BETTER ASSISTANCE IN CRISES RESEARCH

Shock-responsive social protection: what is known about what works in fragile and conflict-affected situations?

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Summary

While shock-responsive social protection (SRSP) has become popular in global and national development discourses, its operationalisation in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) remains more limited, yet it is arguably here where it could meaningfully contribute to wider nexus approaches. By exploring experiences in a range of countries, the paper explores what is known about the use of SRSP in FCAS, and identifies further areas of potential research for the BASIC Research programme. It also assesses the state of knowledge regarding a number of key questions being raised among stakeholders, namely: What is known about navigating the ethical and political dilemmas around attempting SRSP in FCAS? What is known about the specific requirements for displaced populations and other excluded or vulnerable groups? What is known about when it might be ill-advised to attempt SRSP in FCAS?

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1. Introduction

A combination of factors has highlighted the need for greater collaboration between humanitarian, development, peace, and security actors to work more closely together. These factors include:

- A growing number of countries are affected by multiple interconnected and compounding crises, such as conflict, climate- and weather-induced disasters, and forced displacement. The number and intensity of humanitarian crises are changing and rising. In turn, compounding crises can weaken the capacity of the state to function and provide essential services to its population, catalysing pre-existing tensions that can generate social unrest.
- Forced displacement is at record levels, with huge impacts on peace-building and sustainable development. By the end of 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recorded a record 79.5 million forcibly displaced people, of which nearly four out of five have been displaced for at least five years (UNHCR 2020).[1] In 2016, 24.2 million people in 118 countries were newly displaced due to fast-onset natural hazards (IDMC 2019).
- Humanitarian financial requirements have steadily increased. Between 2010 and 2019, humanitarian appeals increased 135 per cent from US$12.9bn to US$30.4bn.[2] Crises have become protracted and multi-annual (Development Initiatives 2017), yet humanitarian funding often remains short term.

In the face of shocks that are recurrent, predictable, interrelated, and multi-annual in nature,[3] the international community is increasingly looking to new ways of working (OCHA 2012) to address multi-dimensional risk in a more sustainable and integrated manner. Discussion on ways of doing so includes making social protection systems more shock responsive and adaptive, and improving the links between humanitarian assistance and social protection.

While the shock-responsive social protection (SRSP) agenda has gained traction and produced multiple initiatives in a diversity of contexts, less is known about its success and applicability in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS).[4] This is despite the fact that conflicts drive 80 per cent of all humanitarian needs (World Bank 2020a). Some progress is being made, however, and case study evidence is emerging (Cherrier et al. 2019; Longhurst *et al*. 2020c; Smith and Bowen 2020).

This paper seeks to map the varied landscapes of SRSP in a range of FCAS and identify the knowledge gaps that undermine progress towards more routine, effective, and efficient delivery. It does so by attempting not to simply look at specific elements of the shock-responsive social protection system in a technical and siloed way, but rather considers the overall landscape(s) of programming to identify combinations of features, challenges, and opportunities in particular contexts. In addition to understanding issues related to individual technical parts of the system, or specific political economy or exclusion dynamics, the logic of this analysis is that it is also important to get a sense of how these pieces come together. This is especially the case in terms of better understanding the patterns, approaches, coverage, and effectiveness of SRSP. Mapping the broader landscape(s) of SRSP and how various parts of the system intersect and interplay with one another allows a more nuanced and connected view of what the major knowledge gaps are. If these gaps are filled, this could contribute to better assistance in crisis situations.

The paper explores these landscapes of SRSP in FCAS in two primary ways. First, it focuses on the policies, initiatives, knowledge, and choices of international actors. Examples of government-led SRSP are included but these are relatively rare, given the impacts of violent conflict on state capacity and the fact that fragility is often characterised by lack of government capacity to deliver public goods and services such as social

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[1] More than two-thirds (68 per cent) of the 26 million refugees worldwide come from just five countries (UNHCR 2020).

[2] The increase between 2007 and 2019 is even steeper, at 452 per cent.

[3] Especially those related to natural hazards, environmental degradation, and seasonal factors such as food insecurity, which are also important factors driving conflict and displacement.

[4] The focus of the paper is on FCAS. This terminology was used at the outset of the BASIC Research inception phase and was used for the literature searches. During the inception phase, the term 'protracted crises' has largely replaced FCAS in the BASIC Research forward agenda, but it remains here so as to be consistent about the terminology used in the course of this research.

protection. Furthermore, given the aim to map the landscape(s) – and not focus on individual elements of the system – it seems useful to step back and get a broader system-wide view of SRSP in FCAS. Starting from a government viewpoint risks not capturing the wider policies and practices that form part of the overall system.

Second, the paper focuses on SRSP as a response to the impacts of conflict (for example, shock-responsive social protection for displaced people) rather than on SRSP in response to climate shocks. This is because there is already a growing evidence base on SRSP in response to climate shocks, with far less known about both using SRSP to respond to impacts of conflicts or using SRSP to respond to climate shocks in situations where delivery is impeded by violent conflict and/or fragility. While the Syrian refugee crisis has certainly put SRSP in response to displacement on the agenda, and this has spread beyond countries receiving Syrian refugees (including Yemen and Nigeria), there is still far less knowledge about how to fine-tune SRSP for objectives beyond responding to climate shocks.

It is not possible in this paper to cover all possible angles or configurations of elements of the SRSP system. There are, however, a number of other papers from across the BASIC Research inception phase that cover specific complementary elements of the SRSP system in much more detail (including targeting, coordination/capacities, financing, and value for money [VfM]) and explore specific contexts in which SRSP is delivered (displacement, climate resilience, marginalised groups/inclusion). The papers covering how government-led social protection is sustained and what is known about capacities for delivering social assistance in crisis situations capture many of the important questions about government roles – in both regular social protection systems and shock-responsive elements of those government systems. Taken together, the full set of papers aims to provide both the required granular examination of SRSP systems elements and a sense of how these elements fall into place in a number of different contexts, and to identify knowledge gaps that emerge from both views.

The key research questions explored in this paper are:

• What is known about where, when, how, and why shock-responsive social protection is delivered in FCAS?
• What gaps are there in the knowledge agenda that deserve further attention and research?

The paper is divided into four sections: (1) Overview (including an introduction, definitions, and a proposed methodology for ranking and comparing countries); (2) Mapping the SRSP efforts undertaken in BASIC Research countries of interest; (3) Summary of key lessons learned about what does and does not work in term of doing SRSP in FCAS; and (4) Further considerations for BASIC Research.

2. Definitions and methods

2.1. Definitions

BASIC Research focuses on social assistance rather than (shock-responsive) social protection, so a note about the use of terminology is useful here. Across BASIC Research, we refer to social assistance programmes as those encompassing social transfers, public works, fee waivers, and subsidies. The programmes are often directed and coordinated by national governments. In areas of protracted crisis and conflict, social assistance also generally encompasses humanitarian assistance, which often uses the same modalities as state-driven social assistance programmes, but usually with greater emphasis on social transfers rather than other mechanisms such as subsidies or waivers (Slater and Sabates-Wheeler 2021).

In this paper, however, we follow the broader literature and refer to (shock-responsive) social protection rather than social assistance. In practice, most literature on SRSP predominantly covers social transfers so there is no inconsistency in the types of programmes this paper considers. As such, we define the term 'SRSP' as 'the adaptation of social protection programmes and systems to address large scale shocks, and/or connecting more coherently with other sectors to do so' (O'Brien *et al*. 2018b: 7).

In terms of FCAS, BASIC Research draws on the World Bank categorisation of FCAS for low- and middle-income countries based on its Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA), and published annually in its *Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations* (World Bank, 2021b). The World Bank

categorisation distinguishes between countries with high- and medium-intensity conflict, and those with high institutional and social fragility. Sometimes, countries can have combinations of these factors, as they often intersect. From this broader list, BASIC Research has identified a list of countries that are of particular interest to the research, including: DRC, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen.

