



European
Commission

CASE STUDY

YEMEN



SPaN
Supporting people through crisis



Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

DEVCO
ECHO
NEAR

Background to the Case Study

The Yemen case study was produced as part of the “Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus” (SPaN). It is the outcome of an initiative jointly led by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and Directorate- General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (NEAR) with the support of DEVCO Unit 04 and the MKS programme.



CASE STUDY

YEMEN

Type of shock	Social protection instrument	Way the social protection system was used (typology)
Forced Displacement, internal (protracted)	Social transfers (unconditional cash and in-kind transfers), public works programmes	Alignment

Scene setting

Yemen is one of the poorest countries in the Middle East and North Africa region with widespread food insecurity and malnutrition, poor health and healthcare, exacerbated by structural underdevelopment and widespread poverty. In 2012 45% of the population lived below the poverty line. The current conflict has further aggravated these pre-existing crises.

In 2011, the 'Arab Spring' protests evolved into months of armed conflict, with major negative socioeconomic impacts, the collapse of the formal social protection systems and the overall exacerbation of the already fragile situation.

Following the 2011 crisis a transitional government was appointed and a Transitional Plan for Stabilisation and Development 2012-2014 developed. This plan identified expansion of social protection as a key priority for improving living conditions of the poorest. However, in 2015, the stabilisation process halted following the violent takeover of state capital Sana'a by the North-based Houthi group and the subsequent military intervention by a group of Arab states (led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)) to reinstall the internationally recognised government of Yemen, currently exiled in Aden. The results of this protracted conflict have been devastating, especially due to a de-facto blockade imposed by the KSA-led coalition on the port city of Hodeida – the single point of entry for food, fuel and medicine imports to the populous Northern regions of the country.

As a result of disruption of markets and income-generating activities, reduced food imports and food production and increases in food prices, access to food has become increasingly problematic for poorer Yemeni families. Over 50% of the population is currently considered on the verge of severe food insecurity. 22.2 million Yemenis are dependent on some form of humanitarian assistance to survive.

NATIONAL PARTNERS: SOCIAL FUND FOR DEVELOPMENT

Among the few programmes still in operation is the Social Fund for Development (SFD), which in 2017, supported by EU funds, delivered assistance to around 300 000 people. The SFD was established by law in 1997 as a non-profit organisation and one of Yemen's main social safety net instruments, with support from the World Bank. The Fund focuses on four elements: community and local development; capacity building; small and micro enterprise development; and labour-intensive cash-for-work programmes. Although the Prime Minister chairs its board, it is independent of the Yemeni Government as it has independent policies and procedures. Its mandate is to achieve and align its programmes with the goals of national social and economic development plans for poverty reduction and it has a nationwide presence to implement community-based cash for work programmes. SFD has very transparent allocation of financial resources, with use of separate bank accounts for each funding agency and an annual financial audit conducted by an independent international audit firm. SFD is a partner for main donors for large programme implementation in Yemen.

While humanitarian actors in the country focus on providing immediate relief to people affected by the conflict, SFD has retained its longer-term development vision supporting the most vulnerable populations. In 2013, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) partnered with SFD via contracts to implement cash for work (CFW) activities. SFD has been responsible for hiring youth, national experts and private sector for urban regeneration. It also hired non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) for training and product development.

SFD is present at site locations to monitor the on-site work through local engineers and architects, supported by UNESCO staff through site visits, monitoring, reporting, documentation and planning. Selected local NGOs and CSOs have also been contracted directly by UNESCO to support identified local handicraft workshops and initiatives to be enhanced through upskilling and training activities. These groups assisted in identifying stakeholders and beneficiaries and craft masters to conduct training. Direct monitoring is provided by the UNESCO local office and via the SFD partnership.

The CSOs active in the field of culture will benefit from a small grant scheme to produce events to stimulate public participation in the cultural life of the city and attract interest in the “cash for work programme” and understand youth employment opportunities. The complexity of the political situation in Yemen has not allowed the SFD to scale up in response to the humanitarian crisis.

