European Commission

Summary

Reference document

Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises

SPaN
Supporting people through crisis

Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus

DEVCO
ECHO
NEAR

The reference document and summary were produced as parts of the European Commission's "Guidance Package on Social protection across the humanitarian-development Nexus (SPaN)". It is a common product 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).

1. Introduction

Humanitarian crises are becoming more frequent, severe, complex and protracted. Displacement is occurring on an unprecedented scale. As a result, humanitarian response capacity is stretched while the funding gap is widening. There is increasing recognition that alternative approaches are needed.

Over the past few years, international commitments have created closer links between humanitarian and development programming. These include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit Grand Bargain commitments, the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, and the 2017 New European Consensus on Development.

Emerging experience shows that social protection systems and approaches have considerable potential to bridge the humanitarian-development divide. There is now a clear international consensus to work towards maximising the use of social protection in fragile, conflict and displacement contexts to provide more effective, efficient and sustainable responses to affected populations.

This note provides a brief overview of working with social protection in fragile, conflict and displacement situations from both a humanitarian and development perspective. It is based on the EC Reference Document "Social Protection Across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises" and is intended as an introduction to the topic and gateway to further resources.

2. Complementarities between humanitarian and social protection approaches

There is increasing recognition of the convergence in approaches between assistance provided during crises and social protection approaches in stable situations. For example, with regards to timing, the distinction between short-term emergency response and long-term development is becoming less clear-cut as humanitarian interventions are increasingly established for longer periods of time. Humanitarian and social protection objectives are also increasingly aligned, as illustrated in Figure 1.

There are also similarities between the operational instruments used by development and humanitarian practitioners in fragile, conflict affected and displacement situations. The clearest overlap, and where most of the evidence to date is based, concerns cash transfers. These form the core of most social protection systems and are increasingly used in humanitarian response. However, public works, vocational skills training, subsidised insurance products and protection services are delivered through both social protection systems and humanitarian assistance. Approaches towards working with government are also becoming less distinct as there is growing recognition that the humanitarian principle of independence does not necessarily preclude working with government and government systems.

Figure 1: Convergence of humanitarian and social protection objectives

Humanitarian objectives	...maps to...	Social protection objectives
Keep people alive	⟷	Protect people through life-course
Alleviate suffering	⟷	Protect from poverty
Maintain human dignity	⟷	Promote human dignity
Provide basic needs	⟷	Support livelihoods
Provide basic social services	⟷	Support access to social services
Provide child and family services	⟷	Support child and family services
Provide labour opportunities	⟷	Support access to labour markets

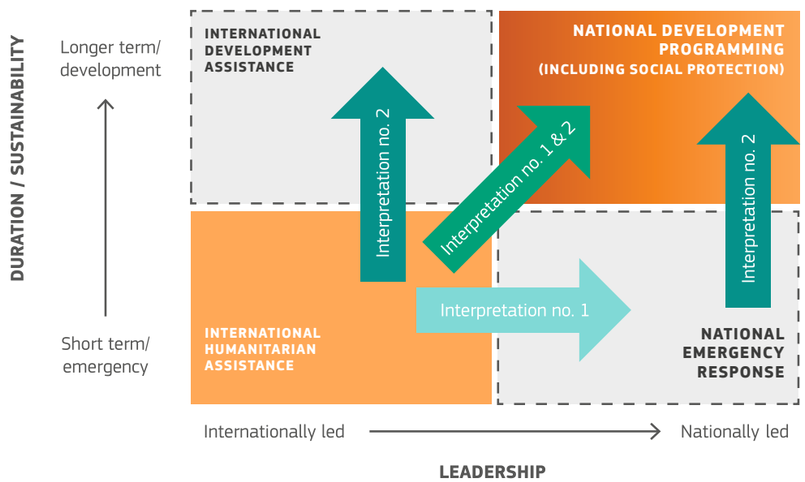
Box 1 Why work with social protection in fragile, conflict and displacement contexts?

Working with social protection in crisis contexts can contribute to greater effectiveness, efficiency and suitability.

