

# Social safety nets in fragile and conflict-affected states

---

*Rachel Cooper*  
*University of Birmingham*  
*9 November 2018*

## Question

*What evidence is there of social safety nets working in fragile and conflict-affected states, and how have they been supported by national governments and the international community?*

## Contents

1. Summary
2. Social safety nets
3. Social safety nets examples from Afghanistan
4. Social safety nets examples from fragile and conflict-affected states
5. Social safety nets examples for returnees and IDPs
6. References

---

*The K4D helpdesk service provides brief summaries of current research, evidence, and lessons learned. Helpdesk reports are not rigorous or systematic reviews; they are intended to provide an introduction to the most important evidence related to a research question. They draw on a rapid desk-based review of published literature and consultation with subject specialists.*

*Helpdesk reports are commissioned by the UK Department for International Development and other Government departments, but the views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of DFID, the UK Government, K4D or any other contributing organisation. For further information, please contact [helpdesk@k4d.info](mailto:helpdesk@k4d.info).*

## 1. Summary

Social safety nets in fragile and conflict-affected states often include cash and in-kind transfers, school feeding programmes and public works programmes (O'Brien, Scott, Smith, Barca, Karden, Holmes, Watson & Congrave, 2018). Programmes often target vulnerable households, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in order to reduce their exposure to shocks and recourse to negative coping strategies, and to strengthen social cohesion (see for example, Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018). In protracted crises, humanitarian actors frequently use social safety net approaches and there is overlap between humanitarian assistance and social protection (O'Brien et al., 2018). In addition to safety nets, social protection programmes in fragile and conflict-affected states can also target government institutions, building the government's capacity to deliver longer-term social protection programmes.

The country examples presented in this review illustrate that even if government-led social protection programmes exist, for example national cash transfer programmes, fragility and conflict affects and can destroy their ability to function. For example, Yemen's Social Welfare Fund delivered cash transfers to 1.5 million households until early 2015<sup>1</sup>. Pre-existing national programmes and systems can be useful to donors and implementing agencies delivering social protection even if they are not functioning. For example, pre-existing beneficiary lists can make beneficiary targeting easier.

However, weak institutions, low institutional and absorptive capacity and damaged infrastructure can pose implementation challenges (Holmes, 2010, p. 4). For example, limited government ownership of a World Bank financed project to improve pension administration in Afghanistan slowed the project's progress (World Bank, 2018b, p. 23). Humanitarian responses often create new emergency structures as national or local institutions are not able to respond a crisis (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 23). However, in Iraq, this may have led to duplication as both the Iraqi government and humanitarian agencies were providing cash transfers to IDPs (Smart, 2017).

Selected insights from the evidence on fragile and conflict-affected states includes:

- Social safety nets and social protection programmes are often donor funded and implemented by UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs); the linkages between implementing agencies and government institutions vary from programmes that operate in parallel, to those that 'piggyback' on elements of pre-existing systems and those that seek to build and strength government systems. Programmes that work with government systems may have the goal of transferring ownership to the government (see for example section 3 on Afghanistan);
- Large-scale programmes include World Food Programme interventions (e.g. food assistance, cash transfers and public works in South Sudan) and a UNICEF/World Bank emergency cash transfer programme in Yemen, which replaces a pre-existing government-led scheme;
- Small-scale interventions include UNICEF's cash transfer for children with disabilities in Syria and pilot projects in Afghanistan;

---

<sup>1</sup> Accessed 8 November 2018: <http://sp-fragility-displacement.onetec.eu/docs/Country%20Profile%20-%20Yemen.pdf>

- Project results, including beneficiary numbers are readily available, however, evidence of long-term impact or impact on goals such as educational attainment or improved food security are less readily available. It is difficult to conduct programme evaluations in fragile and conflict-affected countries as it may not be possible to access beneficiaries due to insecurity or to track beneficiaries due to high levels of internal displacement (Aurino, Tranchant, Diallo & Gelli, 2018, p. 15);
- Returnees and IDPs face barriers in accessing social protection, for example, in Afghanistan returnee children have struggled to access the school system due to problems with having their school certificates recognised (UNHCR, 2018);
- Security concerns can affect the scale and reach of social protection programmes, for example, in Sudan it is hard to reach IDPs in non-government controlled areas (UNOCHA, 2018);
- Humanitarian agencies often work with host communities as well as IDPs in order to promote social cohesion;
- Gender sensitive programming is important as women can face barriers accessing social protection, for example, women in Afghanistan cannot travel far from their villages, which could hinder their ability to attend registration centres (World Bank, 2018b). The World Bank's funded cash transfer programme also had gendered impacts on food security: male food security increased, but women's did not. Cash-based programmes do not necessarily have impacts on gender norms or roles or equality (see for example, UNHCR, 2018);
- Donor harmonisation can also be a problem, for example, in Iraq, until recently, there was no agreed cash transfer amount amongst implementing agencies.

The evidence base on social protection in fragile and conflict-affected states, particularly in relation to provision and policy/programme impacts is generally weak (Slater, Mallet & Carpenter, 2012, p. 1). For example, knowledge gaps include the evidence of social protection on children's education, including whether effects vary by type of programme, child gender or degree of conflict intensity (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 3)<sup>2</sup>. This lack of evidence critically hinders the design of context and child sensitive responses that can promote the accumulation of human capital, particularly in situations of protracted fragility (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 3). In terms of displacement, there is lots of information on programmes working with refugees, for example, Syrian refugees in Jordan. During the course of this review only limited evidence was found of programmes addressing the needs of returnees to fragile and conflict-affected states. IDPs are included in a number of the social protection programmes outlined in the review. In selecting examples, this review largely focused on states that are included in DFID's high fragility category<sup>3</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> For example, conflict is likely to increase the opportunity cost of education as child labour is a common coping strategy in the face of conflict-related shocks (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 8).

<sup>3</sup> Accessed 8 November 2018:  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/722389/Methodology-Note-Fragile-and-conflict-affected-states-and-regions.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/722389/Methodology-Note-Fragile-and-conflict-affected-states-and-regions.pdf)

## 2. Social safety nets

Social protection is “is the set of public actions that address the deprivation and vulnerabilities of the poorest, and the need of the currently non-poor for security in the face of shocks and the particular demands of different stages of the life cycle” (O’Brien et al., 2018). ‘Safety nets’ are a form of social protection which help people meet immediate basic needs in times of crisis, with the short-term goals of mitigating the immediate impact of shocks and smoothing consumption (Browne, 2015). Common social safety nets in fragile and crisis-affected states include unconditional cash transfers, conditional transfers (e.g. beneficiaries must comply with certain conditions such as sending their children to school or attending a health centre), school feeding programmes, and in-kind transfers (food, shelter, agricultural inputs). The World Bank (2018) has a wider definition of safety nets that conceptualises them in terms of social assistance programme. As such, they also include social pensions, public works programmes, and fee waivers and targeted subsidies (World Bank, 2018).

During the course of this review, the World Bank, UNICEF, WFP and others were found to be actively supporting or implementing social protection programmes in fragile and conflict-affected states. For example, in South Sudan, all social safety net programming consists of World Food Programme (WFP) financed and implemented programmes (World Bank, 2018, p. 3). The WFP uses both in-kind transfers (general food distribution, blanket supplementary feeding programmes and targeted supplementary feeding programmes for internally displaced persons and returnees) and Food Assistance for Assets projects (a public works programme) (World Bank, 2018; WFP, 2018).

### Social protection in fragile and conflict-affected states

Delivering social protection in fragile states is hugely difficult (Harvey et al., 2007). Long-term government-led safety nets are rarely in place in fragile and conflict-affected countries (Holmes, 2010, p. 4). In countries where social safety nets were in place pre-crisis, for example in Nepal and Tajikistan, the impact of conflict limits and can destroy the delivery of interventions (Holmes, 2010, p. 4). Social protection programmes can play an important role in fragile and conflict-affected states: for example, public works programmes can provide an income and reduce the use of harmful coping mechanisms such as selling assets and removing children from school (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 19).

Challenges for implementing social protection programmes include weak institutions, low institutional and absorptive capacity and damaged infrastructure (Holmes, 2010, p. 4). Expenditure on social protection as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) is low in conflict-affected countries (Slater, Mallet & Carpenter, 2012, p. 2). Particularly in Africa, government delivered or managed social assistance is highly constrained, with international agencies dominating instead (Slater, Mallet & Carpenter, 2012, p. 2). Assistance is often small-scale, limited in coverage and funded via short-term or humanitarian budget lines (Slater, Mallet & Carpenter, 2012, p. 2). Government-led social protection is more developed in South Asia, however, it is often hampered by problems including low coverage, low transfer value, elite control of access and lack of coordination (Slater, Mallet & Carpenter, 2012, p. 2).

## Trends

The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2016) argue that within social protection programmes in fragile and risk-prone contexts there has been a shift towards cash-based programming to provide safety nets. For example, in fragile and humanitarian contexts where social protection structures are not in place, but markets continue to function (FAO, 2016, p. 4). The benefits of cash transfers include minimising recourse to negative coping strategies, allowing families to reduce their exposure to hazards, promoting public works programmes to create and rehabilitate infrastructure, and in the context of forced displacement, strengthen the capacity of host communities to tolerate additional strain on resources (FAO, 2016, p. 1). However, according to the FAO (2016, p. 4) more needs to be done enhance the potential of cash-based interventions including strengthening partnerships with financial institutions and mobile phone companies, using e-payments, digital transfers and where possible leveraging cash transfers to build medium and long-term social assistance structures that can be used in recurrent emergencies. FAO (2016, p. 5) have developed CASH+ interventions which combine transfers of cash and productive in-kind assets.

Within the literature there is also increasing attention to building risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems (see for example, FAO, 2016). A recent research programme, the Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems study (2015-2018) aimed to strengthen the evidence base as to when and how social protection systems could better respond to shocks in low-income countries and fragile and conflict-affected states (O'Brien, Scott, Smith, Barca, Karden, Holmes, Watson & Congrave, 2018). The programme identified five key options for shock-responsive adaption:

- design tweaks (making small adjustments to a routine social protection programme);
- piggybacking (where an emergency response uses an established system or programme to deliver something new);
- vertical expansion (temporary increase of the value or duration of an intervention to meet beneficiaries additional needs);
- horizontal expansion (temporary inclusion of a new caseload e.g. enrolling more households)
- alignment (designing an intervention with elements resembling others that already exist or are planned, but without integrating the two) (O'Brien et al., 2018).

There is considerable evidence to show that across countries, people regularly pursue informal social protection in order to mitigate the risks they face (Slater, Mallet & Carpenter, 2012, p. 2). For example, available longitudinal data from Afghanistan illustrates that surveyed urban households largely had strong social networks from which they borrowed: effectively their only source of social protection (Pain, 2012). Formal social protection, i.e. provided by the state or other agencies is limited in Afghanistan (Pain, 2012).

## Case study: Education

A 2010 background paper prepared for UNESCO examined the role of social protection programmes in supporting education in conflict-affected contexts, drawing on existing literature (Holmes, 2010). Experience suggests that education subsidies and fee waivers offer important potential to offset costs and increase enrolment and attendance, but have not been widely implemented (Holmes, 2010, p. iv). The direct and indirect costs of schooling to families often

represent the single most important factor excluding children from poor households from school in fragile and conflict-affected settings (Holmes, 2010, p. 1). The paper argues that long-term funding, institutional coordination and support for capacity building are needed to deliver sustainable social protection at scale, which supports households to meet both the direct and indirect costs of education in conflict-affected countries (Holmes, 2010, p. iv).

In situations where families and communities are chronically displaced as a result of localised, ongoing conflict, even if schools exist, children may not be able to enrol because they lack the correct documentation or the school fees (Holmes, 2010, p. 5). Public works programmes can achieve the dual goals of building school infrastructure and increasing school attendance as wages paid in cash are used for school fees, but, a concern remains about the quality of education as well as adequate staffing and school resources (Holmes, 2010, p. 5).

School feeding programmes are one of the most common social protection initiatives and offer a free meal, snack or take-home ration to attending children with the general goals of promoting education and health, and programme goals in conflict-affected settings including child protection, safety and normalcy (Holmes, 2010, p. 5; Aurino et al., 2018, p. 5). Programmes are normally supported by donors and implemented by NGOs or UN agencies, reaching larger number numbers than other social protection initiatives (Holmes, 2010, p. 5). For example, within a year of the collapse of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the World Food Programme was feeding 350,000 schoolchildren (however, the 2001/2 school-age population was 3.4 million) (Holmes, 2010, p. 5). However, evidence of school feeding programmes' impact on school enrolment, attendance and attainment is mixed (Holmes, 2010, p. 6).

In transitional contexts, school feeding can be used to assist restoration of education systems, encourage the return of IDPs and promote social cohesion amongst children (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 5). School feeding may not be a viable solution in high-intensity conflict areas where schools are closed or other operational constraints impede effective implementation (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 6). Fear and insecurity may constitute additional barriers in conflict settings, for example, girls may be kept out of school due to fears that girls are more likely to be targets of violence (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 7).

## Recommendations from the literature

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is an eight-year global research programme exploring livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict-affected situations<sup>4</sup>. A 2017 Briefing Paper based on findings from a three-year research programme into how people make a living in rural Afghanistan and the role played by the government, aid agencies, markets and donors, includes a number of recommendations, including:

- Urgent attention is required to address the immediate needs of a deeply impoverished rural population, many of whom are food insecure, without decent work and without the means in the near future to be able to secure it. Direct cash transfers would need to be context specific, for example, transfers to women may be possible if appropriately framed as a family payment or child welfare payment. However, in some regions this would be seen as deeply subversive (Pain, Jackson, Huot & Minoia, 2017, p. 4).

---

<sup>4</sup> Accessed 5 November 2018: <https://securelivelihoods.org/who-we-are/>

- Long term decent job creation is more likely to lie in the urban than the rural economy. However it is difficult to see under current circumstances how this will come about. In the short term focused labour intensive rural infrastructure and urban public work programmes could do much to address the acute need for work and income of Afghanistan's rural population (Pain, Jackson, Huot & Minoia, 2017, p. 5).
- Both cash transfers and employment schemes would need to be based "on a careful analysis of context to take account of the ability of local power holders to control and capture external resources" (Pain, Jackson, Huot & Minoia, 2017, p. 4).

A 2012 SLRC briefing paper on social protection in conflict-affected settings recommends:

- Conflict-sensitive programmes approaches: it is important to deliver social protection programmes in a way that do not inadvertently contribute to conflict;
- Build on what is there, i.e. on the resilience of people and communities: there is substantial evidence that individuals, households and communities use their own resources and initiative to access basic services (Slater, Mallet & Carpenter, 2012, p. 4).

Holmes (2010, p. 10) argues that four important considerations to take into account when designing social protection programmes in conflict-affected areas are the type of social protection intervention, targeting, length and amount of cash transfers and the existence of complementary activities. For example, seed distribution, livestock restocking, and skills training.

### 3. Social safety nets examples from Afghanistan

#### The World Bank: Pension Administration and Safety Net Project

Running from 2010 to end of 2017, the project's aims were:

- improving the administration of the public pension scheme;
- develop administrative systems for safety net interventions, with a focus on targeting and benefit payment delivery,
- Cash benefits to the poorest families in four pilot districts as a first step in developing a sustainable approach to safety nets in Afghanistan (World Bank, 2018b, p. 1, p. 6).

#### Pension Administration

The Government of Afghanistan supports two pension schemes, spending approximately 0.5% of GDP on each scheme in 2009 (World Bank, 2018b, p. 5). In 2009, the Public Sector Pension had approximately 60,000 registered public sector employees and uniformed members of the police and military; the Martyrs and Disabled Pension had approximately 220,000 survivors of the conflicts and 90,000 persons with disabilities (World Bank, 2018b, p. 5). The Pensions Department of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) administers both schemes (World Bank, 2018b, p. 5).

Project activities for both programmes included software development and record cleansing and verification (the Ministry was originally using a paper-based system and as part of the transition pensioners were asked to appear in person as proof of life) (World Bank, 2018b, pp. 34-39). In order to provide smooth delivery, the World Bank supported a power generator at the Pensions Department, the opening of individual bank accounts for all pensioners and management

information systems installations in four provinces (Nangarhar, Balkh, Herat and Kandahar) (World Bank, 2018b, pp. 34- 39).

Project results include:

- 114,100 beneficiaries registered in a new electronic management information system for the public sector pension programme against a revised target of 85,000;
- 0 beneficiaries registered in a new electronic management system for the martyrs and disabled pension programme (the World Bank has continued to support this transition and there were 3,000 beneficiaries registered by May 2018);
- Development of an operational manual for the Pensions Department; training for 88 Pension Department staff in how to implement new rules/procedures against a target of 50; and, pension eligibility verification and recertification procedures defined and applied (World Bank, 2018b, pp. 25-28).

### **Safety net pilot programme**

Project activities included developing administrative systems, designing and implementing a targeting process, and delivering targeted benefit payments (including payment service provider's fees and facilitating partners services) (World Bank, 2018b, p. 9). The World Bank aimed to develop scalable systems for delivering social protection (World Bank, 2018b, p. 54). For beneficiaries the intended outcomes included smoothing food consumption, increasing food security and reducing reliance on harmful coping mechanisms through seasonal shocks (World Bank, 2018b, p. 54).

During the pilot phase (2010 to 2013), a one-off cash transfer of between USD 40 and USD 200 (depending on the number of dependents in the household) was issued as a manual payment during the lean winter season (World Bank, 2018b, p. 42). Beneficiaries were selected from a pool of 70,000 families who had registered in the management information system (World Bank, 2018b, p. 41).

In the project completion report, the World Bank (2018b, p. 42) stated that the transfer was relatively large and could attract elite capture; a one-off payment did not serve as a safety net; and manual cash transfers were subject to leakages (World Bank, 2018b, p. 42). During the project's additional financing phase the transfer amount was reduced and two payments were issued (one before and one after winter) for two years and e-payment was introduced via bank electronic transfer or by mobile phone via two mobile money operators (World Bank, 2018b, p. 42, p. 39).

Project results include

- 55% of safety net beneficiaries coming from the poorest 30% against a revised target of 60% (the original project design did not have a value for this indicator, the 60% target was added during the additional financing phase);
- 72% of beneficiaries receiving their payments on time against a revised target of 60%;
- 26,938 families receiving assistance against a 2012 baseline of 16,465 and a revised target of 28,000 (World Bank, 2018b, p. 27);
- 4 staff members in a dedicated safety nets unit within the MoLSAMD against a revised target of 6 staff (World Bank, 2018b, p. 33).



## Project evaluation

The World Bank rated the project's performance as moderately satisfactory (World Bank, 2018b, p. 2). Project implementation challenges included unpredictable and risky security, poor accessibility to project areas and weak capacity of government and community institutions implementing the project (World Bank, 2018b, p. 5). As part of the additional financing for the project in 2013, the Bank envisaged changing the implementation arrangements for the day-to-day project management from the Project Coordination Unit staffed by consultants to structures within the MoLSAMD (World Bank, 2018b, p. 11). However, this was not possible due to a lack of capacity in the MoLSAMD (World Bank, 2018b, p. 11).

An impact evaluation for the safety net component involved a cluster-randomised controlled trial comparing a sample group of beneficiaries with a control group (World Bank, 2018b, p. 54). Findings from the evaluation include:

- The transfer improved food security (significant reduction in number of households reporting no food in the household in the previous 30 days, and in households reporting either any adult male or any male/female child going to bed hungry in the previous 30 days) but not per capita food consumption;
- Women's food security was not affected, which may be due to women's ensuring everyone else's food security first or men helping themselves first
- Significant positive effects on the number of households that indicated they had recovered from the shocks they had experienced in the last year
- Increased school attendance for boys aged 6-13 who were enrolled in school, potentially due to cash transfers reducing the need for boy child labour in family work. However, cash transfers were associated with lower school attendance for girls aged 14-17 enrolled in school. This raises a point of concern for further investigation (World Bank, 2018b, pp. 55-57).
- Higher levels of confidence in public institutions, potentially due to beneficiaries having contact with public institutions, which had not previously occurred, or the results could reflect a relative decrease in confidence in the control group as a result of not receiving transfers during the trial period (World Bank, 2018b, p. 58).

The project has a number of lessons that are relevant to the implementation of social safety nets in fragile and conflict-affected states. Government ownership is critical for project success: the implementation of both pension schemes was slowed down due to limited government involvement and leadership and the reluctance of Pensions Department staff to engage with the project (World Bank, 2018b, p. 23). The Bank argues that in retrospect it would have engaged more with midlevel managers and technical staff, responsible for day-to-day project activities (World Bank, 2018b, p. 24).

Barriers to participation need to be removed, for example, the registration process needs to be flexible and reach out to those who cannot travel far from their villages including women (World Bank, 2018b, p. 24). The delivery of cash through mobile banking services in provinces where there were no banking facilities available was successful and future safety net projects, which intend to use cash, can build on the experience gained in this project and use the mobile payment mechanism (World Bank, 2018b, p. 24).

## **UNICEF: Cash Transfers**

### **Child sensitive cash transfer**

In 2017, UNICEF discontinued a child sensitive cash transfer pilot project (UNICEF, 2018, p. 57). Pilot activities included providing conditional and unconditional transfers of an annual value of USD180-250, depending on family size, to comparable, eligible households via e-payment mechanisms into beneficiary bank accounts (UNICEF, 2017, p. 55). The targeted caseload was 18,026 and round one of payment transfers was completed successfully (UNICEF, 2017, p. 55). The pilot was implemented by the MoLSAMD, a team of national technical experts was hired and the targeting process involved a cohort of social mobilisers (UNICEF, 2017, p. 55). In the long-term, UNICEF aimed at increasing the scale of interventions with the government taking ownership of the system (Samuel Hall, 2014, p. 6).

Challenges with the pilot included securing funding for sustainability and scale-up, and the project's limited connections to established MoLSAMD social protection mechanisms (UNICEF, 2018, p. 59). UNICEF is currently working on a lessons learnt, particularly in terms of establishing and administering a cash transfer system with MoLSAMD. One of the organisation's 2018 priorities is to re-strategise its social protection programme with the Ministry and development partners, and identify pathways to reach the most marginalised children (UNICEF, 2018, p. 57).

### **Small cash transfer projects**

As part of its work to improve maternal, neonatal and child health, UNICEF introduced a conditional cash transfer for institutional delivery for women (roughly the cost of transport) and community health workers (UNICEF, 2018, p. 14). In 2017, 3, 643 post-partum women who gave birth in facilities received the cash incentive and 1,260 community workers who referred or accompanied a woman also received it (UNICEF, 2018, p. 23).

In 2018, UNICEF will implement a small cash transfer initiative for the families of out-of-school adolescent girls to generate evidence on the effect of cash transfers on increasing secondary enrolment rates among girls and reducing the incidence of child marriage (UNICEF, 2018, p. 59).

### **Supporting the government to establish social protection systems**

In 2016 and 2017, UNICEF Afghanistan provided technical support to the government to assist it in drafting a national social protection policy (UNICEF, 2018, p. 59). In 2018, UNICEF Afghanistan will undertake a mapping of the social protection landscape for children to generate evidence on the number of children benefitting from existing social protection mechanisms and the potential to enhance the child-centred elements (UNICEF, 2018, p. 59).

In 2017, UNICEF supported a feasibility study, funded by DFID and co-authored with WFP and UNHCR to determine the feasibility of various cash-in-emergencies options (UNICEF, 2018, p. 59). According to UNICEF'S 2017 annual report, the draft is being finalised for submission and will serve as a stepping-stone for further discussions regarding future joint United Nations initiatives on cash in emergencies and potential partnerships with DFID (UNICEF, 2018, p. 59).

## 4. Social safety nets examples from fragile and conflict-affected states

### Mali: Educational Impacts of emergency food assistance

Aurino, Tranchant, Diallo and Gelli's (2018) working paper analyses the effects of a WFP emergency school feeding programme and a WFP general food distribution programme on children's schooling during conflict in Mali. The paper focuses on the impacts of food assistance on children's school enrolment, attendance and attainment in Mopti, central Mali (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 4). Half of Mali's population are under 15 years of age and its primary completion and literacy rates are amongst the lowest in the world (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 4).

As part of the school feeding programme, WFP and partners relied on the government's geographical targeting and provided daily hot lunches throughout the school year as an incentive for parents to enrol and keep their children in school (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 13). General food distribution involves the provision of a food ration, including basics such as cereals and oils to vulnerable households in order to help families avoid adopting detrimental coping strategies including school dropout and increased child labour (Aurino et al., 2018, pp. 7-8). The literature on general food distribution and education is strikingly limited, with the majority of available literature focusing on non-conflict situations (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 8). Unlike school feeding programmes, where the school attendance pathway is clear, the links between general food distribution and household decisions regarding child schooling are less direct (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 9).

Project results include:

- Children in the school feeding programme were nearly 11% more likely to be enrolled in school;
- School feeding had a positive effect on grade attainment: treated boys achieved an average of more than additional half-year of education compared with comparison peers, whilst girls achieved an additional 0.6 years relative to boys;
- School feeding had no significant effect on absenteeism;
- School feeding reduced the amount of time girls spent on farming and animal-rearing activities;
- General food distribution did not change enrolment and had a slightly negative effect on the grade attained, as well as increasing absenteeism by an average of an additional day a week amongst boys
- General food distribution increased boys participation and time spent in child labour (Aurino et al., 2018, p.p. 29-30, pp. 34-35).

Negative effects on school attendance in the villages receiving general food distribution can be largely explained by the intensity of the conflict: general food distribution had no effect on child absenteeism in villages where no armed groups were present, but did lead to increased absenteeism in communes and villages where armed groups were present (Aurino et al., 2018, pp. 32-33). Increases in male child labour were larger in more conflict-affected areas (Aurino et al., 2018, p. 35).

## South Sudan: Food Assistance for Assets

The World Food Programme implements its Food Assistance for Assets programme in a number of countries, including in 2017, in the parts of South Sudan, which were experiencing stability (WFP, 2018, p. 1). The South Sudanese programme focuses on asset creation activities that enhance food availability e.g. crop farms and vegetable gardens, and activities that enhance food access, e.g. community access roads. Assets are selected by community members through community-based participatory planning processes (WFP, 2018, p. 2).

Food assistance is provided to participants and their family members to meet short-term food needs (WFP, 2018, p. 2). Where markets are functioning a cash-based transfer is issued, where markets are non-functioning or access is challenging an in-kind ration is provided (WFP, 2018, p. 2). The WFP works with government at all levels from the ministries of agriculture down to state, county and boma administrators (WFP, 2018, p. 2).

Project results in 2017 include:

- 450,000 people supported;
- 11,000 metric tonnes of food assistance distributed;
- USD 4.7 million disbursed in cash based transfers;
- 24, 715 hectares of crop farms and 466 kilometres of roads built;
- 67, 215 people provided with skills development training (WFP, 2018, p. 1).

In 2018, the programme is being scaled-up to reach almost 630,000 people across all regions of the countries (WFP, 2018, p. 1). This partly reflects WFP's interest in moving away from unconditional transfers where possible (WFP, 2018, p. 1).

## Yemen: comparing cash and food transfers

Schwab's (2018) working paper for UNICEF's Office of Research compares the productive effects of cash and food transfers in Yemen. The paper studies a food assistance intervention implemented by the WFP in rural Yemen in 2011-2012, during insecurity before the full onset of the current crisis, which caused the erosion of real incomes and severe price volatility of staple goods (Schwab, 2018, p. 4, p. 12). Communities in the study were randomly assigned to receive three equal-valued food or cash transfers worth nearly USD 50 each (Schwab, 2018, p. 4). These transfers were part of a WFP emergency safety net initiative designed to assist severely food insecure households (Schwab, 2018, p. 12).

Both the cash transfer and the food transfer had modest productive impacts: cash transfers had a positive impact on livestock acquisition and food transfers increased the likelihood farming households would plant cash crops (Schwab, 2018, p. 5). Both transfer types boosted the amount of off-farm wage-work households undertook, but there was no relative difference in adult or child labour (Schwab, 2018, p. 4). