

IFRC - LINKING HUMANITARIAN CASH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Scaling-up linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection for effective response to shocks and protracted crises and to improve resilience

BACKGROUND

- **Access to adequate social protection, especially cash transfers where these are appropriate, is essential at times of crisis and must be part of national responses.** Cash transfers are quickly becoming the most popular national social protection instrument to help vulnerable households reduce risks and manage shocks; enabling them to meet basic needs, maintain dignity, protect livelihoods; preventing households from falling further into poverty and exacerbating inequalities. COVID-19 national responses are accelerating this trend, around 130 countries include cash as their preferred social assistance mechanism.
- **Linking, building on or aligning humanitarian cash responses with national social protection programmes and systems, where feasible and appropriate, can contribute to an efficient and effective response and achieve lasting results.** Social protection policies and programmes are key to an overall strategy to end poverty and build resilience. Engaging with them throughout the humanitarian-development *nexus*, reinforces the key role played by social protection as a mechanism to address poverty, inequality, mitigate shocks, and build resilience and social cohesion. Cash assistance can be particularly effective when used in combination with other services and support. Evidence shows that in addition to helping to meet basic needs, cash enables access to healthcare and education services, supports livelihoods protection and recovery and sustains investments in human capital.
- **National Societies often use a multi-sectoral approach, working closely with different governmental departments (i.e. health, education, agriculture, etc.) and humanitarian and development actors to address a wide range of vulnerabilities.** Promoting integrated responses and linking vulnerable people to the different national systems that are available at national, community or regional level.

NATIONAL SOCIETY COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES

- **The RCRC Movement has been using cash transfers for decades and is committed to supporting cash scale-up and linkages with national social protection systems.** The IFRC, in alignment with the **Strategy 2030 goals¹**, the **SGDs agenda**, and **Grand Bargain Commitments on localization and cash scale-up**, is committed to supporting **principled humanitarian, development, DRR and early actions** that are **as local as possible and as international as necessary and leave no one behind**. In recent years, around 100 National Societies have delivered cash assistance at different levels of scale in their response to natural disasters, conflict, forced displacement, epidemics, and a wide range of complex and protracted crises.
- **National Societies have a unique opportunity to build on their principled approach, auxiliary role and unique comparative advantages² to be partners of choice for governments, humanitarian and development actors and donors, to deliver humanitarian cash and social protection assistance.** Building on its CVA experience and capitalizing on its extensive **global network** and volunteer **presence at national, regional and community level** to implement inclusive cash transfers assistance, National Societies are also well positioned to **manage humanitarian responses differently** through being **adaptive and flexible, especially in fragile, conflict and displacement contexts**, where governments might not always be present, reach those in need or face challenges to scale-up.
- **National Societies have a role to play in making support more predictable.** They can do this by building on the Movement investment in **National Society cash preparedness** and **using anticipatory and Forecast Based Financing mechanisms**, strengthening existing (or implementing new) anticipatory and early warning actions, and **supporting shock responsive social or humanitarian safety nets** that deliver regular and predictable cash transfers to vulnerable people.
- **National Societies, building on their humanitarian diplomacy expertise, can play a critical role advocating on behalf of minorities and excluded groups to promote their inclusion in social protection and other**

¹**Goal 1:** People anticipate, respond to and quickly recover from crises. **Goal 2:** People lead safe, healthy, and dignified lives and have opportunities to thrive. **Goal 3:** People mobilise for inclusive and peaceful communities.

² Extensive volunteer network and coverage; presence before, during and after a shock/disaster; multi-sectoral approach, strong community-based approaches.

national systems. National Societies are committed to reach all vulnerable people effectively and in a **non-discriminatory and equitable manner, supporting dignity, access, participation, and safety**. National systems should also incorporate the range of increasing **new risks** people are exposed to, including **climate change**, in addition to compounding risks from **migration, conflict and urban** living conditions.

CHALLENGES

- **Leaving no one behind.** Despite growing trends towards higher inclusion in national social protection systems, **high numbers of vulnerable and newly vulnerable people remain excluded**, as a result of a lack of access, political or other bias and limited capacity. It could also be due to policies that prevent the **undocumented, migrants, the forcibly displaced and refugees** from accessing national social protection systems.
- **Timely and effective scale-up, fragmented social protection systems.** System, resources, and funding limitations can constrain the **ability to scale-up** and respond to growing needs and demand in contexts of protracted crisis, sudden onset disasters and massive displacement. **Complex targeting**, use of **out of date registers**, and **inefficient cash delivery mechanisms** can seriously restrict the timeliness and effectiveness of the support provided to people in need. **Fragmented social protection** and a **lack of a holistic approach and synergy** between the different ministries and institutional departments responsible for humanitarian, development and social assistance could also contribute to the coordination and delivery challenges.

ROLE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIONAL SOCIETIES

- **National Societies can play a key role in addressing some of these challenges, improving the coverage, equity, and efficiency of national social protection systems.** Even when not directly involved in the physical value transaction, National Societies are well placed to **support government to strengthen national systems** and **advocate to ensure no one is left behind**.
- **National Societies can make significant contributions to strengthen the timeliness, effectiveness, and accountability of shock-responsive social protection, supported by the IFRC network. This can be done through** assisting or complementing national governments to **reach those in need, reduce duplication, be quicker, more predictable, more cost effective and more sustainable**. Contributions include participation in vulnerability assessment, engaging in targeting and registration processes, investment in systems, strengthening the effectiveness of monitoring and community engagement and accountability to populations in need.
- **National Societies can decide when to link, align or complement social protection programmes based on the assessment of national systems to ensure the compliance with the RCRC humanitarian principles and its mandate.** The **assessment** should include the analysis of the social protection system performance, coverage, timeliness, and constraints, preferences of different vulnerable people and the complementarity of multi-sectoral assistance. National Societies should be supported to carry out a **comprehensive risk analysis** considering their **operational capacity** and highlighting any potential **integrity challenges** and **reputational risks** that might **compromise the Movement principles** and affect their credibility or image.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement global-regional-local network, the CashHub and the Cash and Social Protection Technical Working Group can provide:

- Resources, funding, and guidance. Building evidence, knowledge management and learning from the different National Societies cash and social protection experiences.
- Linkages to wider Cash and social protection initiatives via the Grand Bargain Cash and Social Protection sub-working group, chaired by IFRC, DFID and UNICEF
- Engagement with different donors, especially **Common Donor Approach** signatories, committed to strengthen the ability of national actors and national systems to respond to shocks; and the complementarity between humanitarian cash programming and predictable, long term funding.