



Credit: ACF Madagascar

RESPONDING TO SHOCKS USING SOCIAL PROTECTION

Principles and a Framework for NGOs

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INTRODUCTION

2020 saw a **40% INCREASE** in the number of people **REQUIRING HUMANITARIAN AID GLOBALLY**, from 168 million to 235 million¹,

undermining recent advances in food security, poverty reduction, and income and gender equality². This was despite widespread efforts³ by various governments to enhance the coverage, adequacy, and comprehensiveness of Social Protection (SP) systems to prevent,

mitigate, and respond to the diverse health, social, economic, and other effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Though approximately half the world's population had access to at least one Social Protection⁴ measure (including social assistance in form of cash voucher transfers) prior to COVID-19, such a substantive increase in humanitarian needs exposes the insufficiency of existing SP systems and related programmes, be it the lack of accessibility and inclusivity or the inadequate nature and extent of assistance.

As such, the right to SP regularly goes unfulfilled, not least in countries where humanitarian needs are greatest. This has necessitated a response unprecedented in nature and scale on the part of the humanitarian community, not simply in substituting where systems fall short, but increasingly cognisant of the importance of doing no harm to existing systems and actively aligning and linking humanitarian response with government programmes leveraging comparative advantages.

Previous outputs⁵ of the CCD Social Protection Working Group (CCD SPWG), as well as related contributions⁶ to the Grand Bargain Sub-workstream on Linking Cash with Social Protection, have advocated for greater inclusion of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and specifically local civil society, in global, regional, and local discourse on the subject. However, despite the proliferation of literature, case studies, and existing frameworks on social protection in humanitarian contexts to date, there exists no guidance specifically for NGOs on whether and how to engage with systems of SP.

This document provides an initial operational framework⁷ to guide decision-making as NGOs engage with SP systems and programmes. It outlines key guiding principles and specifies the value-add of NGOs engaging with systems of SP. It aims to complement and balance the considerable existing work aimed at, where possible and appropriate, supporting governments' system strengthening and the UN to contribute to and complement SP in humanitarian contexts.

CCD PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING WITH SOCIAL PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS

Since both, government social protection assistance and humanitarian programmes can use cash transfers to meet needs, Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) interventions can provide a direct link between systems. In this way, NGOs have an important role in realising universal access to social protection and supporting the systems that can deliver social protection during crises. This includes temporarily increasing the number of recipients/case load or rapidly scaling to reach more vulnerable disaster-affected people (horizontal expansion); temporarily increasing the value or duration of benefits to disaster affected populations (vertical expansion); using existing social protection infrastructure for delivery (piggy-backing); [strengthening shock-responsiveness](#); or adapting SP mechanisms as appropriate and feasible⁸.

CCD members (comprised of international and local NGOs) are committed to the following principles:

1. Work with and within SP systems wherever possible and appropriate.

We, as CCD members, commit to systematically considering whether it is possible and appropriate to engage with existing SP systems in the contexts where we work. We do so, considering whether and how the engagement is possible, while recognising that it may not always be appropriate to engage with SP in all humanitarian contexts.⁹

We acknowledge that progressive engagement with social protection may ultimately change our long-held role as delivery agents and that of the international humanitarian system more widely. However, this does not supersede our imperative to ensure timely, appropriate, sustainable, accountable, and predictable support to communities affected by crises. To this end, we commit to assessing the feasibility of engaging with existing formal SP systems in every context and engaging wherever appropriate and feasible. We also commit to promoting the humanitarian community's commitment to local actor and system strengthening approaches (e.g., national governments, local civil society formal and informal SP linkages). Where this is not appropriate, we endeavour to coordinate and collaborate to provide more coherent and systematic support.

2. The rights-based approach.

As rights-based organisations, we believe in the necessity of SP floors¹⁰. To that aim, we help civil society and governments realise their commitments to human rights and support them to find ways to deliver the universal right to national and locally led SP. We do this by influencing and improving SP programme needs assessments, categorical targeting, communications, and design, and elevating the voice of marginalised communities as well vulnerable groups (e.g. children, elderly, minorities, refugees, etc.) who can be disproportionately affected by crisis-shocks, so that SP interventions are sensitive to the particular needs of these groups and reach those in need regardless of status across contexts in a shock-responsive and adaptive manner.

3. Humanitarian principles.

Our commitment to neutral, independent, and impartial action guides how we engage with governments to protect the well-being and safety of affected communities to deliver in humanitarian contexts. This may prevent us from working with governments, for example, if they are party to conflict. Where direct engagement is not possible, we will seek to collaborate and coordinate with other actors to deliver a more coherent humanitarian response that provides systematic and predictable support, akin to SP support, to recipients regardless of status as far as possible and appropriate, while advocating for strengthened, principled, and inclusive shock responsive SP based on previously established universal SP floors. Furthermore, since protection principles are a cornerstone of NGO humanitarian programming, in collaboration with others, CCD members have developed strong systems and training to ensure safe programming approaches and protection concerns are mainstreamed throughout the humanitarian project cycle. These principles are critical to be mainstreamed when seeking to engage social protection systems.

4. Community-based, localised action.

Locally based and context-driven, we listen to and promote the voices of affected communities and collaborate with civil society organisations (CSOs) and informal community groups that comprise the fabric of society.

CCD members prioritise well-developed accountable processes that are responsive to recipient's grievances, and that can support government systems to be more responsive to community priorities and perceptions through strengthened social accountability and community engagement practices, effective feedback and grievance mechanisms, etc., facilitating Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus leadership.

5. Gender transformative approach.

As organisations that commit to gender-transformative programmes, we believe that universal SP floors help counterbalance gender inequalities, which persist across contexts. Effective implementation of the right to social protection can help transform assigned gender roles and inequalities; for example, by recognising, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work in support of vulnerable women¹¹. We can do this by influencing SP programmes to be more gender sensitive.

6. Do No Harm.

In the design and delivery of humanitarian aid must apply safe programming approaches and [NGOs must at minimum ensure they are not duplicating efforts](#), systems, or undermining existing effective social protection systems.

[Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: A gamechanger in supporting people through crises, February 2019.](#)

Where Social Protection systems and programmes are unable or unwilling to adequately respond to the idiosyncratic and covariate needs of populations including

refugees, migrants, or internally displaced people in a shock-responsive, inclusive, and comprehensive manner.

Social Protection floors refer to nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees that should ensure, as a minimum, that, over the lifecycle, all in need have access to essential healthcare and to basic income security which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level (International Labour Organisation (ILO)).

Action Against Hunger, "[Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work through universal social protection](#)," June 2021.

HOW CCD MEMBERS CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

CCD can leverage the operational last-mile delivery capacity of its members, advocacy capacity through a strong collective NGO voice, thought leadership through the development of collaboration tools and guidance, and influence policy at local and global levels¹².

Inclusion and last-mile accountability: As actors experienced in last mile delivery in complex and fragile environments where government may lack reach and to marginalised groups such as those who are forcibly displaced, we are well-positioned to enhance the last-mile accountability of SP systems. We can do this by contributing to SP design and policies; establishing, testing, or managing and leveraging grievance and accountability mechanisms; working with governments to engage communities about SP interventions and vice-versa;

raising the voice of CSOs and marginalised or vulnerable communities, especially those who can be traditionally excluded from SP systems such as refugees, migrants, and internally displaced populations; supporting (rather than undermining) existing informal SP mechanisms (e.g. VSLAs, remittances); or lobbying for and helping to deliver participatory, inclusive, and accountable SP.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, [World Vision Bangladesh worked with local civil society and government](#) to improve access to social safety net programmes and [social accountability](#) through the Citizen Voice Action project model, effectively leveraged in development contexts. The various aspects of this programme including community engagement, joint social audits, and information sharing about government policy commitments, access, and the eligibility criteria of the Social Safety Net Programme, helped to raise awareness and knowledge among vulnerable community members, especially women and ethnic minority groups, about their entitlement to SP support provided by the Bangladeshi

government. This work resulted in a 69-point increase in access to the social safety net programme from 5% to 74% from baseline to endline, effectively strengthening existing Government SP systems and enhancing equitable and informed access and benefits.