2.2. Methodology

The literature upon which this report is based is drawn from two sources: (1) the personal libraries of the authors (published and grey literature on shock-responsive social protection); and (2) a set of literature searches using SCOPUS, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Key words used in the literature searches include: "shock responsive social protection" (OR "shock response*" AND "cash transfer*"), WITH "conflict", "fragile*", "humanitarian", and "emergency". A further search was conducted for "shock responsive social protection" and specific country names. SCOPUS and Web of Science (i.e. bibliographic databases of academic, peer reviewed publications, mainly journal articles and book chapters) produced no results for the combined searches and only three results for "shock responsive social protection". The Google Scholar search identified 189 results, which was reduced to 47 following screening. The majority of these were already in the personal libraries of the authors.

Those results that made it through the screening process were grey literature, especially research and policy analysis commissioned by international agencies, and some agency policy documents. Screening often removed documents focused on intra-household conflict (covered in other BASIC Research inception phase theme papers on inclusion). A number of documents that focus on social protection (especially disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration [DDR] programmes) were also removed because the focus of this paper is not post-conflict social protection programmes.

The literature focuses predominantly on international agency activities and initiatives, rather than government-led programmes and systems. Exceptions to this rule include commonly cited examples from conflict-affected parts of the Philippines, Pakistan, and a number of countries in Latin America. Here, the literature is largely about whether social protection can directly reduce conflict, and is focused on community-level effects. Because this is not the focus of this paper, these papers were also subsequently removed from the screened group. Some results were also of limited use. While they were about conflict-affected countries, they had no conflict lens nor did they discuss how the conflict affected capacities to deliver SRSP.

Overall, the relatively small body of literature available as a result of these various searches highlights that evidence on SRSP in FCAS remains limited. This is especially the case in relation to government-led interventions.

3. Summary of SRSP efforts in BASIC countries

There are a number of models for SRSP, but most are based on O'Brien *et al*. (2018a) and comprise:

- **Alignment** – The development of one or more elements of a parallel humanitarian response that aligns as best as possible with those used in a current or possible future social protection programme or DRM (Disaster Risk Management) system. This is distinct from piggybacking on elements of a system, as it uses a parallel infrastructure rather than the same system.
- **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.
- **Horizontal expansion** – The temporary inclusion of new beneficiaries from disaster-affected communities in a social protection programme.
- **Piggybacking** – Use of part of an established system or programme by a new programme response (either by government or partners).
- **Vertical expansion** – The benefit value or the duration of a social protection programme is temporarily increased for some or all beneficiaries.

Recent SRSP discussions at global level have begun to move away from strict categorisations such as the ones above, towards a more nuanced assessment of opportunities to link and align along the delivery chain (Longhurst *et al*. 2020b). Across different countries, though, these categories still act as a useful basis for identifying different combinations of activities that result in the varied patterns or landscapes of SRSP.

Table 3.1 aims to summarise the SRSP efforts of international partners working in the countries of initial interest to the BASIC Research programme; namely, Lebanon, Niger, Nigeria, and Yemen (prioritised countries); and Iraq, Jordan, Mali, and Somalia (long list countries).[5] These countries are set across different geographic regions, face a diversity of different risks, have social protection systems in different stages of development and maturity, and are attempting various SRSP activities. The table demonstrates a range of different contexts that are in some respects unique in terms of the crises faced, geography, constellations of international actors involved in SRSP, national capacity, etc.[6] Nonetheless, several overriding themes emerge with respect to the efforts made by international partners and their host governments to advance SRSP (also noting that some further measures have been employed for Covid-19, not all of which are captured here).

First, **many SRSP efforts in FCAS focus on alignment**. In six out of the eight country cases presented in Table 3.1, alignment is the predominant approach that is used. This is unsurprising, given that social protection systems are nascent or disrupted, and their reach in conflict-affected areas is often limited. Alignment can include: (1) Coordination across different geographic areas to enhance overall coverage; (2) Delivering different forms of assistance to the same household in a complementary manner to improve the adequacy of assistance (e.g. top ups or cash plus); or (3) Humanitarian actors identifying and assisting those people who fall outside of government-led responses (e.g. for refugees or for the Covid-19 response). It can include actual or attempted alignment of technical parameters such as transfer values and modalities (Mali), targeting and registration processes (Iraq), delivery timings and partners (Lebanon), and financing streams (Jordan).

Second, while these efforts all demonstrate leadership by international agencies in providing SRSP, they are all also happening at different speeds, with the **risk of outpacing government**, which may not have the willingness or capacity to follow the same agenda. One significant outstanding question is whether alignment efforts have a longer-term goal to build national social protection systems and move towards government implementation and ownership, or whether this is simply a different way of partnering to address an emergency without a longer-term social protection goal in mind. For example, this was seen in Mali: NGOs provided assistance in the insecure north that was similar (e.g. targeting criteria and transfer value) to the government social protection system in the south. This saw a convergence of elements of programme design and implementation between the national population and refugees.

Third, **piggybacking has also been attempted** in some cases, using parts of a system or programme to help deliver parts or all of another programme. This includes humanitarian actors using a social registry or beneficiary database for their targeting, or social protection actors using elements of humanitarian assistance delivery architecture to deliver social protection assistance during an emergency. It can also include integrating the tools, capacity, and expertise from one approach into another to make it more shock responsive, as can be seen in Yemen, Iraq, and Niger.

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[5] According to the 2021 World Bank Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (World Bank, 2021b), the BASIC Research countries identified above are described as follows: Somalia (High-Intensity Conflict); Lebanon, Iraq, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Yemen (Medium-Intensity Conflict); Lebanon (High Institutional and Social Fragility); and Jordan (unlisted).

[6] The ways in which politics and power dynamics influence responses are explored in more detail in Lind (2021).

Table 3.1: Summary of country efforts around SRSP

Country	Emergency context[7]	Main international actors working on SRSP	Social protection context	Approach to SRSP
PRIORITISED BASIC RESEARCH COUNTRIES				
Lebanon	Current programming reflects the refugee crisis and, to some extent, Covid-19, but political and economic crises are a growing influence on SRSP approach, with questions about accountability in particular	World Food Programme (WFP) UNICEF UNHCR World Bank CAMEALEON (NGO consortium[8])	Emerging social protection system: National Poverty Targeted Programme (NPTP) is the flagship safety net (includes small voucher component)	Alignment of emergency response and longer-term programming: convergence in elements of programme design and implementation for the national population and for refugees. Since 2015, multiple refugee programmes consolidated into two for food and basic needs, jointly delivered by WFP and UNHCR, implemented through a Common Card facility managed by WFP, and a common targeting approach managed by UNHCR. International partners aligning humanitarian cash and voucher assistance with the national social protection system for citizens through targeting of food vouchers to vulnerable Lebanese using the National Poverty Targeting Programme (a proxy means test), provided by WFP and funded by the World Bank, reaching 10,000 households in 2017. The transfer values between refugees and NPTP voucher recipients are aligned. Donors are a key player, driving a cohesive policy dialogue. CAMEALEON, an NGO consortium, has assumed an independent monitoring, accountability, and learning role for the programme. Hezbollah play an important role in managing and distributing assistance in many areas (CaLP 2020).
Niger	Conflict/ seasonal food insecurity/ Covid-19	WFP UNICEF World Bank	Pre-existing social protection system, reasonable institutionalisation, limited coverage (esp. in northern and frontier regions), heavily reliant on international funding	Various informal trials to expand national cash transfer programme supported by the World Bank (vertically for floods and horizontally for conflict). World Bank working on extensive Adaptive Social Protection Programme with the government, including efforts to build a social registry, expand and scale cash transfers, and develop objective methods and triggers for scaling responses. WFP and UNICEF working on strengthening social protection systems. WFP, UNICEF, and World Bank increasingly coordinating their interventions to government social protection programmes (e.g. through coordinating programme coverage, discussions around targeting, and designing the social registry). Donors playing a key role in pushing for alignment of international partners with government efforts. Lack of clarity of role of armed groups in managing assistance in insecure areas (Mohamed *et al*. 2021; BMZ 2021; World Bank 2021a).

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[7] In Table 3.1, climate change and climate- and weather-related hazards are considered cross-cutting. Each country is affected by different natural hazards and longer-term climate change effects.