In 2018, the EU also allocated EUR 10 million for a labour-intensive cash for work programme in urban cultural heritage sites implemented by UNESCO. The target beneficiaries of this programme are in particular urban youth, whose livelihoods have been devastated by years of prolonged crisis and who are at a particular risk of radicalisation by militant groups active in Yemen.

NATIONAL PARTNERS: THE SOCIAL WELFARE FUND

The flagship social protection programme in the country is the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) programme, established in 1996, which provides unconditional cash transfers to beneficiaries on a quarterly basis – mostly through the Post Office as well as through two partner banks. This aims to support the poorest and most vulnerable people whose families are not able to support them. Target groups comprise (1) social categories (elderly, disabled and orphans); and (2) economic categories (unemployed male and female without a breadwinner). The programme expanded coverage significantly between 2012 and 2013, using a new targeting approach promoted by the World Bank. New beneficiaries were identified from the 2008 Comprehensive Social Survey through a proxy means test (PMT) formula. In 2014, the programme covered one-third of the population (over 1.5 million households). The SWF is a publicly funded programme, but after 2012, it relied on budget support from donors to cover up to 25% of the transfers.

With regard to the programmes of the SWF the National Social Protection Monitoring Survey reported in 2014 that the SWF programme was commendably pro-poor, being the only regular source of income for some families, without which they would be unable to buy even the most basic food items. However, the survey also highlighted significant inclusion and exclusion errors of the targeting mechanism. Despite

some small improvements as a result of transition to the PMT, it found that 44% of the extreme poor were excluded, despite the programme covering 35% of the population, whilst 27% of beneficiaries were not poor or vulnerable according to programme criteria. A key challenge identified was the difficulty in accurately targeting the poor using observable variables, given such high levels of poverty. The lack of procedures for re-verifying eligibility of enrolled beneficiaries and exiting those who do not meet the criteria was also contributing to inclusion error, while also meaning that the effects of the recent conflict on poverty dynamics (i.e. on the likelihood of non-poor households falling into poverty) was not being considered.

In March 2015 Yemen again descended into armed conflict, and ultimately a coup, resulting in forced displacement, erosion of livelihoods and resort to damaging coping strategies. The conflict led the SWF programme to stop operations since budget support from both the government and development partners had to be suspended. This removed a vital source of income for poor and vulnerable people.

As the situation continued to deteriorate, international organisations began humanitarian interventions. These were initially using in-kind resources since there was limited experience among UN agencies or INGOs in humanitarian cash transfers programming (CTP) at that time. In late 2015 and 2016 there was a gradual transition to cash and voucher-based responses.

EU RESPONSE: THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

A workshop on Yemen’s post-conflict Recovery and Reconstruction was held in 2016, included sessions on the Damage and Needs Assessment, macroeconomic stabilisation, the humanitarian-security-development nexus, decentralised service delivery, the role of the private sector and civil society, aid coordination, and operational challenges. During this workshop, EU representatives and Member States highlighted the importance of preserving Yemen’s financial institutions to avoid an economic collapse. While humanitarian aid will remain essential in the short and medium term, it is important that the required funding is allocated to bridge between the emergency response and the reconstruction and development work.

On-going efforts towards increasing synergies between the Humanitarian Intervention Plan (HIP) and the European Commission services bilateral and thematic instruments contribute to promoting resilience and the Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) approach and provide a clear ground of discussion with other partners, including EU Member States.

The European Commission’s DGs ECHO, DEVCO and FPI are pursuing joint programming efforts to ensure synergies and complementarity with new development funded programmes in the country. A programming

mission took place in December 2018 involving all relevant EU services to determine how EU tools can best complement each other over the period 2019–2020 in assisting the Yemeni population through the current crisis. At the time of writing, the results of this meeting are awaited.

HUMANITARIAN RELIEF

EU humanitarian assistance of EUR 233.7 million has been provided since the beginning of the conflict in 2015 and focuses on health, nutrition and food security crises with projects including a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) component to prevent transmission of epidemics such as cholera. The EU has also funded protection activities with a particular focus on gender-based violence, education in emergencies activities and activities that enhance rapid response capacity among partners, logistical support, and coordination and advocacy actions. This commitment has been further reinforced at the High Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen held in Geneva in April 2018, where the EU pledged another EUR 107.5 million in new funding for 2018 to help civilians most in need across the country.

