



Shock Responsive Social Protection in Zimbabwe

Strengthening the existing Social Protection system in Zimbabwe



This paper presents possible areas of engagement for the Zimbabwe Red Cross Society (ZRCS) aiming to support the existing Social Protection system in Zimbabwe, focusing on linkages between humanitarian cash and SP and increasing adaptation capacity. It builds on the National Society's experience in disaster preparedness, notably through cash assistance preparedness, forecast based action, and as a first responder in support to national institutions and programmes.

SRSP encompasses the adaptation of routine social protection (SP) programmes and systems to cope with changes in context and demand following large-scale shocks. This includes building shock-responsive systems, plans and partnerships in advance of a shock to better prepare for emergency response, and post-shock to support affected households.¹

SRSP is increasingly seen as an efficient instrument to complement and support timely, effective, emergency response and contribute to the resilience of populations affected by recurrent crises, shocks and the impacts of climate change. It can also be linked with anticipatory action, including the Movement's dedicated funding mechanism Forecast-based Action by the DREF.²

The ZRCS can use its auxiliary role to cooperate with the Government, World Bank and UN agencies, and make a unique contribution to improving the ability of existing Social Protection Schemes to deliver effective emergency assistance and disaster relief.

This paper is the result of a scoping study, programme mapping and collaborative reflection supported by the British Red Cross and the Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) Movement. The full scoping study is available on the [Cash Hub](#).

¹ <https://socialprotection.org/learn/glossary/shock-responsive-social-protection>

² <https://www.ifrc.org/forecast-based-action>



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Context

Zimbabwe is particularly vulnerable to weather and climate-related disasters, climate change and economic instability:



Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of floods, droughts and epidemic episodes which can lead to enormous socio-economic losses



56%
of the rural population is food insecure
(ZimVAC 2020)



2.4M
people are food insecure in urban areas
(ZimVAC 2020)



A currency crisis is affecting purchasing power and crisis response
(year on year inflation for April 2021 was at 194.1%)

Additional information:

[Zimbabwe Climate Risk Country Profile \(World Bank\)](#) >

[Mapping of Selected Hazards Affecting Rural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe](#) >

[Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee \(ZimVAC\) 2020 Rural Livelihoods Assessment Report](#) >

[Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee \(ZimVAC\) 2020 Urban Livelihoods Assessment Report](#) >

[Building partnerships for Social Protection in Zimbabwe](#) >

According to the ZIMSTAT Poverty, Income, Consumption and Expenditure Survey 2017 Report, 70.5% of the population were poor whilst 29.3% were deemed extremely poor and potentially eligible for social assistance (i.e. over 4 million people).³

Zimbabwe has a National Social Protection Policy Framework and a range of social assistance programmes. As of 2021, the main social assistance programmes identified in Zimbabwe are:

– **Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM):** educational subsidy targeted at vulnerable children enrolled in primary and secondary education. In 2020, 700 000 children were targeted through 65 districts.

– **Assisted Medical Treatment Order (AMTO):** health subsidy targeted at vulnerable individuals in need of health care and paying medical bills directly to hospitals and health centres. The current coverage is unknown.

– **Harmonised Social Cash Transfer (HSCT):** unconditional cash transfer targeted at labour-constrained food-poor households. Approximately 60,000 households are enrolled in 23 districts, but payments are erratic.

– **Public assistance (PA) programme:** discretionary grant for individuals lacking means of subsistence provided by District Social Welfare Officers to vulnerable households. In 2020, there were 8,551 beneficiaries in 48 districts.

– **Food Deficit Mitigation (FDM) programme:** food transfer targeted at labour-constrained food-insecure households during peak lean season. The current coverage is unknown and transfers are erratic.

³ www.zimstat.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/publications/Income/Finance/PICES-2017-Report.pdf



Photo: © Zimbabwe Red Cross, 2020

ZRCS role in disaster preparedness and response

The mission of ZRCS is to assist the most vulnerable in target communities with developmental and humanitarian interventions. ZRCS is an auxiliary to the government of Zimbabwe, as articulated clearly on the ZRCS ACT chapter 30 of 1981. Premised upon this ZRCS was formerly incorporated into the Civil Protection Unit (CPU) and is the only organization mentioned by name in the Civil Protection Act. As such it is a leading organization in disaster management encompassing disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. ZRCS has been visible as a lead agency in disaster response in the past years with recent highlights being the response to Cyclone Idai, the biggest catastrophe to befall the nation.

In recent years the ZRCS has been developing and implementing programmes to reduce risks and exposures to hazards, improve preparedness and readiness. ZRCS has a nationwide network of over 40,000 staff and volunteers. The National Society has grown its capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance through cash and vouchers effectively and at scale, reaching approximately 165,000 people since 2018.

Cash and voucher assistance programmes implemented by ZRCS between 2018 and 2021

Location	Reach	Partners
Binga and Kariba Phase 1	4000 HH	Zimbabwe RC Danish RC, Finnish RC, British RC, IFRC and ICRC
Binga and Kariba Phase 2	4500 HH	Zimbabwe RC Finnish RC, British RC
Muzarabani	4000 HH	Zimbabwe RC WFP
Binga, Gwoke and Siakobvu	15,590 HH	Zimbabwe RC ECHO Finnish RC
Mwenezi and Chipenge	5000 HH	Zimbabwe RC British RC

HH= households

Identified opportunities and challenges for SRSP in Zimbabwe

The Government of Zimbabwe is playing a leading role in upscaling the national social protection and SRSP sector, with the support of the World Bank and UN Agencies. Gaps in the coverage of the current social assistance programmes leave unattended vulnerable people in need of assistance. Some programmes are designed to be shock responsive, but in general the existing programmes are not adaptive to meet the transitory needs caused by shocks. Despite this, progress has been made and there are many opportunities identified to strengthen the system.

	Opportunities	Challenges
Coverage and systems	<p>A World Bank supported project is laying the foundations for a social registry and a management information system within the Department of Social Development</p> <p>The Red Cross and partners have growing experience in developing enrolment and delivery systems</p> <p>Communities face recurrent shocks and receive repeated assistance, offering opportunities for delivery systems to be streamlined</p>	<p>Gaps in the geographical coverage of social assistance programmes</p> <p>Social assistance programmes use outdated and incomplete registries, meaning eligible people are excluded</p> <p>No interoperability of the programmes and delivery systems</p> <p>Risk of exclusion errors that leave vulnerable people behind</p>
Government	<p>The Department of Social Development and Social Welfare Offices are already involved in both social assistance and disaster response</p> <p>Increasing willingness to update programme design to be shock responsive</p>	<p>Civil Protection emergencies response plans include Social Protection but implementation of this area is limited</p> <p>Limited assistance to recovery and resilience</p>
Resourcing	<p>Government and stakeholders are aligned in their growing interest to invest in preparedness and SRSP</p>	<p>Funding for SP is limited and has decreased in recent years</p> <p>High dependency on humanitarian assistance</p>
CEA	<p>Growing experience within the Red Cross in developing community engagement and accountability (CEA) mechanisms</p>	<p>Existing social protection programmes lack comprehensive grievance response and CEA mechanisms</p>
Coordination	<p>Improved coordination through the National Cash Working Group, which could offer a platform to develop a Community of Practice on SRSP</p>	<p>Limited coordination between disaster response and social protection</p>

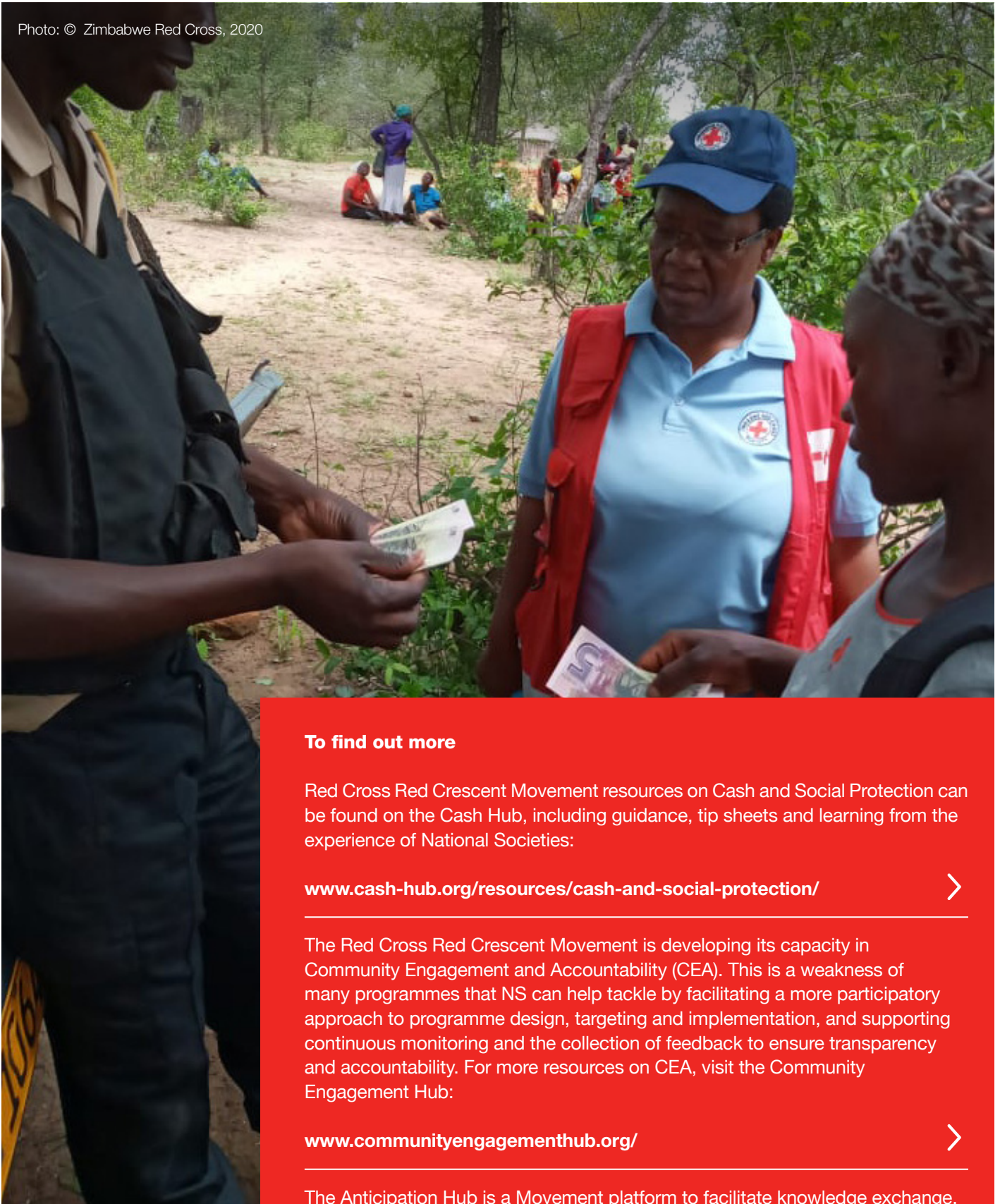
How Zimbabwe Red Cross can engage in SRSP

The Zimbabwe Red Cross could play a role in supporting the national social protection system to achieve its objectives of effectiveness, timeliness and impact. ZRCS could support the system to:



Acknowledging the Government's leading role on Social Protection and SRSP, and the role of the World Bank and UN agencies in supporting the development of the social protection sector, the ZRCS can contribute using its auxiliary role. This paper proposes that ZRCS focus on supporting the development of specific instruments and strengthening coordination, to support the continuity of social assistance during crises and strengthen its ability to respond effectively to needs.

Risk identified	Strengthening measures that ZRCS can lead on
When disaster strikes, priority turns into supporting affected population, often services are disrupted, including the delivery of social assistance	Support contingency planning to minimize services interruption and make it possible for existing programmes to scale up to meet additional needs
Social Welfare Offices (SWO) have insufficient resources to cover needs	Improve coordination and resource sharing between stakeholders to reduce duplication and maximise use of resources
No sufficient preparedness to ensure a timely and scalable response to needs	Support the development of a disaster response plan by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MoPSLSW) encompassing the different types of disasters and crises Continue engaging with the SWOs and leverage the RC volunteer network to help reach the most vulnerable and affected Invite the SWOs and Department of Social Development (DSD)/MoPSLSW to participate in capacity building activities
Weak coordination and technical cooperation hamper the dialogue between social protection and disaster response and the development of SRSP	Propose regular thematic meetings to discuss SRSP-related themes using the Cash Working Group as an entry point Participate actively and support inter-sectoral coordination
Limited information on the profile and impacts of the different shocks on specific groups and individuals – risk of exclusion of those in need	Contribute to the UNICEF and WFP SRSP capacity assessment(s), on the disaster risk management analysis and identifying linkages with SP, sharing Movement experience on anticipatory action Leverage ZRCS experience and network to improve early warning, understanding of risks and vulnerabilities and refine the eligibility criteria
Beneficiary selection relies on community mechanisms, but capacities in community engagement and accountability are lacking to ensure that the right support goes to the right people	Support the DSD/ MoPSLSW to develop operational tools and train its staff on community engagement and accountability and complaints and feedback mechanisms To improve the awareness and attention given to specific needs of the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach individuals



To find out more

Red Cross Red Crescent Movement resources on Cash and Social Protection can be found on the Cash Hub, including guidance, tip sheets and learning from the experience of National Societies:

www.cash-hub.org/resources/cash-and-social-protection/



The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement is developing its capacity in Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA). This is a weakness of many programmes that NS can help tackle by facilitating a more participatory approach to programme design, targeting and implementation, and supporting continuous monitoring and the collection of feedback to ensure transparency and accountability. For more resources on CEA, visit the Community Engagement Hub:

www.communityengagementhub.org/



The Anticipation Hub is a Movement platform to facilitate knowledge exchange, learning, guidance and advocacy around anticipatory action. Social protection can play an important role in responding to the impacts of climate change, and SP systems can be linked with early warning systems and early action to provide faster, more sustainable, coordinated and cost-effective assistance. More information can be found on the Anticipation Hub:

www.anticipation-hub.org/learn/emerging-topics/social-protection



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