[8] CAMEALEON is co-managed by the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam and Solidarités International, and involves Lebanese and international partners including academia, think tanks and independent research specialists.

Country	Emergency context[7]	Main international actors working on SRSP	Social protection context	Approach to SRSP
Nigeria	Conflict/ Covid-19	WFP UNICEF World Bank Cash Working Group (CWG) Social Protection Working Group	Nascent social protection system with limited national coverage. The National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP) is the main social assistance scheme. Access issues in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states due to conflict. Raising linkage agenda with humanitarian actors	Alignment of social protection actors with national social protection provision for Covid-19. Rapid expansion of the NCTP and creation of Urban Cash Transfer Programme (both for Covid-19). Social protection partners aiming to harmonise targeting and transfer design with the government social protection response. Humanitarian CWG members designed CVA (Cash and Voucher Assistance) programmes separately, according to humanitarian principles and the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB). In some case, the government offers integrated approaches; e.g. block grants and starter packs for small businesses in Borno state (Smith and Ammoun, forthcoming).
Yemen	Conflict/ Famine/ Covid-19	WFP UNICEF World Bank	Previous significant national social protection system; main programmes: Social Welfare Fund (SWF); Social Fund for Development (SFD). Now highly limited due to the conflict.	Provision of services in conflict settings: Humanitarian and development actors leveraging and maintaining parts of pre-existing social protection institutions and practices. Flagship SWF provided cash transfers to over 1.5 million households prior to conflict. In 2015, UNICEF began humanitarian cash programme that piggy-backed on several SWF administrative systems (human resources, payment mechanism). Since 2017, UNICEF and the World Bank have implemented the Emergency Cash Transfer Programme, continuing cash assistance to SWF beneficiaries in the absence of state support (Ghorpade and Ammar 2021).
LONG LIST BASIC COUNTRIES				
Iraq	Internal displacement (and some refugees)/ Covid-19	WFP UNHCR UNICEF CCI (Cash Consortium for Iraq, an INGO group)	Emerging social protection system: Social Protection Network (SPN) is flagship cash transfer programme.	Attempted alignment of emergency response and longer-term programming: discussed transition of emergency IDP (internally displaced person) caseload onto national systems. Trend towards consolidation and harmonisation of cash assistance: the CCI has reviewed its multi-purpose grant targeting model and collaborated with the UNHCR, World Bank, REACH Initiative, and the CWG to develop and test a revised proxy means test for targeting future cash and vouchers to facilitate future transition of eligible households to the national scheme. Since 2018, international partners and the government have been developing a road map for linking CVA and social protection, with a focus on the government-run SPN, supported through joint humanitarian–development Iraq Social Protection Forum (SPF). Donors have emerged as a key player driving coordination, at both operational and policy levels.

Country	Emergency context[7]	Main international actors working on SRSP	Social protection context	Approach to SRSP
Jordan	Refugee crisis/ Covid-19	WFP UNICEF UNHCR World Bank European Union (EU)	Emerging social protection system: National Aid Fund (NAF) is flagship cash transfer programme.	Alignment of emergency response and longer-term programming: intention to transition refugees to national systems. Covid-19 has fast tracked social protection and SRSP expansion. NAF expansion fast tracked by Covid-19, with EU, United States, and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) grants now aligned with World Bank loans to vertically and horizontally expand existing social protection system and develop terms of reference for including SRSP in new social protection policy.[9] UNICEF working with the Central Bank of Jordan to develop the Jordan Mobile Payment Platform, which could provide a scalable payment mechanism. Inclusion and integration of refugees into the national social protection system remains politically sensitive (Smith 2020). One significant SRSP initiative was the government cash transfer response after fuel subsidies ended in 2012, when the Income and Sales Tax Department reached 70 per cent of the population (Tebaldi 2019).
Mali	Conflict/ seasonal food insecurity/ Covid-19	WFP UNICEF World Bank INGO/NGO consortium	Emerging but fragmented social protection system: lack of coverage and control in northern areas; heavy reliance on external funding and delivery capacity.	In 2018, INGO/NGO consortium aligned targeting and transfer values to World Bank-supported national cash transfer programmes in northern states to provide assistance to areas outside government control and build the basis for future extension of government-run safety nets in the future (Cherrier *et al.* 2019). Now, WFP, UNICEF, and World Bank increasingly aligning their efforts to coordinate with national social protection strategy and build SRSP systems. Institutional approach still very fragmented. Lack of clarity on role of armed groups in managing assistance in insecure areas (SPaN 2019).
Somalia	Conflict/ seasonal food insecurity/ Covid-19	WFP World Bank UNICEF NGO Consortia (delivering multi-purpose cash) DG ECHO/DEVCO (Directorate-General European Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations/ (Directorate-General) International Development and Cooperation	Nascent social protection policy (SSPP) and principal World Bank-supported Shock-responsive Safety Net for Human Capital Project (Baxnaano).	Inclusion of SRSP in new social protection policy. Implementation of SRSP pilots in different areas (including Somaliland) for floods and locusts, including vertical scale ups. UNICEF developing the MIS (Management Information Systems) and Unified Social Registry (USR); EWEA (Early Warning Early Action) functioning well. Good overall coordination between social protection and humanitarian assistance actors, but fragmented at field level. Strong informal safety nets (including remittances), as well as clan- and Al-Shabaab-provided basic assistance in many areas.

Source: Table adapted from Smith (2020).

[9] KII with Gabrielle Smith on 19/05/21.

Other trends worth noting include:

- It is only a relatively recent development that social protection has become more prominent in national policy discourses, with some national policies beginning to take up the theme of shock-responsive social protection, including to climate shocks; e.g. Nigeria, Niger, Somalia, and nascent discussions in Jordan.
- There have been some reported attempts to transfer caseloads of displaced people onto national social protection systems or provide equivalence of support (e.g. Iraq and Jordan), but with different challenges relating to residency, nationality, financing, and most importantly, political economy.
- Important roles are being played by non-state (armed and non-armed) groups in managing and distributing assistance in many areas, functioning as the *de facto* state (e.g. Lebanon, Niger, Mali, Somalia), but little is known about how this works, and how different groups, including beneficiaries, view this arrangement *vis-á-vis* the role of the state or other humanitarian actors.
- Covid-19 has added new impetus to SRSP discussions (e.g. in Jordan and the Sahel), but also presents new challenges, such as reaching different demographics in different geographic areas to conventional programmes, and being able to sustain support (for regular and Covid-19 programmes) into the future in the face of possible post-Covid-19 economic contractions in public sector spending.
- in many instances, donors have been instrumental in driving SRSP discussions and pushing for more coordinated engagement between international partners and national governments (see Lebanon, Jordan, Somalia, Yemen, and the Sahel). This is, however, subject to the normal vicissitudes of changing circumstances and personnel; e.g. if there are changes to donor staff or policy, the impetus behind SRSP can fall off the agenda.

These various issues are explored in more detail in section 4.

4. Findings about SRSP from FCAS countries

Based on learning from across contexts, key issues and opportunities arise for implementing SRSP in FCAS, ranging from the big picture to a more technical focus. Here, the focus is on big picture lessons because the complementary BASIC Research papers (e.g. on targeting, digital, and financing) address the lessons that are more technical in nature. Where relevant, country-based examples are provided. Some country-based examples are drawn from contexts outside the eight BASIC countries reviewed in Table 3.1 because they are deemed pertinent.

4.1. What is known about the legal, political and ethical factors around SRSP in FCAS?

The literature suggests that the debate on when and whether to connect humanitarian assistance to social protection reveals deep divides on key issues, especially where government capacity is low, complicity in conflict is high, or where refugees or IDPs represent a sizable share of the population (Seyfert *et al.* 2019). Some of these debates are based on robust evidence. More commonly, however, the positions taken are theory-based or imported from other (different) contexts. They also tend to be based on anecdotal evidence.

Differences in values and ideology, particularly between humanitarian actors and national governments, are frequently cited as limiting shifts from external assistance to government-led functions, and from subjective to objective processes (e.g. automated processes around risk financing and anticipatory action). These shifts also transfer responsibility away from traditional loci of power, and transfer risk and cost from international actors to national actors over time. A common theme in the literature is the problem of aligning humanitarian principles and values with those of governments, especially where governments are viewed as predatory or without legitimacy. The need for humanitarian actors to be wary of aligning with governments and building their capacity is widely noted in the literature – because of the need to preserve humanitarian principles, especially impartiality and neutrality. Beyond identifying this concern, there is in fact very little empirical analysis of exactly how impartiality/partiality or neutrality plays out in practice for SRSP. There is also little empirical evidence providing insights into what could be done to integrate systems and overcome potential contradictory practices.

Similarly, there are concerns that the overall goals of international donors – notably for governments to take increasing responsibility for crisis response – do not align with government preoccupations about fiscal space, or the political ramifications of addressing the needs of refugees above their own citizens. Again, there are many problem statements in the literature, but no identified empirical studies about how to realistically align expectations and objectives for SRSP, and what might be done to increase alignment at a policy and goal level.

The trade-offs (between political priorities, technical criteria, normative principles, and cost) appear poorly understood, especially how they vary across contexts and at different sub-national levels. Active management of such trade-offs is crucial, but appears overlooked. For example, where international agencies propose cost-benefit arguments for SRSP, but do not address political concerns, governments can raise the question: Cost-benefits for whom? Reading across the literature, while noting the potential SRSP brings in terms of supporting government-led approaches to crisis management, the risk identified is that the SRSP agenda, designed above all to expand the use of national social protection systems over time to address covariate shocks, may be increasingly hijacked to expand the agendas and portfolios of international actors without supporting national systems and actors in a meaningful way.

The literature does highlight that many of the issues raised by trying to link humanitarian assistance to social protection are not conducive to technical fixes. Rather, they require an understanding of differing approaches and ways of working, as well as political motivations and incentives. These include coordination (issues of fragmentation by design; perceived loss of influence), financing (who should fund SRSP; who wins and loses through cost-efficiency measures), and ethics (when and whether humanitarian or social protection actors should link emergency responses to government-led social protection systems and programmes based on issues of legality, neutrality, geography, capacity, etc.) (Longhurst *et al*. 2020a).

4.2. What is known about when not to use social protection for shock response?

The existing literature highlights that the rules of engagement in FCAS contexts – in terms of access, ethics, legality, partners, cost, logistics, and timing – are different across contexts. Coverage of the literature, however, does not yet allow a clear articulation of when using social protection for shock response is or is not possible or advisable.

In most countries, eligibility for social protection is still based on citizenship and locality (by requiring proof of both citizenship and principle place of residence in order to access support). Most social protection programmes are also delivered through government systems and staff, whose capacity or legitimacy in FCAS can vary – especially between national, state, and local level (Slater and Mallett 2017). The literature indicates agreement that these factors undermine capacity to address anthropocentric shocks and dynamic situations of displacement through social protection.

In theory, there is broad agreement that linking humanitarian assistance to social protection is as much about sharing roles based on who brings the most added value, as it is social protection taking the lead. There is far less clarity, however, about which types of SRSP are most suitable to respond to a certain shock or caseload. This is due to a host of political, logistical, financial, and ethical reasons. Particularly relevant in FCAS, these reasons can include:[10]

- Risky operating environments;
- Ensuring timely delivery of assistance in life-threatening situations;
- Navigating humanitarian principles;
- Engaging non-state, non-aligned or armed groups (as well as anti-terrorism legislation);
- Questions of government sovereignty, territorial control, and complicity in conflict;
- The views of and interaction with non-state actors;
- Lack of legislation for, or existing legislation that prevents, domestic assistance to non-nationals;
- Low levels of government and decentralised capacity;
- Ensuring transparency and accountability of resource management; and
- Over-committing national governments, both politically and financially.

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[10] In part, this list of reasons is drawn from Seyfert et al. 2019.

There are lessons from other sectors in this regard – for example, from health system operations in FCAS – but their transferability to the social protection sector is not explored in the literature.

As a result of these factors, where examples do exist of social protection being provided in contexts of conflict and forced displacement, delivery is almost always in parallel to government systems. The dearth of evidence or analysis could suggest that decisions to work in parallel are made because they align with received wisdoms about government capacities and ideologies, and their compatibility with the values, systems, and procedures of international actors rather than because, for example, a robust examination of capacities has been carried out. Generally, the global literature on when or whether to consider linking to or using social protection systems in FCAS is scant (from Longhurst *et al*. 2020a).

4.3. What is known about inclusive SRSP?

4.3.1. Addressing (cross-border) displacement

The current evidence on displacement and SRSP focuses predominantly on refugees rather than IDPs (although the latter are discussed in more detail in the BASIC Research inception theme paper on displacement). The legislative landscape around provision of social protection to the forcibly displaced is complex, as the duty of care implicit in social protection either does not extend to non-nationals or assistance is tied to a place of permanent residence. A limited number of low and lower middle-income countries have passed legislation permitting support to non-nationals, in particular for social assistance (although some offer access to contributory social insurance programmes). Where social protection for non-nationals does exist, however, there can be a gap between law and practice. Provision for undocumented migrants or those in transition is even more complex.

The policy and programming literature does include political commitments – such as the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), and the World Bank International Development Association (IDA) refugee sub-window – that may begin to change eligibility for social protection being restricted to citizens. The GCR calls for a multi-stakeholder approach to provide protection and longer-term solutions to refugees worldwide, including easing the pressure on host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, enabling interim legal stay, and supporting the economic and social inclusion of refugees. Some countries are also expanding social protection-style programmes to IDPs and refugees. This is broadly presented by the international community as part of a road map from care and maintenance in camps, to aligned delivery between humanitarian and social protection programmes, towards full integration in national systems, even if certain features and functions remain operationally distinct (Mitchell 2018). International actors play a central role in this process in many FCAS, but as stated above, this is largely done through alignment first and then (slow incremental) steps towards integration.

Assistance to the refugee population in low and lower middle-income countries continues to function predominantly outside the national system. There is some evidence of resentment fuelled among host populations if they feel refugees are prioritised over them, but exactly how this may hinder the long-term social and economic integration of refugees is less well understood. Experiences of modelling approaches closely on national systems yet retaining distinct policy and operational features, such as the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme in Turkey, offers insights for replication, with the caveat that country capacity and resources differ. There is no agreement in the literature about if and when incorporation into national social protection systems becomes permanent, or whether governments should have exit strategies for refugees (into other types of programming) or enable their return, or what those strategies would look like.

It is widely acknowledged in programming literature that displaced people have specific protection needs and face certain barriers that require defining and integrating into any linkage strategy between humanitarian assistance and social protection provision. In the case of harmonising programmatic approaches (i.e. transfer values, social services, or grievance redress), additional wrap-around activities or investments are needed. While typologies of refugee protection issues to address exist,[11] evidence on which combinations of activities should accompany SRSP is not found in the existing body of evidence reviewed.

[11] For example, for Turkey, see Table 9 in:
  https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ESSN%20MTR%20Final%20Report_EN.pdf

Country example: In Mauritania where the social protection system is nascent, various shock-responsive components have been designed in collaboration between social protection and humanitarian assistance actors, including a harmonised questionnaire for joint targeting, joint usage of the national social registry, and the provision seasonal top-ups to recipients of the regular social assistance programme (aligned with the values of the humanitarian response) (WFP 2019). As part of the next round of IDA refugee sub-window financing, the government is also extending social assistance support to its principal refugee camp in the east of the country, supported by UNHCR and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), including a full assessment of refugee protection needs to support the transition from camp-based humanitarian assistance to support through national social protection systems (World Bank 2020b).

Country example: In Kyrgyzstan, the government temporarily waived regulations through a decree that extended the national social assistance programme to displaced citizens in the aftermath of violent ethnic clashes, aided by a systems feasibility study undertaken by UNICEF prior to the crisis (Cherrier *et al*. 2019).

Country example: In Jordan, the use of cash for the humanitarian refugee response has grown rapidly, with a government policy that requires equitable provision of support to both refugees and host populations to lessen tensions with host communities (*ibid*.). Discussions are continuing between the government and international partners to transition refugee support over to national social assistance programmes (such as the NAF), but the government is concerned about the risk of losing international donor support should it do so. Consideration is being given to a joint strategy that uses external support to both facilitate the roll-out of the national social protection system and link it to the refugee response over the medium term (e.g. five or more years).

4.3.2. Other vulnerable groups, especially older persons and people with disabilities

Evidence confirming inclusive SRSP is weak, even in non-FCAS. Reviewing SRSP programming for climate shocks suggests that in some countries there is often limited overlap between those targeted by social protection programmes (especially where categorical targeting is used) and those directly affected by shocks, and that receiving social protection may lead to exclusion from other emergency assistance at the local level as local officials try to avoid any single household receiving more than one form of support (e.g. see Slater, Ghimire and Baur 2018). Evidence also shows that older persons are often overlooked in humanitarian operations (HelpAge 2012; Handicap International 2015). Those with disabilities are acutely vulnerable to crises because they are less likely than others to benefit from interventions or humanitarian assistance, especially due to limited accessible information, lack of disability data, and negative attitudes or limited knowledge among family members, communities, and programme implementers (Groce *et al*. 2011; UNHCR 2019; Sherwood and Pearce 2016). Humanitarian cash and voucher assistance, social assistance, and programmes that attempt to build links between them (such as SRSP) need to pay greater attention to issues of age and disability, but how to do this is less clear (Longhurst *et al*. 2020a).

In FCAS, the differential impacts of conflict on specific vulnerable groups or on individuals with intersecting vulnerabilities are relatively well understood (Rohwerder and Szyp 2022; Slater 2022). This does not, however, translate into strategic guidance for programmes. There is little evidence on how to ensure inclusion in SRSP.

4.4. What is known about capacities to deliver SRSP?

4.4.1. Governance and administrative capacity

Regardless of the starting conditions, the evidence shows that it can take a long time to restore minimal institutional, human, and physical capacities, especially during or after conflict, depending on scale, geography, the progress of political negotiations, etc. Historically, international agency policy documents stress that it is essential to build national capacities as early as possible to ensure delivery of services, and support government legitimacy. Empirical evidence challenges this simple narrative, suggesting that while building capacity to deliver services is important, the link to state legitimacy is far more complex and not proven (Nixon, Mallett and McCullough 2017; Slater and Mallet 2017). Irrespective of the debate about state legitimacy, however, essential functions and services – including social protection – are critical in their own right (UNDP and World Bank 2017).

Investing in crisis prevention, response, and recovery can require substantial external assistance. With low levels of public financial management capacity and levels of accountability, this can lead to the creation of parallel delivery systems and economic distortions that crowd out local initiatives and organisations, and prevent national ownership (*ibid.*). This can be seen in the large number of parallel SRSP efforts being undertaken in many FCAS contexts, highlighted in section 3. There are also evident tensions between the objectives of SRSP to build government capacity over time to more effectively address covariate shocks, while ensuring that the system is built in a manner that remains agile and flexible, that capacities are retained to respond to shocks even when institutions are weak, and that the system and its actors adhere to humanitarian principles. This approach requires trade-offs between aims that in some cases are not totally reconcilable.

Almost all fragile contexts possess central institutions with core systems that could be built upon and adapted incrementally. Generally, insufficient investment is made in human, technical, and infrastructural capacity in linking humanitarian assistance to social protection and making social protection systems shock responsive, especially at sub-national and local levels. Governments tend to focus on protecting limited fiscal space for their regular social protection programmes and donors are unwilling to channel funds through government systems without sufficient accountability and public financial management capacity in place.[12] This can leave local actors overwhelmed with the increased burden of delivering SRSP.[13]

4.4.2. Financial capacity

The literature on resourcing approaches to SRSP poses difficult questions as to which actors pay for activities and how, and which financing mechanisms are most suited to address different shocks, either *ex-ante* (reserve or calamity funds, contingent budgets, risk transfer) or *ex-post* (budget reallocation, domestic credit, external credit, tax increases, and donor assistance). For instance, should shock responsive top-ups be paid for by humanitarian donors or should regular social protection donors create contingency funds? Can any risk be transferred to capital markets?

While in theory the principles of risk financing can apply to different types of shocks, they have not yet been applied to contexts of conflict or forced displacement. Further research needs to be undertaken into expanding financial protection strategies from climate- and weather-induced covariate shocks to cover other complex risks, and more evidence is needed on how to align financial instruments, sources, and actors, which can be quite different in contexts of insecurity (Longhurst *et al.* 2021, Longhurst 2021).

Evidence also suggests that remittances, which make up a larger percentage of foreign financing inflows to people in crises than Official Development Assistance (ODA), could play an important role in recipient access to social protection. The potential of remittances is, however, largely in social and private insurance rather than social assistance. As such, they may have limited coverage, especially for the poorest or most vulnerable households. Kenya and Rwanda have diaspora pension funds, with other possibilities including health and life insurance policies, including risk pools for health insurance, funded in part or whole through remittance payments, which can be sold to members of diasporas, with the insurance premiums paid by workers overseas to the benefit of family members living in the country of origin (UNDP 2016).

In the literature, the focus of global discussions and commitments has shifted towards finding sustainable multi-sector solutions for humanitarian crises that put governments first, as humanitarian financing trends demonstrate those commitments are not being met. A lack of appropriate humanitarian financing also hampers the ability of the humanitarian community to work effectively as well as engage in wider programming across the nexus (Cherrier *et al.* 2019). Nevertheless, risk-aware development finance is on the rise, with the World Bank and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs) offering a range of products to FCAS countries, and a far higher percentage of ODA being offered as contingent loans to countries in protracted crisis (with consequent questions being raised about the effects of such moves on country debt

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[12] Actions to support local government capacity building can include: (1) Earmarking administrative funds for spikes in the accountancy, targeting, and delivery capacity at regional and local levels; (2) Ensuring availability of translated programme implementation procedures for local staff; (3) Facilitating institutional coordination through training and cross-sectoral committees; and (4) Preparing national plans with regional and local involvement.

[13] There is more analysis of the evidence on capacity strengthening and how it might be approached in FCAS in BASIC Research Working Paper 16 Humanitarian and Social Protection Approaches to Inclusion: Knowledge Gaps and Implications for Working in the Humanitarian–Social Protection Nexus (Slater 2022).

burdens and country capacities to set their own macroeconomic and policy priorities (Longhurst *et al.* 2021; Hill 2020). More collaborative engagement could be encouraged with humanitarian assistance and social protection actors as part of a larger shock-responsive financing strategy. Across Middle Eastern countries (e.g. Lebanon, Turkey, Yemen, and Jordan), donors are playing an important role, coming together or mobilising to develop portfolio financing, thus reducing reliance on humanitarian funds (Smith 2020).

Increased investment is necessary across components of a SRSP system to ensure responses to: (1) reach women, girls, and diverse groups; and (2) contribute to longer-term empowerment and transformative objectives (beyond the immediate shock response) to ensure resources get delivered in both a timely and equitable manner that is differentiated to the inter-sectional needs of people. Investments can include disaggregated data gathering and analysis, gender-sensitive programme linkages (e.g. linkages to essential health services) and outreach, and investing in local organisations led by or representative of women, persons with disability, and so on, to help ensure SRSP resources are channelled directly to women, girls, and diverse groups as part of shock response (Longhurst *et al.* 2021). Extending beyond financing questions, these are challenges that are found wherever SRSP is attempted, and are all the more challenging in FCAS.

Country example: In Uganda, support from the World Bank has been used by the government to develop an automated shock-responsive mechanism that provides additional pay outs to drought-affected households through satellite monitoring of vegetation cover linked to disaster risk financing, and that provides social protection-style programmes to refugees.