All EU humanitarian aid is provided to help the most vulnerable civilians in need of humanitarian assistance or protection. EU programmes address both immediate and medium, long term needs with a particular focus on resilience.

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Since 2016, development programmes have restarted in Yemen, including EU funded actions managed by DEVCO and FPI. **In line with the above, the EU's development cooperation with Yemen is closely aligned with the humanitarian response to the crisis (humanitarian-development nexus approach).**

Since 2016, the EU has provided EUR 214 million in long-term assistance, making the EU one of the leading development donors in Yemen. The allocation for Yemen in the period 2018–2020 under the Development Cooperation Instrument amounts to EUR 150 million. The EU plans to focus this assistance on the provision of basic services to ensure local communities are protected from famine and disease, strengthening their resilience in the face of crisis. A further comprehensive support package to internally displaced populations (IDPs) in Yemen worth EUR 30 million was adopted at the end of 2018.

Social protection may be broadly defined therefore as policies and actions that:

- enhance the capacity of all people, but notably poor and vulnerable groups, to escape from poverty, or avoid falling into poverty, and better manage risks and shocks;
- aim at providing a higher level of social security through income security and access to essential services (in particular, health and education) throughout active and inactive periods and periods of need throughout the life-cycle.

In this sense, social protection is at the heart of development operations in Yemen since the deterioration of the crisis of 2015. Action programmes developed by DEVCO in particular, Social Protection mechanisms for increased communities' resilience in fragile environment (Ref. 2016/039477, EUR 23 million) contribute to an increased focus on the most vulnerable population and also lead to more structural LRRD activities in health, livelihoods and infrastructure.

Another very pertinent intervention was launched in 2017, funded partially through the bilateral DCI country allocation for Yemen and the thematic Pro-Resilience Action (PRO-ACT) budget line on food security (Ref. 2016/389320; 2017/396361 and 2013/398941). The project 'Responding to the food crisis in Yemen' was conceived through strategic discussions between ECHO and DEVCO, through which a consensus emerged around the fact that only a comprehensive cash-based intervention to support food/nutrition security but also livelihoods could bring about the desired outcomes in terms of strengthened community resilience. Thus, ECHO and DEVCO closely coordinate the delivery of assistance to vulnerable households, whereby ECHO addresses the most pressing food security needs through in-kind (food baskets) or cash contributions. DEVCO then complements the assistance package through multi-purpose cash transfers aimed at strengthening families' resilience and livelihoods opportunities, as well as through community-based infrastructure rehabilitation.

In general, in addressing most pressing needs, the largest part of development assistance to Yemen has been focused on the themes of community resilience and food security. The EU's flagship programme in this area worth EUR 70 million and running from 2016 to 2021, has been dedicated to Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen (ERRY). In a country on the verge of famine, this programme offers support to agri-businesses and livelihoods in rural communities to help vulnerable families build up sustainable farming practices. Through this programme, the EU has also supported social cohesion by recruiting and training local mediators, including female mediators, in methods to resolve local conflict through non-violent means.

The EU is also supporting Yemen's fragile health services and infrastructure with projects worth EUR 26 million that fight malnutrition and work to create a network of community health workers to help prevent the country's health system from collapsing.

Through its latest support package set for adoption in November 2018, the EU is responding to the continuous displacements of more than 2.3 million Yemenis and one million returnees caused by the conflict. An integral component of this new initiative is dedicated to ensuring adequate access to education to a generation of Yemeni children, some of whom have been out of school for more than two years.

