS



- Poverty, lack of income
- Disability and chronic disabling diseases
- Other forms of vulnerability (elderly, women heads of household, large families, etc.)
- Risk of social exclusion and marginalisation
- Unequal access to basic living conditions and social protection

KEY QUESTION

Are the social needs targeted by the Solidarity Subsidy adequately identified and understood?

2. OBJECTIVES



- Provide regular financial support to eligible vulnerable persons and households
- Protect vulnerable categories and promote social inclusion
- Prevent aggravation of poverty and social exclusion
- Support dignity and improve living conditions

KEY QUESTION

Are the objectives relevant and aligned with the social needs and vulnerabilities?

3. MEANS / RESOURCES (MOBILISED)



FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- 2024 budget: 170 billion DA (AFS)
- Allocated by the State through the ADS



HUMAN RESOURCES

- Social workers at local level (TS) in communes
- Staff within ADS and Social Proximity Cells (CPS)



INFORMATION SYSTEMS & APPLICATIONS

- AFS Pro (commune level)
- AFS Wil (wilaya level)
- Administrative databases
- Interfaces with partners (CNAS, CASNOS, CNRC, etc.)



TOOLS & SUPPORT

- Procedures and guidelines
- Training and technical support
- Transport and communication means

KEY QUESTION

Are the resources sufficient, appropriate and well coordinated to achieve the objectives?

4. PROCESSES (IMPLEMENTED)



Identification of social needs and potential beneficiaries



Submission of applications and verification of eligibility conditions



Decision by validation commissions (wilaya level) and registration



Monthly payment of the allowance



Monitoring and regular updating of files (annual renewal, controls, detection of changes)

KEY QUESTION

Are the processes effective, transparent and accessible to those who are eligible?

5. RESULTS (SHORT / MEDIUM TERM)



Increased number of eligible beneficiaries covered by the programme



Regular and secure disbursement of the allowance



Improved reliability of beneficiary data



Better coordination with databases and partners



Regular updating of situations and exit of non-eligible beneficiaries

KEY QUESTION

Is the programme producing the expected outputs in a relevant and efficient manner?

6. EFFECTS (MEDIUM / LONG TERM)



Improved living conditions of households and beneficiaries



Reduced economic and social vulnerability



Improved access to other social services (health, education, social support)



Strengthened social protection and social cohesion

KEY QUESTION

Are the expected changes in the lives of beneficiaries and households being achieved?

7. IMPACT GLOBAL (LONG TERM)



Sustainable reduction of poverty and social exclusion

Improved well-being and dignity of vulnerable populations

Stronger social inclusion and equitable access to opportunities



KEY QUESTION

Does the AFS contribute in a lasting way to reducing poverty and vulnerability in society?



EVALUATION QUESTION: Is the Solidarity Subsidy designed and implemented in a way that effectively reaches the targeted vulnerable populations and contributes sustainably to reducing poverty and vulnerability?



CRITERIA ASSESSED: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability

5 The regulatory dimension of relevance: a critical finding



Our evaluation highlighted an **important issue** concerning the regulatory design of the policy.



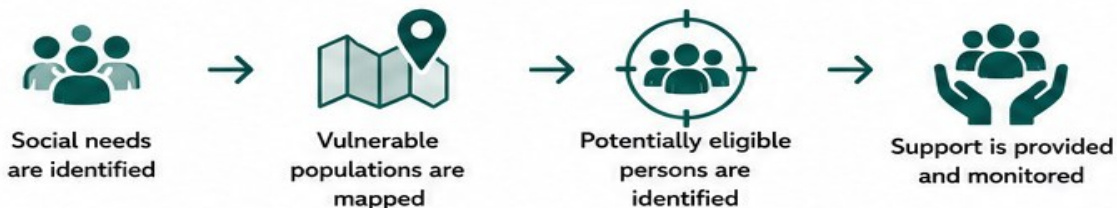
The legal framework **does not establish** household or social surveys as a systematic and mandatory mechanism for identifying potential beneficiaries and mapping unmet needs.



If the identification of needs is not structurally embedded in the policy, the system may become essentially **demand-driven**.



A SYSTEM WITH NEEDS IDENTIFICATION



A DEMAND-DRIVEN SYSTEM



WHAT REMAINS UNANSWERED IN A DEMAND-DRIVEN SYSTEM



Who remains **outside** the programme?



Where are **unmet needs** concentrated?



Which forms of **vulnerability** are emerging?



Do existing **eligibility categories** continue to reflect social realities?



This represents a **RELEVANCE ISSUE AT THE DESIGN LEVEL**, rather than merely an implementation weakness.

Why it matters:

Without a regulatory requirement for systematic needs identification, it is difficult to ensure that the policy is informed by the **real distribution and evolution** of social needs.

The risk:

The policy may not **reach the people who need it most**, or may **not adapt** to emerging vulnerabilities, reducing its **overall relevance and effectiveness**.



6 Medical eligibility: when regulatory ambiguity becomes a relevance issue



The AFS includes categories linked to **disability** and **chronic disabling diseases**.

Our work identified difficulties in translating these categories into **clear, homogeneous and operational criteria**.



No sufficiently precise operational reference framework for the notion of “disabling chronic disease”.



Ambiguity in assessing disability rates.

Different references may be used, but without a clear and dedicated framework.



Interpretations can vary between localities.

Similar medical situations may be treated differently.



The key evaluation question:

Was the policy designed with clear enough criteria to ensure consistent and equitable decisions?

SAME MEDICAL CONDITION, DIFFERENT DECISIONS

Examples: hypertension, diabetes...

LOCALITY A

Person **accepted** under the scheme



LOCALITY B

Person **not accepted** under the scheme



This does not mean that one decision is correct and the other is not. It highlights a more fundamental issue:
When criteria are not sufficiently operationalised, their interpretation may vary across territories.

THE RISKS FOR POLICY RELEVANCE



Unequal treatment



Inclusion errors



Exclusion errors



Unequal access to social assistance



Ultimately: weakened targeting and policy relevance.



CLEAR CRITERIA = CONSISTENT DECISIONS, EQUITABLE ACCESS, GREATER RELEVANCE

Ambiguity in medical eligibility criteria creates room for interpretation, which can lead to unequal treatment, errors and weaker targeting.

Clarity is not a technical detail; it is a condition for relevance and fairness.



7 Regulatory gap in the systematic updating of beneficiaries' situations



No clear regulatory requirement

obliging Social Workers (TS) to systematically update files and reassess eligibility as circumstances evolve.



AFS BUDGET 2024
170 BILLION DA

1. DIVERGENT PRACTICES ACROSS LOCALITIES



No uniform obligation leads to inconsistent updating practices among localities and Social Workers (TS).

2. RISK OF OUTDATED BENEFICIARY INFORMATION



Changes affecting eligibility may not be identified in a timely manner.

3. RISK OF CONTINUED PAYMENTS TO NON-ELIGIBLE BENEFICIARIES



Benefits may continue to be paid to persons who no longer meet the eligibility conditions, while other eligible persons remain outside the scheme.

4. WEAKER USE OF SOCIAL RESOURCES



Reduced effectiveness of targeting and lower alignment with actual social needs.



RELEVANCE IMPLICATION

A policy cannot remain fully relevant if its beneficiary targeting does not adapt to changing social circumstances.



Regulatory gap



Inconsistent updating



Outdated targeting



Reduced policy relevance



Outdated Regulatory Framework and weak digital governance



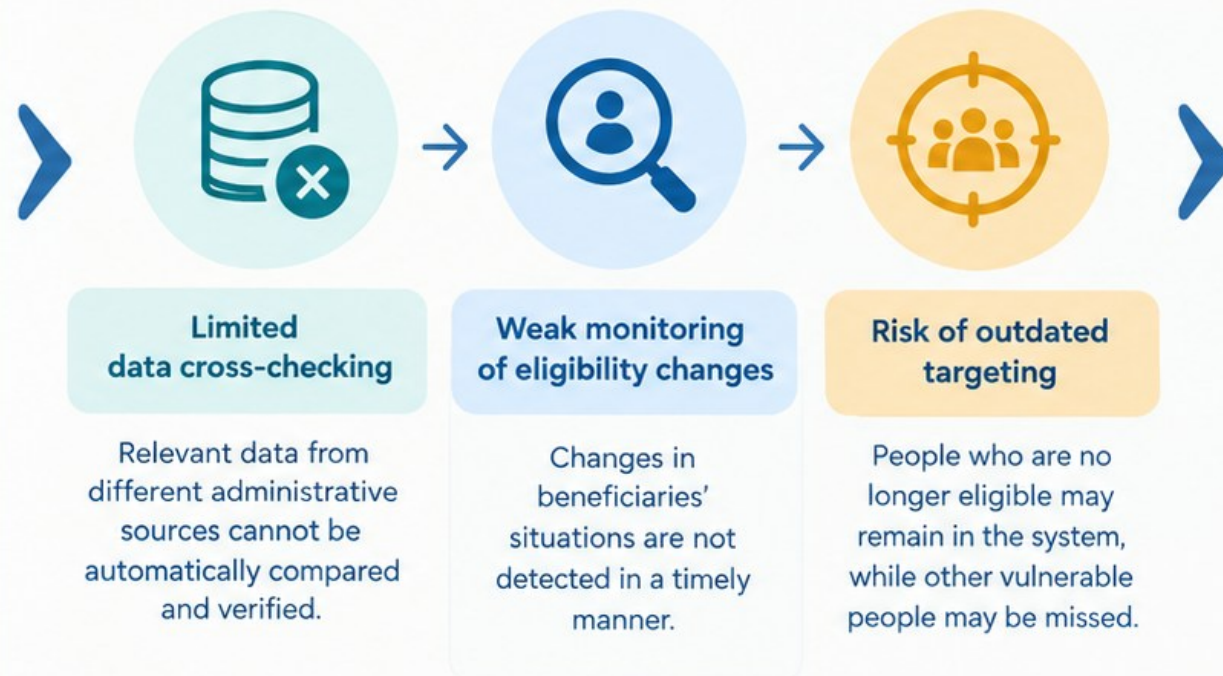
An outdated legal and regulatory framework

The evaluation also identified an outdated regulatory framework that does not adequately address current information-management requirements.



In particular, it does not provide for a clear obligation to establish an **integrated and interoperable information system** capable of cross-checking relevant administrative data and monitoring changes in beneficiaries' circumstances.

CONSEQUENCES



Weakened policy relevance

The policy's ability to adapt to changing social needs over time is limited.



A policy designed for today's social needs also needs an information framework capable of **identifying tomorrow's changes**. Without this, relevance cannot be maintained over time.

Audit Finding: Recovery of Undue Payments

The audit found that while eligibility for the Solidarity Subsidy is established, a clear and comprehensive legal and procedural framework for the recovery of unduly paid subsidies is lacking when beneficiaries cease to meet the criteria.

1

Legal and Procedural Gaps in Recovery



Current legal and regulatory frameworks do not clearly define provisions for recovering subsidies unduly paid after a change in beneficiary eligibility.

- Absence of clear conditions and specific procedures for recovery.
- Unclear process for identifying and notifying undue payments.
- Undefined method for determining recovery amounts.
- Lack of clear responsibilities for entities involved.
- Treatment of unresolved cases is not established.



Existing provisions are insufficient to address cases where a beneficiary loses eligibility but payments continue.

2

Operational Consequences and Risks



The lack of framework results in undetected ineligibility, continuing payments, and high risk of financial loss.



Risk of significant financial loss from unrecovered funds.



Weakened effectiveness of eligibility controls.



Undermined integrity and public trust in the scheme.



Inefficient overall management of the subsidy scheme.



Limited ability to promptly detect changes in situations.



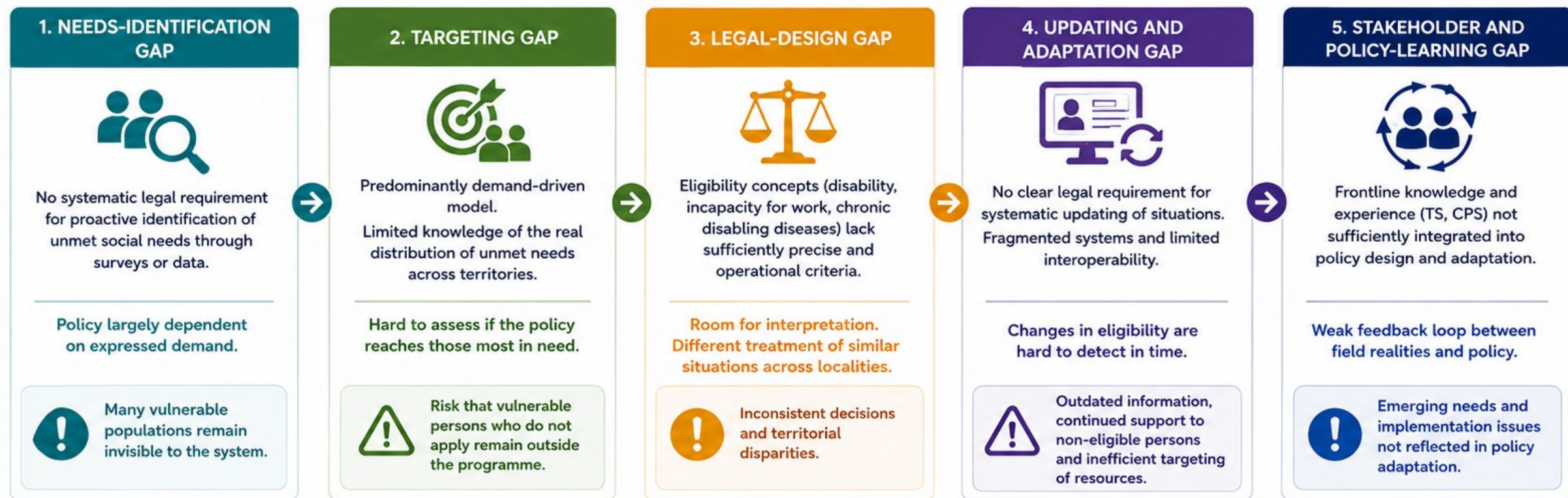
Unduly paid funds are likely to remain unrecovered due to procedural voids.

The regulatory and operational framework must define comprehensive recovery mechanisms to protect public funds and maintain scheme integrity.

A full recovery process must be defined and implemented.

8 MAIN RELEVANCE FINDINGS

Five interconnected relevance gaps affecting the AFS policy cycle



THE OVERALL RELEVANCE CHALLENGE

If needs are not identified, criteria are not clear, situations are not updated, and field experience is not used to adapt the policy, the AFS risks losing alignment with the needs it is intended to address.



Relevance can be undermined before effectiveness.

A CHAIN OF RELEVANCE THROUGHOUT THE POLICY CYCLE



ULTIMATE GOAL: Not only to implement the AFS better, but to ensure that the policy remains aligned with the needs of the population it is intended to serve – today and in the future.

FROM FINDINGS TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Turning relevance gaps into concrete actions for a more relevant and adaptive AFS policy



OUR GOAL

From a reactive social programme to a needs-driven, adaptive and learning policy.



Better identify those most in need



Reach the right beneficiaries



Adapt to changes in situations



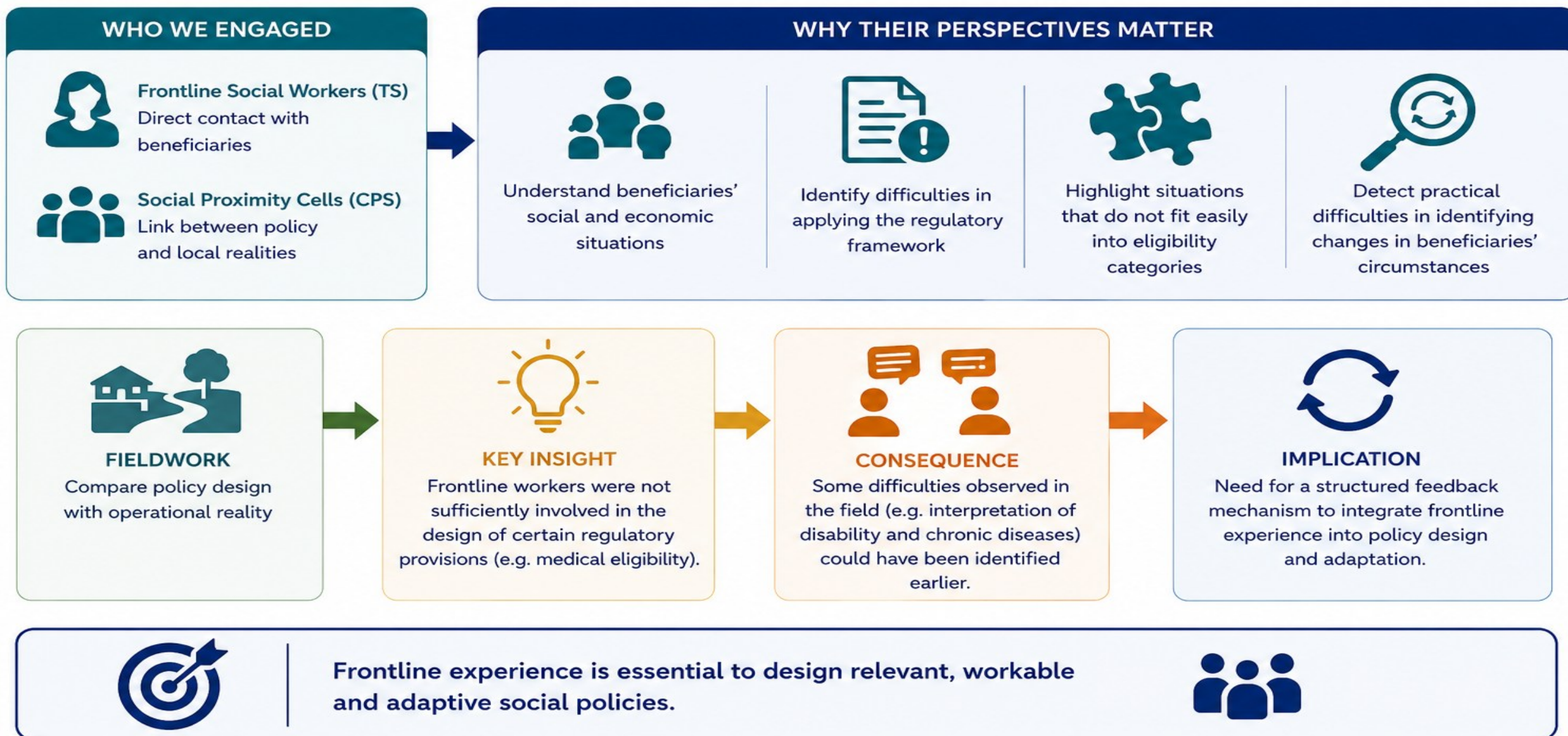
Use data better and more securely



Continuously learn and improve the policy

How were stakeholders and end users involved?

Stakeholder perspectives were gathered through fieldwork, interviews and discussions with actors directly involved in the implementation of the programmes.





STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE



Following the transmission of the audit report, the Ministry of National Solidarity indicated that **a regulatory and operational reform** of the AFS is currently underway.



The Ministry further indicated that the **recommendations** issued by the Court of Accounts **will be taken into consideration** as part of this reform process.



RELEVANCE OF THIS RESPONSE



Several of our findings concerned not only implementation weaknesses, but also **gaps in**:

- **regulatory design**
- **targeting** mechanisms
- **medical eligibility** criteria
- **information systems**
- **adaptation** of the programme to changing needs



FROM FOLLOW-UP TO POLICY IMPACT



AUDIT FINDINGS

Evidence on relevance gaps and design issues



REPORT SUBMITTED

Report transmitted to the relevant stakeholders



STAKEHOLDER RESPONSE

Regulatory and operational reform of the AFS is underway



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations of the Court of Accounts will be taken into consideration



EXPECTED IMPACT

Better aligned policy with the needs of vulnerable populations



A constructive follow-up that supports a more **relevant, effective and inclusive** AFS policy.

“

The key lesson is simple:
before asking **whether a policy works**,
we should first ask whether it is
addressing the **right problem**,
for the **right people**, with the **right instruments**.

**RIGHT PROBLEM**

Understand needs
and priorities

**RIGHT PEOPLE**

Reach those who
need it most

**RIGHT INSTRUMENTS**

Use appropriate and
effective tools

**BETTER RESULTS**

Achieve meaningful
and sustainable change

**BETTER PUBLIC VALUE**

A relevant, efficient
and inclusive policy



A relevant policy is the foundation of effective public action.
Relevance first, results that last.





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Together for more relevant,
inclusive and effective social policies.



Identify
needs



Target
better



Adapt
continuously



Make a
difference