4.5. What is known about the prospects for aligning programme features, tools or partners?

The evidence (as shown above) demonstrates that alignment is a common SRSP strategy in FCAS. While procedures and criteria for the design and implementation of humanitarian and social protection programmes are different, alignment (or common agreement when differences remain) of key programme features across humanitarian and social protection programming (such as vulnerability analysis, targeting methodologies, transfer values, delivery modalities, and data collection and monitoring processes) is assumed to provide a more coherent response to shocks across sectors. Alignment also enables humanitarian practitioners to help lay the foundations for (re)building future social protection systems. While this is the assumption, the evidence on when this happens in practice is patchy. There are, however, numerous examples of assessments of bottlenecks along the delivery chain (as done by UNICEF in Yemen and Kyrgyzstan)[14] and assessments of social protection system capacity for shock response (e.g. the tools created by UNICEF and WFP).[15]

Programme design features are often different for good reason, though. Merging these under shock-responsive approaches can lead to problems, especially in contexts where pre-existing community grievances may be present and the social contract is weak (Seyfert *et al.* 2019). For instance, increasing the transfer value for a social assistance recipient significantly during a crisis or the lean season (vertical expansion), then reducing it again, can be administratively difficult to implement in a timely fashion. This may also be disruptive for recipients. In FCAS, these sorts of disruptions can lower confidence in government or humanitarian actors, and be triggers for protest or violence.

Similarly, providing households with multiple forms of support (e.g. both social assistance and humanitarian) in contexts of widespread poverty and food insecurity, combined with scant resources, can lead to strong community aversion to double dipping (one recipient receiving more than one form of support; e.g. experience from Malawi (Holmes and Costella *et al.* 2017)). In FCAS, this can create or magnify existing

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[14] See relevant case studies in SPaN resources: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/sp-nexus/wiki/guidance-package-span-resources

[15] Both WFP and UNICEF have developed tools for assessing the readiness and shock responsiveness of national social protection systems, but neither of these tools are yet in the public domain.

grievances within communities or between groups receiving support and groups that do not. The frequent non-equivalence of transfer values between different sources of benefits can lead to social tension at the community level.

In these examples, however, the key word is 'can'. While there may be anecdotal evidence that getting delivery wrong results in community tensions or exacerbates conflict, there is little robust and comprehensive analysis of this. While programme design needs to take into account what is essentially a tension between consumption-smoothing and needs-based approaches, there is little empirically based guidance on how to do so. Several examples exist in which the decision has been made to align humanitarian to social protection approaches and reduce emergency response transfer values to the level of the social assistance programme to ensure coherence and parity, and promote future government take up (e.g. in Kenya, the Hunger Safety Net Programme [HSNP] for drought; in Kyrgyzstan, the State Agency for Social Welfare [SASW] for displacement; and in Nepal, to some extent, Emergency Cash Transfer Programmes [ECTP] post-2015 earthquake. In all these cases, however, it is noted through assessment that values were too low to meet essential household needs. Trade-offs should be carefully analysed (Longhurst and Sabates-Wheeler 2019).

Another aspect to alignment is through service provision partners. Although routing funds through government and existing social protection structures may still remain off limits for many donors in FCAS based on concerns related to transparency, accountability, and fiduciary risk, one way of aligning with a government system (at least initially) can be to direct funds to the same financial service provider. This allows the recipient to continue to receive one point of contact for services, as was the now well-known case in Yemen using government providers, and Lebanon using humanitarian providers (Cherrier *et al*. 2019).

Country example: In Mali in 2018, INGOs managing cash transfer programmes in the insecure north established common design and administrative processes (logical framework, assessment tools, transfer value, registration method, and monitoring and evaluation) aligned with the nascent government social cash transfer programme in the south, enabling a move towards national coverage (Cherrier *et al*. 2019).

Country example: In Turkey, international partners and the government have discussed how to align transfer values for the ESSN with social assistance for nationals. This discussion began with the government and its international humanitarian partners calculating the MEB and undertaking a gap analysis. During these consultations, the government expressed reluctance to cover the full basic needs gap for refugees because it did not want the transfer value to exceed the benefits provided to Turkish citizens through the national social assistance system. The initial ESSN transfer was based on the calculation of needs, plus broader concerns around sustainability and social cohesion. Monitoring data demonstrates this amount was insufficient to achieve the ESSN objective of meeting basic needs. To close the gap, the Government of Turkey, the WFP, and the Turkish Red Crescent negotiated an increase in the transfer value (from 100 to 120 Turkish lira per person), as well as quarterly top-ups for households (Smith and Bowen 2020).

4.6. What is known about coordination for SRSP?

There is strong agreement in the literature that effective coordination and collaboration provides the foundation for SRSP. This is also the biggest challenge. Vertical and horizontal planning between sectors and departments to enable coherence along the delivery chain is often limited. A lack of coordination can be due to a number of factors. Social protection and humanitarian sectors use different governance and coordination mechanisms. Often there is a lack of clarity and alignment in institutional mandates, responsibilities, and operational guidelines for the ministries overseeing social protection, disaster risk management, and humanitarian assistance. Donors often fund both, and can play an important convening role, although their priorities are not always unified (Longhurst *et al*. 2020b). Programme coordination can be particularly disjointed at lower-administrative levels, causing inefficiencies and confusion, and affecting information sharing and joined-up action between managing entities.

The literature also identifies perverse incentives not to coordinate and collaborate, if it leads to the loss of influence and visibility for one actor over another or a reduction in overall budgets. Overcoming fragmentation by design requires a broader understanding of the political economy context and incentives. Ultimately, global case study evidence shows that it is possible for different actors to lead or act together based on context, capacity, and shock type, if coordination is strong and roles are clearly defined.

Donors are emerging as a key player driving the necessary coordination at operational and policy levels for SRSP, as has been demonstrated in Turkey, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. This includes bringing together humanitarian development donors, commissioning assessments and workshops, and resourcing dedicated coordination roles (Smith 2020). Naturally, however, donor involvement and leadership can wax and wane over time based on the personnel in country and changing policy priorities.

Country examples: In [Nigeria](#), [Iraq](#) and the [Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)](#), Cash Transfer Working Groups have added linkage to social protection forums to their work plans and terms of reference in an effort to improve SRSP coordination and the exchange of technical insight.

4.6.1. Partnerships

Shifting to more shock-responsive approaches requires time, partnership building, and technical investment from a wide range of stakeholders. In countries where there is a complex mixture of factors that drive fragility, there broad recognition of the need both to scale up long-term social assistance while maintaining humanitarian assistance. Beyond the technical and operational challenges, this type of vision requires leadership from both governments and donors, and commitment of resources (Cherrier 2014).

Where institutions have been dismantled or disrupted, parallel systems and programmes are often introduced, either out of necessity or habit. To establish a participatory (vs. autocratic or donor-driven) decision-making structure, however, it is crucial from the start to work with pre-existing governance structures, different combinations of partners at regional and local levels, as well as community structures, civil society, and the private sector. Recognising such pre-existing capacities is key to avoiding replication of inefficient or illegitimate systems (UNDP and World Bank 2017).

This has arisen in the Covid-19 response, where some pre-existing programmes and processes have been insufficient (i.e. pre-existing programmes targeting the wrong people in the wrong areas, without the ability to work remotely or identify very vulnerable groups). The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities and created new vulnerabilities, particularly around gender equity and social inclusion. Hence engaging local actors (community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, trade unions, the private sector, etc.) as part of a localisation agenda has been critical to bridging these gaps. While the term 'localisation' is broad, it can be defined as 'recognising, respecting and strengthening delivery, leadership and decision-making by local and national actors, in order to better address people's needs and priorities inclusively' (Cabot Venton, unpublished: 4). This includes actively seeking to understand how more funding and voice can be transferred to local actors, with the term 'local' defined as leadership proximate to the communities they are meant to serve. This includes local leaders, local groups and networks, local and national organisations, local and regional government, and local private sector actors (while noting these actors can also be party to conflict in different ways).

