

H-Seminar workshop: Humanitarian cash & Social protection

A new area of work for humanitarians

- Engagement with Social protection has traditionally been the space of development actors¹ and it is the responsibility of Governments, thereby it is new for humanitarians to have a clear added-value.
- Within SDC it is new for both the humanitarian and the development arms. SDC Management has approved its first issue paper on Social Protection, produced by Humanitarian Aid together with the South Cooperation, on 20 March 2017, the day prior to this workshop. It calls for more investment in Social Protection and for the identification of joint projects between domains.
- The increasing interest from humanitarians globally, noted during the World Humanitarian Summit and other recent global processes, comes from a reflection by large humanitarian actors such as WFP on how to remain relevant in Middle Income Countries (MICs) where the Governments are leading responses and require technical assistance rather than standalone interventions by humanitarians.

Cash as one of the vehicles to make the link

Cash transfers are showing to be an effective entry point for humanitarians to link their work with existing or emerging social protection. Indeed, over the last 20 years, the use of cash transfers² has expanded at large scale both in i) social protection programmes of MICs, and gradually in some Lower Income countries as well, and in ii) humanitarian responses globally. Humanitarian experience in the use of the transfer modality for emergencies is one of the elements that can thus be beneficial to existing or emerging social protection programmes and safety nets.

Concrete role for humanitarians

Humanitarian actors can leverage their operational experience in social protection by:

- **Using existing social protection programmes to respond to emergencies** e.g. WFP channeling cash through the 4Ps national programme in response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2014, or UNICEF doing the same in Nepal after the earthquake in 2015, were some of the first best practices.
- **Contribute to:**
 - **Strengthening the social protection programmes** – 1) adding a shock responsive component so the systems can become flexible enough for use in emergencies e.g. in the Fiji in response to Cyclone Winston, 2) reinforcing specific parts of it such as beneficiary registration, management of the database, the transfer mechanisms, the monitoring, or others e.g. India asked WFP for technical assistance in a shift from providing in-kind food to cash in its largest social protection programme to 870 million beneficiaries.
 - **Supporting emerging social protection programmes** - where the national Governments don't have programmes in place, humanitarian can pilot safety nets that could be replicated fully or partly by national Governments or provide technical assistance for them to develop ones e.g. WFP in Myanmar.
- **Facilitate knowledge sharing and build key partnership:** 1) within a country: ensure actors from both sides communicate and share best practices, including line ministries/Government bodies, 2) between countries e.g. promote south to south exchanges. Key partnerships can include ones between humanitarian and development actors, with the private sector, universities, and others as relevant.

Linking humanitarian work to social protection may entail risks. These may include divergences between political motives and humanitarian principles, possible exclusion of affected persons outside the programmes, misunderstanding from the regular social assistance recipients, or delays due to not owning the system.

Investment by SDC/HA

On the Humanitarian side, a current investment is the strategic secondment of Louis Rovira to WFP Asia and the Pacific which directly supports the positioning of the largest operational humanitarian agency on Social Protection. He is designing the agency's first regional position on Social Protection which will then lead to the finalization of the first corporate strategy. He is the first person dedicated to work exclusively on this within WFP highlighting SDC/HA's added value in supporting innovative work. Possibilities for other future investment could include the building of more skills within the SHA pool in Social Protection, considering secondments directly to Governments, implementing joint projects in the field with SDC Development and other actors. The discussion is only starting.

¹ It features strongly on the agendas of the World Bank, ILO, UNICEF, as well as donors such as DFID, Australian DFAT, and German BMZ.

² Conditional or unconditional transfers have been used depending on programme objectives.