For example:

- Reducing response times: Working with social protection programmes or systems (e.g. existing beneficiary lists or payment mechanisms) can enable a rapid delivery of assistance.Avoiding duplication: Working with existing systems can reduce overlaps between agencies responding to a crisis and streamline support to beneficiaries.
- Strengthening national systems: For example, through building the capacities of social protection staff or strengthening household registries as part of a humanitarian intervention.
- Offering choice and dignity: People may derive a greater sense of dignity and control by receiving predictable support through established, systematised (often cash-based) channels.
- Supporting local economies: Using regular, predictable cash-based responses supports local markets, jobs and incomes extending economic benefits to others including host communities.
- Offering a progressive exit strategy: A smoother transition between assistance in normal times and during a crisis may be achieved, for example, by bolstering the role of national governments in the immediate aftermath and in longer-term recovery.
- Supporting sustainability of impacts and enhancing Value for Money: The effectiveness and efficiencies brought about by the above benefits can contribute to achieving greater Value for Money.

Depending on the context, bridging humanitarian assistance and social protection can be ensured in different ways, as illustrated in the following scheme:



Source: Gentilini, Ugo / Laughton, Sarah / O'Brien, Clare (2018) *Human(itarian) Capital? Lessons on Better Connecting Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection, Social Protection & Jobs Discussion Paper No. 1802, WFP / WB.*

Social protection and humanitarian actors
Monique Pariat, Director-General, DG ECHO
https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/articles/social-protection-and-humanitarian-actors-qa-monique-pariat-director-general-echo

Social protection as an instrument for emergency contexts
Jean-Louis Ville, former acting Director of People and Peace Directorate, DG DEVCO
https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/node/119144_fi

Beyond cash transfers: Social protection in fragile contexts
https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/articles/beyond-cash-transfers-social-protection-fragile-contexts

What role can social protection systems play in responding to humanitarian emergencies?
Duration: 00:04:06
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=dHl38bb_cjs

3. What does working with social protection in fragile, conflict and displacement contexts look like?

Global experiences of working with social protection in response to crises have been organised into a typology, summarised in Table 1. The choice of approach will be influenced by, amongst others, the nature of the shock, the extent of the vulnerability, and the maturity of the underlying social protection system. The more mature a social protection system is ex-ante, the better able it will be to contribute to crisis response.

Table 1 Social protection in humanitarian contexts: A typology of experiences to date

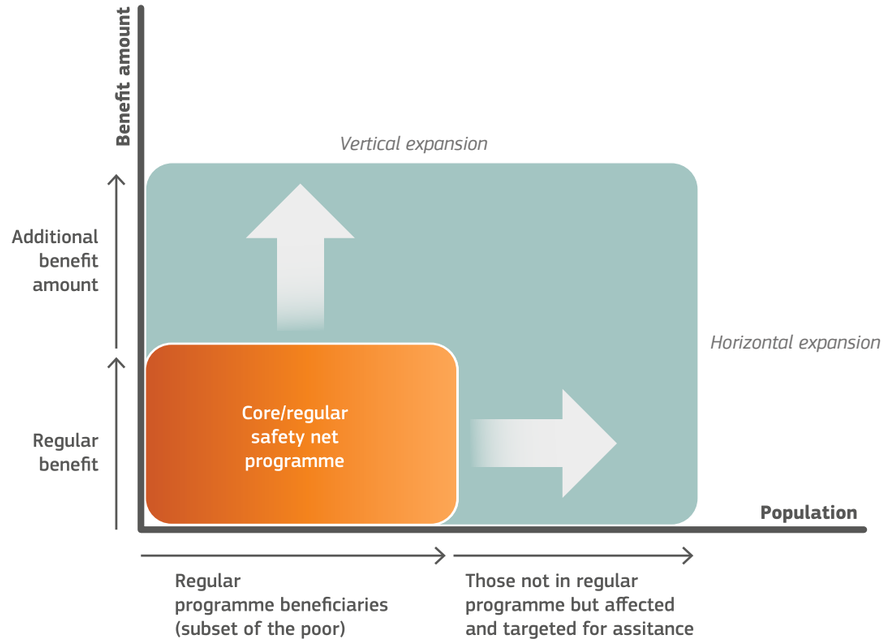
Response Approach	Description
Design tweaks	The design of social protection programmes and systems can be adjusted in a way that takes into consideration the crises that a country typically faces. These are adjustments to a routine social protection programme to maintain the regular service in a disaster. This may include: Waived conditionality in a calamity. Adjust delivery schedule before the dry season or flooding season. Fee waiver of social security contributions such as unemployment or health insurance.
Piggy-backing	A social protection programme's administrative system can be used to respond to a disaster, but the response itself is managed separately from the social protection programme. This may include: Using the social protection programme's beneficiary list, payment mechanisms or staff to provide humanitarian assistance.
Vertical expansion	A social protection programme can temporarily increase the benefit value or duration of benefits provided through an existing programme, for all or some of the existing beneficiaries. This may include: Adjustment of transfer amounts. Introduction of extraordinary payments or transfers.
Horizontal expansion	Programmes can temporarily include new, disaster-affected beneficiaries in an existing social protection programme. This may include: Extension of the geographical coverage of an existing programme. Include more people in the same geographical area. Relaxation of requirements/conditionalities to facilitate participation.
Alignment	Emergency responses can be designed to align with another, actual or future, social protection programme or system, for example, in contexts where social protection systems are nascent.