Such strategies present their own challenges, however. These include fiduciary issues, reputational and operational risk, the requirement to fund only through one or two intermediaries, the ability of local actors to operate at scale, and the capacity of local actors to provide a holistic response that meets due diligence requirements. Despite this, the Covid-19 response has demonstrated again that actors working with proximity to beneficiaries hold great potential to flex and scale programmes. They may also be credible alternative partners, including in areas where access for government and international actors is limited. In addition, research is beginning to highlight the opportunity and reputational costs of not supporting local actors more

adequately (*ibid.*). With only 2.1 per cent of international humanitarian assistance going directly to national and local actors in 2019 (and most of this to governments), there is room for increased investment, although how much this will happen in FCAS depends on improved evidence about the circumstances in which this can work well.

Country examples: In Yemen, when transfers were made to vulnerable and food-insecure households in enclaved areas affected by the civil war, the (private sector) payment service provider for the Social Welfare Fund was able to move money discretely into and within the enclaved areas. Then government staff selected pay-out points that were accessible to the affected communities (especially women) and set up temporary pay-out points in more secure community spaces. They also conducted home visits for those unable to go to the pay-out points (Smith and Bowen 2020).

4.6.2. Information systems/interoperability

Coordinating humanitarian assistance and social protection could be greatly facilitated by harmonising data sharing and information systems.[16] In practice, harmonisation efforts range from sharing basic information on who is doing what where to coordinate programme coverage across different geographic areas, to using existing social registries to help target different interventions, to facilitating interoperability across humanitarian and social protection databases (e.g. harmonising and standardising data fields and collection approaches through Humanitarian Exchange Language [HXL]). Questions about sharing with government information systems, as well as the rationales and risks to sharing, are central for SRSP (and indeed all social assistance) in FCAS. There are important questions and concerns about data security and privacy, and government capacities to ensure this.

There is a noticeable trend towards consolidation of larger systems in humanitarian contexts, as well as greater use of social protection information systems for shock response, even as the technology is still developing. A recent study looking at the potential for aligning systems in FCAS highlights that the main perceived benefit of stakeholders operating in these environments is the promise of de-duplication and the resultant cost savings that interoperable management information systems and/or the use of biometrics offer, which can be attractive for donors and therefore an attractive sell for implementers (Goodman *et al.* 2020).

Challenges exist, however. There is a commonly held assumption that centralised data management systems, including those created by humanitarian agencies, may form the basis of longer-term or government-led social protection systems. Instead of being open-source and open to scrutiny, the systems currently under development are predominantly designed and viewed as proprietary, with implementing agencies and private sector partners in a race to dominate the digital market.

Furthermore, a host of challenges revolves around data protection, with many organisations and governments not yet able to demonstrate they have the infrastructure, guidance, staff capacity, or data management processes in place to ensure that the data collected from beneficiaries is adequately protected (*ibid.*). A lack of capacity or willingness to do so has potentially profound consequences on the fundamental rights of beneficiaries, with the inadvertent and deliberate leaking and sharing of personal and anonymised data somewhat an inevitability. Data protection becomes even more critical in countries experiencing active conflict, where sharing humanitarian data directly with the government may not be possible or advisable, and mistakes and abuses of data sharing can have lethal consequences.[17] Likewise a lack of identification, including barriers to obtaining identification documents, can then hinder access to social protection or SRSP

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[16] Data issues are covered in more detail in BASIC Research Theme Brief Managing the Risk and Benefits of Digital Technologies in Social Assistance Provision (Faith and Roberts 2022).

[17] At its most extreme, there are multiple examples of abuses in data management and data sharing being used to fuel genocide. See Responsible Data (RD).

interventions. This issue can be particularly pronounced for internal migrants, the displaced, and non-nationals, such as refugees, as most social protection is linked to both citizenship and residency.

Relevant experiences and lessons from the use of personal data for health, social, political, commercial, security, and military purposes need to be more commonly applied. Without appropriate learning from other applications of identity and data management, further development of management information systems in humanitarian and social protection work in FCAS risks further exclusion, marginalisation, and political polarisation by subjecting beneficiaries to significant unnecessary risk (*ibid*.).

Country example: In the Republic of Congo, the WFP has switched to urban cash transfers through mobile money and utilised the existing Registre Social Unique (RSU) created by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Humanitarian Action and the World Bank as the basis for its targeting, validated through socially distanced door-to-door retargeting, Covid-19 awareness raising, and heightened vendor protection measures. The WFP hopes to then use this information to update the RSU through a protocol agreement with the government (WFP 2020).

Country example: In Nigeria, the federal government is designing a social protection response for households affected by the economic impacts of Covid-19. This will use data from the national social register to identify the existing poor, where this data exists. This register does not, however, have good coverage in urban areas and cannot be used to identify the new poor. The government is designing a Rapid Response Register, which is proposed to be based on easy-to-verify criteria considered to identify vulnerability such as household size, composition, etc. It will also use indicators in existing databases from local government and other organisations such as being registered with an association of informal sector workers. Humanitarian actors have ambition to align with and make use of the same targeting design for their Covid-19 responses where this is appropriate (Longhurst *et al*. 2020b)

4.6.3. Integrating and coordinating with wider service delivery

A strong body of evidence confirms that cash transfers are a powerful mechanism for reducing poverty, increasing consumption, and reducing food insecurity, as well as promoting lives and livelihoods in the medium- to long-term future (DFID 2011; Bastagli *et al*. 2016; Daidone *et al*. 2016). Evidence also demonstrates that cash transfers alone cannot achieve all the wider impacts – such as on nutrition, livelihood resilience, learning, and health outcomes – needed for broader development (Attah *et al*. 2016; Mishra, 2017; Roelen *et al*. 2017).

The literature suggests that the jury is still out on whether SRSP can be effectively linked with wider complementary services – regardless if these are focused on basic services, protection, or livelihoods – and on the outcomes of these efforts in FCAS. The scope for cash plus or linkage to wider social services in FCAS can be limited, and conflict is associated with the deterioration of delivery systems and service provision (Carpenter, Slater and Mallett 2012). Covariate shocks, including conflict, have a particular impact on service provision as they can create sudden spikes in demand and increases in beneficiary needs or caseloads, which can test social protection systems built around fixed budgets, quotas, and staff capacity, thus affecting business continuity (e.g. staff being unable to work, diversion of social protection funds to other sectors, beneficiary displacement) (O'Brien 2020). Integrated programming can also be costlier. That is, while the comprehensiveness of support can increase, coverage can decrease (in terms of the overall number of beneficiaries reached) (TRANSFORM 2020).

Country example: In response to the 2010 conflict in Kyrgyzstan, both existing social protection programmes required the applicant to provide extensive documents. These could take time to collate and not all were easily accessible. In addition, some conflict-affected households had lost civil documentation. As a result, the government allowed those applying to the social protection programmes during its horizontal expansion to submit necessary verification documents within six months. During this time, a government taskforce was set up to fast track claims for replacing the requisite national identification and civil documentation. UNICEF also provided skills and methods training, along with coaching, to social protection managers and social workers on additional outreach measures to ensure family welfare. They introduced new documentation – a care and support plan for the family – for monitoring needs, referrals to services, and progress. This monitoring approach was subsequently adopted by the government (Smith and Bowen 2020).

Country example: In Pakistan, one-stop shops respond to flooding and forced displacement by rapidly registering, assessing, enrolling, and paying affected households. Following widespread flooding in 2010, the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) established Watan Card Facilitation Centers (WCFCs) in local offices to cover the flood-affected districts. The WCFCs serve as one-stop shops, where the beneficiaries are enrolled, can register complaints and grievances, and often receive their payments via a point-of-sale machine. Biometric screening is used to verify the beneficiaries against their computerised national identity cards (CNICs). This can be used at the point-of-sale desk or any of the payment service provider automatic teller machines (ATMs). The one-stop shop model has also been used to provide livelihood support grants and child welfare grants to IDPs as part of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas Temporarily Displaced Persons—Emergency Recovery Project (*ibid.*)

5. Reflections and implications for BASIC Research

SRSP in FCAS is a continuation of the broader adaptive and shock-responsive agendas that have emerged over the last five years. Learning on SRSP in FCAS remains nascent, however, with key knowledge gaps and specific challenges to address. More broadly, important questions about when and whether to link humanitarian assistance to social protection systems and programmes in FCAS have yet to be properly explored.