Agility, speed, and innovation: More than government systems, we can change delivery modalities based on context and needs with agility, and can easily test approaches (i.e., delivery mechanisms, or new technologies that facilitate digital targeting, payments, data, monitoring, and information systems) to adapt design and delivery based on evidence, what works best in each context, and in line with needs and preferences. This allows CCD members to help respond quickly in a crisis to complement a government response and can provide learning that can help strengthen government systems to respond more quickly.

CCD members have also demonstrated that collaborative, innovative approaches can



Credit: Neetu Mahil/ IRC Afghanistan

save time and money, making humanitarian responses, and potentially SP systems, more efficient and streamlined. CCD members should always look to innovate in partnership with a government system.

During COVID 19, a consortium comprised of Action Against Hunger, Catholic Relief Services, and Relief International filled gaps in the Philippines national social protection scheme by reaching those excluded due to their IDP status and for others, topping up the transfer value from the survival minimum expenditure basket (MEB) to meet the required targeted needs. The consortium enhanced the cash by linking to other SP programmes, and providing access to other risk mitigation initiatives, such as microinsurance and providing resilience advice to households.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, [Save the Children worked with the Fiji Council of Social Services \(FCOSS\), other Government offices, NGOs, UN agencies, and Vodafone](#) to rapidly pivot their mobile money program to meet new needs, as part of a shock-responsive SP system. The program aimed to “catalyse further impact by providing technical assistance to the Government of Fiji to strengthen existing SP systems, including identifying crisis affected communities; digitising existing and new registrations; performing data management and analysis to ensure targeting of priority groups (i.e., female-headed households, survivors of gender-based violence, people with disabilities, and the sick and elderly).”

Expertise across humanitarian-development policy and operations: CCD members, many of whom are humanitarian and development actors as well as policy advocates and implementers, have long-term operational footprints that span the humanitarian-development nexus. Drawing on the respective strengths and skills of

CCD’s membership, especially with respect to internal development, policy, and advocacy, we can improve SP in crisis contexts by building capacity on preparedness planning, resilience interventions, pre-emptive and shock responsive SP, risk analysis and mitigation, and linkages to longer term aspects of SP (e.g., livelihoods and labour opportunities, insurance, transformative of gender inequalities). [Oxfam has documented 12 case studies on social protection in humanitarian crisis](#) that illustrates these and other ways of applying social protection approaches across contexts. Further, as part of exit strategies, we can advocate for more inclusive, accountable, and shock-responsive SP based on the pre-establishment of SP floors and inclusive policies and legal frameworks.

CARE, in consortium with WFP, World Vision and Action Against Hunger, created a programme funded by USAID, [Kore Lavi](#) which helped the Haitian Government launch and lead a nation-wide Social Safety Net for the extremely poor. The consortium helped the government adopt a national poverty and vulnerability targeting mechanism, which enabled the most vulnerable households to access nutritious, locally produced foods.

Commitment to collaboration¹³: We recognise the need for coherence across humanitarian responses to deliver more systematic, consistent, and people-centred support to those affected by crises. Where transferring caseloads to government SP systems is not possible or appropriate, CCD members will collaborate to instead align transfer values and other design features with existing programs; improve referrals for services across CCD members, other NGOs, and the UN; commit to interoperability of systems and data sharing agreements.

We can share learning on our experiences to engage the wider humanitarian system, donors, and government on what works for people affected by crisis. Along with other actors, we can work towards minimum standards for SP in humanitarian response and advocate for humanitarian system to commit to these standards.

As part of the Kenyan COVID-19 response and in alignment with *Inua Jamii*, the government's flagship social assistance programme, a consortium formed by Oxfam, ACTED, Concern Worldwide, local NGOs CREAW, Kenya Red Cross, and the Wangu Kanja foundation helped meet the basic needs of over 140,000 people with three monthly cash transfers distributed by Safaricom and through the mobile phone payment system, MPESA to minimise physical contact. Cash transfers were complemented with referrals to existing health, legal, social, and shelter services as part of the SGBV component of this project co-implemented by WKF and CREAW. This programme linked support to advocacy, campaigning for [this programme to be available nationally](#) so that [all vulnerable Kenyans are better covered by greater state SP](#), including with better [access to social services](#). Humanitarian programmes such as these mirror SP with access to social services and assistance where there is a lack of state provision.

In Colombia, seven CCD member organisations across two consortia including the [VenEsperanza](#) cash consortium (comprised of the International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, and World Vision) and the Cash for Urban Assistance (CUA) consortium (comprised of Action against Hunger, Danish Refugee Council and the Norwegian Refugee Council), have led efforts to collaborate with

the Government of Colombia's policy framework on SP. This has included the harmonisation of transfer values, integration of local actors, organisation and authorities in the referral process, and the redesign of the federal policy to enable lump sum transfers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interoperability and Data Rights: CCD members continue to work on improving data interoperability and ensuring data solutions are people centred. As a next phase of its DSA¹⁴, the CCD aims to enhance capacity, build standards, and influence key stakeholders to foster greater data portability to shift ownership over personal data, collected as part of CVA programs, from humanitarian agencies to the affected people by identifying and addressing barriers to the safe, people-centred, and efficient collection, management, sharing and portability of personal data and system interoperability.

CCD's mission is to improve the efficiency, scale, and speed of CVA by amplifying the impact of NGOs through inter-agency collaboration. In 2019, the CEOs of the 14 CCD global member agencies confirmed their commitment to "enable, facilitate, and drive a shared CCD vision, agenda, and operational support" through a global collaboration agreement signed during the GB meetings. The basis of agreement is shared capacity, interoperability, collective impact, and systems' change.

CCD's data sharing agreement is being used in Colombia for de-duplication across CCD members and UN agencies with over US\$ 4m in savings and has resulted in a shortened and harmonized project cycle across participating agencies.



Credit: World Vision Bangladesh

FRAMEWORK FOR NGOS TO ENGAGE WITH SOCIAL PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING

This is an overview of a framework for NGOs to engage with SP in humanitarian work from a project cycle perspective with key questions for field practitioners to determine further in-depth analysis, with the level of engagement depending on context, gaps, and the capabilities of different humanitarian actors, including NGOs to contribute across SP typologies (i.e., design tweaks, horizontal or vertical expansion, piggybacking, alignment, etc.) represented in a given context. It is a summary of a more detailed toolkit forthcoming, which includes [more examples of CCD members' collaborative work on SP](#) and leverages this in-depth [bibliography](#). The framework intentionally focuses on

'traditional' humanitarian programming (i.e., first-phase response delivery) but we recognise that NGOs increasingly work in longer term ways and there is frequently a fluid line between humanitarian and development operations. This is particularly true when we consider nexus programming, anticipatory action, and engaging our advocacy colleagues. This framework is the result of analysis of established external SP approaches as well as the guidelines of all CCD members which contributed to the combined approach below, in particular the work of CRS, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision. This is still a work in progress and reflects current thinking, as we seek to refine and consolidate a common operational approach for our members to adopt, promote, and share with further NGO and other stakeholders.

Steps to integrate humanitarian response leveraging Cash Voucher Assistance in a social protection framework

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------|---------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Humanitarian project cycle | Context analysis, Needs analysis, gender analysis, community engagement | | | IMPLEMENTATION Target, register, deliver. | EXIT | EVALUATION/ LEARNING | |
| STEPS OF SP FRAMEWORK | 1. What exists | 2. Gap analysis | 3. Strengths/ added value | 4. Capacity analysis | 5. Utilise/ support/ collaborate | 6. Exit & Sustainability | 7. Evaluation & Learning |

STEPS to integrate humanitarian response leveraging Cash Voucher Assistance into social protection framework

0 Determine Objective: What is your starting point and what is the objective of your engagement?

1. Humanitarian response through SP systems - during crisis; 2. Preparedness of systems - pre-crisis 3. Designing new programme - non-crisis time

1 What exists: What formal and informal social protection exists (that is in line with your project objective)

During a response: explore horizontally through the SP delivery chain; Pre-crisis: analyse vertically through SP 'building blocks'

2 Gap analysis: What are the weaknesses/gaps & political economy preventing SP effectiveness during shocks?

During a response: Consider along the SP delivery chain for relevant SP intervention; Pre-crisis: Analyse vertically through SP 'building blocks'

3 Strengths/Added value: What is your added value - the strengths of your implementing office?

NGOs contribution to SP can be categorised in 5 areas, each of which can be explored to identify strengths (e.g., targeting, data management, grievance process, referrals, etc.).

4 Capacity analysis: What is your capacity and experience to engage in a social protection?

Assess the NGO's country office's (or the CCD + partners') capacity & experience to engage based on the level of maturity of the government social protection intervention.

5 Where to engage: what are the existing systems and structures you can support or (strengthen)?

What existing structures/system you can use or support (reinforce) to deliver faster & better during a shock or that you can help support/build to deliver during a future shock? Consider along the project delivery cycle, based on analysis in steps 1-3. If no social protection systems, can you work with government national disaster management systems and/or collaborate with other non-government actors?

6 Exit & Sustainability & inclusive, rights-based SP

Based on previous analysis of policy & practice (with advocacy colleagues), consider links (referrals & advocacy) to social protection & sustainability as part of the exit strategy.

7 Evaluation & learning

Monitor effectiveness of engaging with SP: Assess progress of humanitarian response towards integration and harmonisation with SP systems (using the OPM and Mercy Corps integration framework) and share learning with actors, including government.

FOOTNOTES

1. [Global Humanitarian Overview 2021](#)
2. Ibid.
3. In response to COVID-19, national governments increased social assistance via cash transfer by 120% from January 2020 to May 2021 according to a [Real-time review of country measures entitled Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19](#)
4. We are referring to formal Social Protection, which is most often delivered by governments, while acknowledging that Social Protection –commonly understood to be a set of policies and programmes aimed at protecting poor or vulnerable people against poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout their lifecycle, and enabling them to better deal with shocks that impact on living standards and long-term wellbeing – is comprised of informal and formal initiatives and a range of interventions, both contributory and non-contributory.
5. [Inclusive Social Protection in Humanitarian Response: Is there a role for CCD?](#) and [Responding to the COVID-19 crisis: Linking humanitarian cash and social protection in practice](#)
6. i.e., [Lois Austin and Valentina Barca for The Grand Bargain Sub-Group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection, Learning on linking humanitarian cash and social protection: Synthesis Note, May 2021](#)
7. Complete guidance including on this framework is forthcoming
8. [Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: A gamechanger in supporting people through crises, February 2019.](#)
9. Where Social Protection systems and programmes are unable or unwilling to adequately respond to the idiosyncratic and covariate needs of populations including refugees, migrants, or internally displaced people in a shock-responsive, inclusive, and comprehensive manner.
10. Social Protection floors refer to nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees that should ensure, as a minimum, that, over the lifecycle, all in need have access to essential healthcare and to basic income security which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level (International Labour Organisation (ILO)).
11. Action Against Hunger, [“Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work through universal social protection,”](#) June 2021.
12. More examples of CCD members’ collaborative work on social protection can be found [here](#).
13. CCD’s mission is to improve the efficiency, scale, and speed of CVA by amplifying the impact of NGOs through inter-agency collaboration. In 2019, the CEOs of the 14 CCD global member agencies confirmed their commitment to “enable, facilitate, and drive a shared CCD vision, agenda, and operational support” through a global collaboration agreement signed during the GB meetings. The basis of agreement is shared capacity, interoperability, collective impact, and systems’ change.
14. CCD’s data sharing agreement is being used in Colombia for de-duplication across CCD members and UN agencies with over US\$ 4m in savings and has resulted in a shortened and harmonized project cycle across participating agencies.