For a selection of case studies which illustrate a range of experiences to date, see the EC reference document on which this overview is based:

"Social Protection Across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises", European Commission, 2018, [insert link]

Practitioners should bear in mind that the approaches presented above are not exhaustive, prescriptive or mutually exclusive. New, innovative approaches may be identified, and a combination of approaches is also common as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Programme scalability to enable responsiveness to shocks



Most experience to date of working with social protection in fragile, conflict and displacement settings is on working with social assistance (often cash based). However other social protection instruments such as social insurance, active labour market programmes and, to a lesser degree, social care services have also been used to respond to emergencies.

In all instances an assessment of options must be made against the anticipated benefits and risks of continuing with stand-alone humanitarian response. Practitioners should be confident that a social protection-oriented response is overall, on balance, at least equivalent to, and not worse than, working through a stand-alone humanitarian response. The most appropriate approach may be to focus on strengthening the basic social protection (or DRM) system to increase coverage, address poverty and vulnerability and build household resilience before a crisis. Providing assistance through social protection systems will also only represent one element of an emergency response. Other responses will also be required to address the needs of affected populations.

A response analysis tool is offered in Table 2. It is a work in progress and is intended to inform decision-making; it is not a decision tree. Depending on the context, different criteria or a different weighting of criteria may also be appropriate, which need to be adjusted to specific country cases at a specific time.

Table 2 Assessing Response Options
Note: Scoring system: high = 3; medium = 2; low = 1; negligible = 0; detrimental = -1

Value	Criteria	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4	OPTION 5	OPTION 6	OPTION 7
		Status quo	Stand-alone but aligns with existing or potential future SP programme	Work with existing prog. to increase benefit value or duration	Work with existing prog. to add new people	Use elements of an existing prog. or system	Adjusting the design of routine SP prog.	Hybrid / new / alternative approach
Meeting needs	Anticipated impact							
	Appropriateness of targeting compared to identified target group							
	Adequacy of support							
	Relevance/ appropriateness of nature of support							
Coverage	Level of coverage							
Timeliness	Speed of response							
Predictability	Predictability of funding to agencies							
	Predictability of support to households							
Duplication of delivery systems and processes	Extent to which it supports/ enables coordination with government and long-term development actors							
	Level of harmonisation with existing systems							
Sustainability	Extent of government or long-term development partner organisational capacity building							
	Extent to which embedded in government systems							
TOTAL								

Source: Authors, building on Eugene Bardach (2012) and O'Brien et al. (2018c).

4. Key features of social protection responses in fragile, conflict affected and displacement contexts

Recent experiences suggest several features of interventions that enable social protection and humanitarian responses to work together for common programming.

Feature	Description	Illustrative Do's and Don'ts
Design		
Preparedness	In stable times, developing new, or extending existing, social protection programmes or investing in systems, processes and institutions is intrinsically worthwhile, and an important means of building capacity to cope with the effects of generalised shocks.	• Work together on scenario and preparedness planning. • Put in place coordination mechanisms ex-ante.- Identify any changes to be made to SP programmes ex-ante to better respond to crises.
Joint vision, complementary objectives, multi-year programmes	As humanitarian situations become more regular and protracted, developing a shared long-term vision and priority common goals to inform multi-year programming is essential.	• Work in partnership with the government where feasible and appropriate. • Clarify the risks to be covered and who will pay.
Compromise	Key design decisions in social protection and humanitarian programmes are made based on different priorities. Compromise is essential, between ideal technical approaches and what is appropriate, feasible and affordable from a long-term and government ownership perspective.	• Ensure decisions are made jointly and transparently. • Don't get caught up in the quest for technical perfection.
People at the centre	This encourages agencies to think about how people, including host communities, can most easily and continuously receive support during fluctuating periods of stability or fragility regardless of the context, institutional mandate or delivery mechanisms of individual agencies.	• Agree how agencies can complement each other's interventions providing a seamless transition of support.
Operations		
Realism, flexibility, simplicity	The more complex and multi-dimensional an intervention is, the less likely it is to realise its objectives; be applicable at scale, or be sustained through government systems.	• Review government capacity to ensure operational collaboration is possible.
Synergies and linkages	The provision of cash (or in-kind transfers) together with other interventions leads to improved household-level impacts compared to cash alone.	• Understand the additional needs of crisis affected populations. • In protracted humanitarian situations consider interventions that offer sequential pathways between services.

Stakeholders		
Political will	Political will is critical in interventions that enable social protection and humanitarian responses in fragile, conflict affected and displacement contexts to work together for common programming.	• Agree as much as possible before a crisis hits, recognising that in fragile and conflict affected states incentives may be different to more stable contexts.
Engaged government	Engaging with government early in a humanitarian response and, where possible, at all stages of the project cycle, will strengthen its ownership beyond an acute response phase.	• Invest in relationships with government departments during periods of stability.
Financing features		
Sustainable resources	Effective risk financing strategies and coordination of financing instruments between development programmes and humanitarian financing make common programming a reality.	• Support governments to develop financing strategies which 'layer' the levels of risk and associated financing instruments depending on severity / cost.
Available resources	Clear definitions of 'shocks', acceptance of risk by stakeholders and agreed thresholds of risk are pre-conditions to having financing available when needed.	• Identify legal & administrative blockages that would restrict financing to joint programmes.
Principles of engagement		
Do no harm	This includes, for example, ensuring initiatives do not damage the underlying social protection system (e.g. placing excessive pressure on front-line staff). Beneficiaries should also not be worse off from receiving emergency support through a regular SP system than through a stand-alone intervention.	• Consider and mitigate potential risks of working with SP programmes and systems compared to stand alone humanitarian response.
Evidence-based programming	More needs to be understood about exactly how to effectively work with social protection in contexts of conflict, fragility and forced displacement. Jointly agree indicators and evidence generation methods from the outset.	• Push for transparency in data sharing between all actors.

World Bank (2018) The State of Social Safety Nets 2018, World Bank Group, Washington DC, USA.

Resilient social protection:
Stefan Dercon keynote speech:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SjcYMJB99A
Duration: 00:50:07

Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research: Synthesis Report, O'Brien et. al., 2018,
https://www.opml.co.uk/files/Publications/a0408-shock-responsive-social-protection-systems/srsp-synthesis-report.pdf?noredirect=1

Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Toolkit: Appraising the use of social protection in addressing large-scale shocks
O'Brien et al. 2018
https://www.opml.co.uk/files/Publications/a0408-shock-responsive-social-protection-systems/sr-sp-toolkit.pdf

5. Outstanding Questions

Though experiences to date are promising, this topic is relatively new and as such key questions remain unanswered. Much of the evidence to date is from relatively stable countries prone to natural disasters. Gathering reliable data in conflict, fragile and displacement contexts is challenging, yet the urgent need to invest in quality monitoring and evaluation demands that an evidence generation strategy is considered from the outset.

Key questions include:

> Analysing what works, in which contexts and why.Comparing social protection-focused interventions to stand-alone humanitarian responses.Assessing social protection instruments beyond social assistance.Understanding how political economy influences options and outcomes.Reviewing the range of financial instruments available for common programming.Understanding whether and how social protection can address conflict and fragility and support state building.

> Assessing how social protection affects decisions to migrate and to return.

Generating evidence in fragile settings
https://www.unicef-irc.org/video/?videoId=8M9sUZm42Wo
Duration: 00:03:33

For further information and support see the EC Reference Document on which this overview is based: "Social Protection Across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises".

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