This paper summarises the current literature in this area from the perspective of international partner-supported activities. It highlights some of the gaps and areas for potential support, research, and in-country engagement. It now outlines nine potential areas of investigation for BASIC Research in terms of operationalising SRSP.

(1) Operationalising SRSP in FCAS and assessing needs/impact: Further research, especially conducted in-country with operational practitioners, is needed to understand what is being attempted around SRSP in FCAS. Global concepts such as the delivery chain analysis (Longhurst *et al*. 2020b) offer a more modular approach to linking humanitarian and social protection systems and programmes, but these lack methodologies to implement them. Key aspects such as joint vulnerability assessments, and monitoring and impact assessments have not yet been developed. These could act as a foundation for joint action, accountability, and ownership. Key questions:

- How is SRSP being operationalised in FCAS, what are the knowledge and methodological gaps and practical guidance questions to address, and how can country-based learning be used to shape operational guidance?
- To what extent are international actors succeeding in building national capacity to deliver SRSP in FCAS contexts, rather than displacing it, and what is feasible while remaining conflict sensitive?

(2) Deciding when not to do SRSP: To date there have been few discussions around when linking humanitarian to social protection is not suitable for a variety of ethical, political, financial, and operational reasons. It is unclear as to what degree certain forms of SRSP are compatible with humanitarian principles, noting that the principles themselves are not monolithic, but instead require context-specific application. More research could be undertaken to support a clearer framework for managing and negotiating the humanitarian

principles as part of the SRSP delivery chain approach (Longhurst *et al.* 2020b).[18] This includes elaborating links to the Sphere Standards guidance,[19] in which reference to social protection is currently minimal. Key question:

- To what degree do approaches that merge different sectors, partners, and objectives (such as SRSP) advance or hinder the observance of humanitarian principles, and what is being learned from field application to improve guidance in this area?

(3) The political economy of SRSP: Concepts such as SRSP are broadly welcomed as attempts to institutionalise more coherent approaches to risk management through government. So far, however, little has been studied on the implications of such approaches in areas where government control, legitimacy, or influence is limited or non-existent, and in places where other actors, including non-state armed actors, take on various roles otherwise provided by the state; e.g. the operational delivery of assistance. At the policy level, little is known about the possible interconnections between investments in state-building and livelihood programmes supported by international partners, on the one hand, and government–donor agreements made to tighten control on migration flows, on the other. The political economy of SRSP could be more deeply interrogated, such as the instrumentalisation of (shock-responsive) social protection for wider geopolitical objectives (including in Turkey and the Sahel), the ramifications of extending state services and control in areas where it may be complicit in a conflict, and the difficulty of squaring SRSP objectives around state sponsorship and capacity building with the ability to operate in areas and negotiate with actors outside or opposed to state control. Key questions (with links to the BASIC Research work on politics):

- To what extent are evolutions around SRSP shaping the political economy in specific countries?
- Whose interests does the SRSP agenda support and whose interests does it challenge?
- To what extent does or could SRSP provision feed into potential conflict dynamics (i.e. who is included and who is excluded)?

(4) Learning lessons from Covid-19 for SRSP in FCAS: A range of efforts have been made to utilise and extend social protection systems, programmes, and principles in response to Covid-19, including in FCAS (e.g. using social protection information systems or creating parallel ones, using similar payment providers, extending cash-based support through decentralised governmental staff capacity, etc.). In some cases, there has been a need to fundamentally alter approaches to reach different geographic areas and beneficiary groups. Some of these experiences have been catalogued in global resources, although FCAS examples are more limited and tend to revolve around the same case studies.[20] As the world slowly transitions away from the Covid-19 response (towards managing its impacts), ongoing research could help monitor which operational lessons and processes have been learned and taken forward to SRSP programming, as part of developing the SRSP systems of tomorrow. Key questions:

- How has Covid-19 changed and advanced SRSP operations in FCAS? What lessons have been learned and integrated into programming, and what challenges remain?

(5) Integrated information systems and SRSP: As noted in section 4, integrated and interoperable information management is seen to hold great potential to help bind SRSP efforts together, supporting coordination and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions. It is, however, necessary to address a plethora of challenges and specific questions related to what is feasible and ethical in FCAS. If answered, these questions could also help improve the design of digital systems globally. Key question (with links to BASIC Research work on digital/accountability issues):

- How are digital ID and data management being operationalised in FCAS to support SRSP (if at all), and what are the key operational areas and pre-conditions to be addressed to improve SRSP (e.g. in

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[18] The four core humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence mandate humanitarian actors to prioritise human need and dignity over any economic, political, religious, ideological, or other interests (OCHA 2012).

[19] The Sphere Standards and Sphere Standards handbook substantiate and operationalise the principles across different sectors and contexts (encompassing the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response) (TRANSFORM 2020).

[20] See for instance Gentilini et al. 2018, the SPACE programme, and the MAINTAINs programme.

ecosystem mapping, system design, data protection and management, capacity development, private sector engagement, political economy, etc.)?

(6) Displacement and SRSP: The legislative and operational landscape around the provision of social protection to the forcibly displaced is complex. Methodologies and guidance for aligning humanitarian and social protection support for the forcibly displaced, or transitioning them onto national systems, is very limited. Actors such as UNHCR and GIZ are exploring a strategy for such a transition in places such as Mauritania, which would merit further research in terms of how effective and appropriate such a strategy is over the short and medium term, particularly in terms of the beneficiary experience and rights. Likewise, the introduction of IFIs to refugee financing and operations has yet to be properly scrutinised. Key questions (with links to BASIC Research work on displacement):

- To what degree have linkages between (shock-responsive) social protection systems and forcibly displaced people been operationalised? What are the gaps in operational guidance, and what other aspects (such as political economy and finance) require further research? What specific support and services are required as part of a SRSP response for refugees? Which promising initiatives (e.g. the UNHCR/GIZ work under the CRRF) could offer learning and/or partnership opportunities?
- How are or should operational decisions such as transfer modality, duration and level, delivery partner choice, and staff capacity building be adapted to adequately address the differentiated needs of displaced populations under SRSP approaches in FCAS?

(7) Understanding the role of non-state and non-aligned (armed) groups: There are important roles being played by non-state armed groups in managing and distributing assistance in many areas, functioning as the *de facto* state (e.g. Lebanon, Niger, Mali), but little is known about how this works, or the attitudes towards the government in areas it only nominally controls. The dynamics of non-state actors and their role as service and security providers (as opposed to being viewed only as instigators of insecurity and terrorism) are similarly under-explored in SRSP narratives. Key questions:

- What roles do non-state and non-aligned armed groups play in the delivery of basic assistance in the absence of the state?
- What are perceptions of the government and its role in service provision and the broader social contract in areas outside of government control?

(8) Partnering differently: Similar to the questions about non-aligned groups, the Covid-19 response has underlined the importance of actors at the local and district level in delivering essential goods and services, yet these actors are traditionally overlooked and under-supported by the international community. Their role in providing more context appropriate, economical, and flexible shock-responsive approaches in FCAS contexts has received almost no attention to date. Key question:

- What role do local and district-level actors currently play, and what role could they play, in providing shock-responsive support in FCAS, and what are the barriers to their increased engagement?

(9) Financing for SRSP in FCAS: As of now, financing in FCAS remains relatively siloed. Risk financing options also remain limited. Refugee financing may provide entry points for SRSP options, with questions around how this aligns with other forms of social protection support. Key questions (with links to BASIC Research work on financing):

- What is the enabling environment and what are the pre-requisites for expanding risk financing in FCAS contexts? Drawing in particular from country experience and grey literature, what lessons have been learned to date in the limited attempts to operationalise risk finance in FCAS? What other initiatives, beyond risk finance, have been attempted to support SRSP (especially around scalability of programmes), how have these been financed, and what can be learned from these lessons for replicability?
- Given the various constraints around risk finance in FCAS (as mentioned in section 4.4), what opportunities lie in leveraging remittance flows to help people gain access to social protection? What are the gaps in the existing literature, and what practical examples or research streams exist upon which to build?

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