What it looked like

UNICEF implemented its humanitarian CTP from late 2015 to early 2017, which aimed to improve purchasing power and meet basic needs of the most vulnerable households affected by the conflict. In Phase 1 the programme was implemented in Amanat Al-Asima (city of Sana'a) while in Phase 2 it extended to the Taiz governorate, where armed conflict was still ongoing. Monthly unconditional, unrestricted cash transfers were provided for six months. In Sana'a households received Yemeni rial (YER) 21 500 (EUR 89) per month. In Taiz households with children received YER 21 500 per month and others received YER 10 750 (EUR 44.50) per month. Some 20 150 households were supported. The programme was separate from the government of Yemen's SWF social transfer programme, but UNICEF made use of several of the SWF's administrative systems to implement the programme, including its human resources and institutions, and the payment mechanism. This meant that the humanitarian intervention could make use of only the relevant design features of the social transfer programme and avoid any bottlenecks in these existing operational processes. It also meant that even though there were barriers to providing humanitarian funds to government in this context, national social protection systems could still be (partially) leveraged, as funds were not transferred to the national programme.

In 2017, UNICEF launched an Emergency Cash Transfer Project (ECTP), with funds from the World Bank through the International Development Association. The ECTP targeted 1.5 million vulnerable households

OPERATIONALISING THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

As above mentioned, in 2015, following the escalation of the conflict, cash transfers by the Social Welfare Fund were interrupted, severely affecting around seven million people.¹ In this framework, UNICEF designed a humanitarian CTP to cover basic needs of the most vulnerable. Donors from humanitarian budget lines (OFDA - The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, within USAID) funded the programme. UNICEF implemented a stand-alone project parallel to the SWF but made use of some of the SWF's administrative systems and good practices to implement the programme. The rationale was to leverage the best elements of the SWF operations without compromising humanitarian principles.

It also aimed at building capacity of national institutions and systems to respond to humanitarian needs. The collaboration with the SWF was under the umbrella of the existing country programme action plan, with an updated work plan reflecting humanitarian action.

(more than nine million people) across all 333 districts and 22 governorates of Yemen, identified through the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) beneficiary list. The ECPT was managed by Project Management Unit (PMU) with support from UNICEF MENARO (Middle East and North Africa Regional Office) and UNICEF Headquarters. The first unconditional quarterly payment, completed in early November, reached 1.33 million beneficiaries (more than an estimated eight million people). A targeted cash transfer for the Muhamasheen, Yemen's most marginalised group, reached 6 731 beneficiary households (32 072 people, 7 038 boys and 6 578 girls) under the humanitarian cash transfer project (HCTP). Cash assistance was also provided to internally displaced people as part of the rapid response mechanism. From January to May/June 2017, households with children received a monthly amount of USD 86, while households without children received USD 43. Given the complex humanitarian crisis situation in a war-torn Taiz, UNICEF expanded coverage of this humanitarian cash transfer project (HCTP-2) and increased the number of payment cycles from six to eight for the main beneficiary group.

A total of 89% of Social Welfare Fund (SWF) beneficiary households improved their purchasing power (exceeding the target of 80%) and hence their possibility of accessing basic social services such as healthcare, food or water. The post-distribution monitoring found that 90% of the beneficiaries had used the cash for medicine, food or repayment of debts.

1 UNICEF Annual Report 2015- Yemen



UNICEF also reached 1 026 households (4 835 individuals) from the complementary group with a six-round cash assistance support. Evidence from the post-distribution monitoring (PDM) exercise indicated the HCTP was the main source of income for the vast majority (97%) of beneficiaries, and 98% confirmed cash assistance helped them improve their living standards. Some 74.3% of PDM respondents claimed they could purchase sufficient food, 36.6% were able to pay their debts, 78% could access credit, 15% could access health services, 8% were less in need of borrowing money, and others could purchase clothes, school supplies and basic hygiene items for their children.

Another critical social protection/cash assistance intervention was the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) project implemented in partnership with Field Operation and Emergency section (the project coordinator) and Action Contre la Faim (ACF - the project implementer). The RRM mechanism integrated a few critical first-response activities, including the unconditional cash disbursed among the internally displaced populations in Abyan, Lahj and Aden governorates. In total, 1 196 IDP households (6 789 individuals), including 3 131 children under five (1 531 girls and 1 600 boys) were reached with a three-month unconditional cash assistance (USD 96 – the amount equal to the value of a food basket) to address the displaced population's food and other basic needs and facilitate their access to social services. The SWF Beneficiary Outreach Network (BON previously known as the 'Beneficiary Development Network' that was initially set up in Yemen to help SWF beneficiaries graduate from the public cash transfer programme) started revisiting its traditional programmatic approach to effectively support the poorest and most vulnerable. The SWF BON added referral to social services and evidence-generation components. In 2017, a fieldwork exercise was conducted in Amanat Al Asimah, Ibb and

Sana'a governorates to collect data on the situation of the poorest and most vulnerable children and their families for social services, including health, nutrition, education, child protection and water and sanitation. The knowledge gained helped the SWF BON.

In this view, UNICEF initiated and supported authorities in setting up the social protection consultative committee (SPCC) that aimed at providing a dialogue and coordination platform to promote integrated and inclusive social protection systems both in the present humanitarian context of Yemen and in the future. The Committee is chaired by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (MoSAL) and includes members of social and finance ministries, UN agencies, NGOs and the private sector. UNICEF also continued supporting the SWF's BON in its adjusted strategic approach as well as with capacity-building efforts. An integrated social assistance model/pilot was designed to support marginalised populations in Yemen.

At the end of 2017 UNICEF promoted an integrated model of social assistance for people living in slums (urban poor, the marginalised Muhamasheen community and, increasingly, internally displaced people) to holistically address the needs of the poorest and most socially excluded children and their families in Yemen. Given the multidimensional nature of poverty and vulnerability, UNICEF Yemen launched a model that integrates income with non-income inputs, services and linkages to services. The data collection for this project will establish a baseline and help to assess project impact and also to generate evidence to better understand the current child poverty and vulnerability in selected governorates in Yemen. The project began in 2018 in Amanat al Asimah in Sanaa and will target 7 000 individuals (approximately 1 000 households) in its first phase. National social protection systems will be engaged in this project.

How it was done

UNICEF mainly worked with the SWF's existing systems, which avoided the need for to spend additional time and resources establishing new systems and processes. At the same time, a number of operational adaptations to the SWF's implementation procedures were necessary for the programme to be effective. This included a revised targeting process with a move from the 'black box' of proxy means testing to a categorical targeting approach to reach Muhamasheen families (a highly marginalised group) with children. This used demographic vulnerability criteria agreed in partnership with the SWF, and the establishment of a targeting committee including the SWF and the Coalition of Taiz Support, comprising 20 NGOs, local council members

and imams. Further adaptations were introduced by delivering payments to households through only one of the payment providers on the SWF, namely Al Amal Microfinance Bank (AMB). The AMB's knowledge and their selection of disbursement sites ensured safe movement and availability of transportation between the Muhamasheen community and the disbursement sites. SWF's staff were retained where possible and trained in the changes being introduced through the UNICEF programme. To protect confidentiality during the conflict, the data management functions were outsourced to non-government personnel (previously the government had been managing these steps).

The project required facilitators on the ground to liaise with local actors for buy-in and to inform beneficiaries about the eligibility criteria, verification and payment mechanisms. Beneficiaries were first requested to verify their identity against the beneficiary list, and only then collected the cash benefit.

Further, the humanitarian programme benefited from AMB's experience in working with populations excluded from formal financial services, and in taking services to people through a network of outlets.

All programmes were partners in the development of the humanitarian needs overview and will continue to act as cluster leads/participants throughout the crisis. Access to data and to specific geographic areas was extremely limited. UNICEF nevertheless launched or supported research initiatives aimed at understanding current social protection systems and informing future programme planning. These included the assessment of the Social Welfare Fund (SWF); assessment of social cash transfer payment agencies and payment modalities; and assessment of social protection systems.

ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

This project builds on the system strengthening work initiated by UNICEF in pre-crisis times. In 2012-2013, UNICEF Yemen completed the National Social Protection Monitoring Survey, a household longitudinal survey that provided insights into the coping strategies applied by households after the 2011 crisis, and evidence on the targeting and impact of the SWF's cash transfer programme. The survey informed future programming, including in times of conflict. Specifically, the data, along with specific identification and registration exercises, were also partly used for targeting the most vulnerable Muhamasheen communities for the humanitarian cash transfer project launched at the end of 2015. The present initiatives aimed at the poorest and most marginalised are an effort to both support the national systems and promote an equity agenda, even in the humanitarian context of Yemen.

It was necessary to ensure that preconditions for humanitarian cash assistance existed – that needs could be met through cash, that a cash response was accepted by government, that markets were accessible and could effectively respond and that risks of distributing cash (including in a conflict zone) could be mitigated.

The UNICEF programme team also had to be confident that linking to national systems was feasible. Factors considered included political will for such collaboration within the SWF, regulations of the government and of UNICEF's donors, the SWF programme design features, targeting criteria and processes, cash delivery processes, staff capacity, and risks of such an approach given the political context and ongoing conflict. The social policy unit had an existing working

relationship with the SWF, which meant that UNICEF already had a good understanding of the strengths and limitations of these national systems. In a very challenging and restricting context, when access to data and areas/governorates in both the North and South was extremely limited, UNICEF Yemen stilled reach its goal by adopting a dual-focused approach. Firstly, a few research projects in partnership with MoSAL and international and local research institutions were launched to better understand the current social protection systems and to inform the future programme planning and capacity-building efforts. These include the assessment of the Social Welfare Fund (SWF); assessment of social cash transfer payment agencies and payment modalities; and assessment of social protection systems. UNICEF also participated in a joint cash and market working group (CMTWG) market assessment that was completed at the end of 2017.

The team also analysed findings of independent evaluations of the SWF. The pre-existing relationship also meant that there was mutual understanding and trust between UNICEF and the SWF, which speeded up the process of reaching agreements on ways of working and meant that the SWF was more inclined to allow flexibility in precisely how national systems were to be used.

DESIGN

Based on discussions with the SWF, UNICEF decided not to rely on the SWF programme's existing targeting criteria and associated beneficiary lists, given the findings of recent evaluations and since the aim was to target the most-affected marginalised groups: the "Muhamasheen" households who have children. At the onset of the conflict, the Muhamasheen, given their poor-quality dwellings in peripheries of cities, were more vulnerable than the general population (although as the conflict continued, this changed, and all groups were equally vulnerable).

Since UNICEF's programme was conceived independently of the SWF, there was no need to align with or consider the transfer values on the long-term programme. The value of UNICEF's humanitarian CTP was defined according to the humanitarian needs to be met and the income gap that households were facing. This was a collaborative process with other humanitarian agencies implementing CTPs for food and basic needs, through cluster engagement and the informal cash working group.

OPERATIONS

Targeting

The SWF's social welfare officers were trained to implement UNICEF's targeting mechanism, with data management support from UNICEF's implementing partner, Prodigy. In Sana'a City, SWF conducted a mapping survey of all Muhamasheen households within the project zone, from which targeted households were selected for assistance according to the agreed vulnerability criteria. Due to insecurity in Taiz, UNICEF relied on their existing database of Muhamasheen beneficiary households from a 2014 Muhamasheen Communities Outreach Project. UNICEF established a partnership with a local NGO to take on a social accountability, or 'Fourth Party Monitoring' role on the project (see Monitoring and evaluation section below), and they were responsible for verifying that all beneficiaries were included in the database. During implementation, additional eligible households were identified through the project's complaints and appeals process (see Complaints and appeals section below). For non-Muhamasheen households in the three inner city districts affected by the conflict, a new mapping survey was undertaken. A targeting committee was formed including SWF and the Coalition of Taiz Support: 20 NGOs, local council members and imams. Prodigy produced satellite images of the districts and the committee used these to agree on which areas were accessible for a remotely implemented HCTP.

Enrolment

Prodigy led the enrolment process for eligible households, and this did not follow the administrative procedures of the SWF programme but rather used processes that suited the context. To ensure a transparent process in conflict-affected areas where access was restricted, Prodigy's team was accompanied by a member of the Fourth Party Monitoring organisation and the targeting committee. The wife, female household head or primary female care-taker in the household was the named beneficiary. Many Muhamasheen, particularly women, do not have national ID, so a contextually appropriate system for identification of beneficiaries was developed. The payment provider, Amal Bank, conducted household visits to confirm beneficiary identity through one of a range of IDs (e.g. national ID card, passport, family card, voter card, SWF ID or traditional leader/Aqels' attestation²) and photos were taken of the named beneficiary. Prodigy created a specific magnetic identification card for use on the programme, incorporating this biometric data and a unique family code linked to the programme database, to decrease risk of fraud. AMB distributed these to beneficiaries in Taiz. Later in the programme fingerprint recognition was added to this registration data. Use of

such biometric technologies were very beneficial to the programme in the context of the conflict and restricted access.

Community validation of identity was added as a service to ensure that all beneficiaries without access to their identity can have a community-based mechanism validate and provide them with official documentation for use for the emergency cash transfer project and other purposes.

Payment

UNICEF were unable to transfer programme funds to the SWF due to donor restrictions, given the nature of the conflict. It also meant that UNICEF could not transfer donor funds to the national postal service, which is the SWF programme's main payment service provider. UNICEF therefore made use of another of the SWF programme's payment channels, Al Amal Microfinance Bank (AMB), and established a direct agreement with them for disbursing the humanitarian CTP funds to beneficiaries. This involved a detailed assessment of AMB's capacity to deliver the cash transfer. Due to the insecurity and the need for remote management in Taiz, UNICEF's programme and finance teams undertook additional due diligence. This included informal discussion with the Central Bank of Yemen, to confirm the bond to cover any loss of funds due to insecurity, and with other humanitarian agencies such as WFP to understand any risks and mitigation measures.

Working with the SWF programme's existing payment channel avoided the need for UNICEF to spend time and resources establishing new systems and processes. The humanitarian programme benefited from AMB's experience in working with populations excluded from formal financial services, and in taking services to people through a network of outlets. AMB was responsible for cash distribution through their network of mobile banks and money dealers, according to specific standard operating procedures (SOPs). This included preparing cash transfers lists, ensuring liquidity, notifying beneficiaries through SMS and word of mouth through local leaders (Aqels), managing distribution sites, conducting home visits for those unable to attend distributions, and submitting reconciliation reports to UNICEF.

In the context of Taiz and the insecure or blockaded areas, the programme benefited from AMB's experience working in conditions of restricted access. AMB evaluated the payment sites and made changes where necessary in order to reduce risks for staff and beneficiaries. They effectively managed cash distribution in an environment where movement of cash and securing disbursement sites was a challenge. AMB's selection of disbursement sites in Taiz ensured

² The Aqel/Aqil is a dignitary who resides in each neighbourhood and is normally associated with security. Aqel's attestation is an accepted mechanism locally according to Yemen's Election Law 13 for the year 2001.

safe movement between communities and the disbursement sites. Sites also only served communities under the control of one of the warring parties. AMB's extensive network of outlets and agents ensured liquidity even during the blockade. In areas of Taiz where money exchangers did not exist, AMB leveraged other distribution sites, such as local grocery stores.

Considering the emergency context in Yemen and the urgent requirement to implement the Emergency Cash Transfer Project (ECTP) while ensuring efficiency during procurement and contracting processes, UNICEF set up a Project Management Unit (PMU) that worked in consultation with MENARO, DFAM, Legal office and Supply Division Contracting unit to support the fast tracking of the sourcing, bidding, technical review and the award of contracts. With such dynamics, the Unit managed to establish high value contracts within a month, integrating new specific contractual elements including data security and protection measures for project information and personal data of ECTP beneficiaries, fraud management and communication.

There were challenges in implementation and lessons learned were used to define a stronger outreach mechanism, introduce e-payments and ensure access for all 1.5 million beneficiary cases.

Complaints response

In Yemen, the complaints response mechanism for the SWF programme was not functioning well, so UNICEF developed a new mechanism to address problems and grievances arising from the humanitarian CTP, with defined operating procedures. A committee for handling complaints and appeals was established between all project parties. The SWF's social welfare officers were trained in how to implement the complaints mechanism, and the process was managed by SWF Director Generals in the project locations. In Taiz, Fourth Party Monitors assumed day to day management of the complaints process at field level, logging complaints for SWF staff to remotely address. The complaints mechanism incorporated both face-to-face and hotline communication channels. These were managed by the SWF, with oversight by Prodigy and the Fourth Party Monitors. Face to face contact with SWF staff was popular with beneficiaries in Sana'a, while the hotlines were more accessible to communities in Taiz. Extensive communication with beneficiaries about the hotlines, undertaken by the Fourth Party Monitors, was important for this uptake.

A grievances redressal mechanism was accessible both at project sites and through a call centre to file beneficiaries' complaints and answer their queries. UNICEF also introduced changes to the monitoring of the programme: a neutral civil society organisation accepted by all parties was selected to become responsible for monitoring the cash disbursement process and its compliance with project rules and procedures, undertaking additional post-distribution

monitoring to triangulate findings from the third-party monitor, raise awareness of the complaints hotline, and verify appeals against exclusion. Technical working committees at both field and central level served as platforms for coordination and decision-making.

Systems and institutions

The SWF institutions existed across the country. UNICEF's programme built on this national institutional capacity and used the trained social welfare officers (SWOs) to implement aspects of the humanitarian CTP including identifying eligible households, communication with communities and complaints handling. SWOs were trained to implement the targeting and complaints response mechanisms, with data management support from UNICEF's implementing partner. The SWF covered the salaries of the SWOs and UNICEF covered their operational expenses.

The partnership with SWF proved important for community coordination and conflict mediation. In the early stages of the programme, non-beneficiaries were very vocal in complaining about their exclusion. Community leaders also complained about their lack of involvement in the targeting process. SWF staff were known to and trusted by communities, local authorities, councils and security forces; their role in community communication on the humanitarian CTP was crucial to secure acceptance of the programme among tribal groups and to secure access by security forces. Managing this without involvement of the social welfare officers would have been difficult for UNICEF.

UNICEF built the capacity of social welfare officers in data collection, targeting and complaints management. As of 2017 the SWF programme was still not operational, however this capacity building meant that SWF staff and institutions were being engaged by other humanitarian actors to support implementation of their programmes.

In the emergency cash transfer project, training was conducted for staff of the private sector companies with more than 82 master trainers trained (all Yemenis) and step-down training conducted for more than 2 400 staff (all Yemenis).

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Prodigy's independent monitors conducted monthly visits to a sample of distribution sites to assess the quality and effectiveness of the cash distribution and the impact of the programme on beneficiaries and children. In Sana'a monitoring activities were conducted with SWF staff; in Taiz, Prodigy worked alone due to the political nature of the conflict which meant it was necessary to limit involvement of the SWF at field level.

In Taiz UNICEF worked with another partner organisation responsible for social accountability – effectively another layer of 'fourth party monitoring', since UNICEF did not have direct oversight of activities. They

were responsible for monitoring the cash disbursement process, undertaking additional PDM to triangulate findings from Prodigy, and verifying appeals against exclusion. Whilst it took considerable time (over four months) to recruit and train the social accountability institution, being a new area for UNICEF, this effectively filled gaps in programme oversight. It reduced the risk of fraud, coercion or errors by programme implementers, increased their incentive to perform and allowed for better interpretation of monitoring data.

The ECTP had access to real-time reporting on people paid through integration of the dashboard of the private sector organisations to monitor progress against targets at national and governorate levels. SharePoint tools were customised, including creation of an automated risks and opportunities register, issues and good practices log, action tracker, and a Notes for the Record, Exceptions and Deviations log. RapidPro was set to allow real-time reporting of issues at project sites during the second payment. RapidPro was also used to reach out to beneficiaries who submitted grievances.

Sources: European Commission (2018 - internal data bases);

Smith (2017a) 'Linking Humanitarian Cash Transfers with National Social Protection Systems in the MENA Region', a lessons learned case study for UNICEF; Smith (2017b) 'Use of Cash in Conflict-Affected Areas in the MENA Region – Example of Yemen', a lessons learned case study for UNICEF; IPC (2014) 'Yemen National Social Protection Monitoring Survey 2012-2013: Final Report', International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, UNDP and UNICEF

UNICEF, Annual Report 2015- Yemen



Contact information

European Commission

International Cooperation and Development
Rue de la Loi 41 - B-1049 Brussels
Fax: +32 (0)2 299 64 07
E-mail: uropeaid-info@ec.europa.eu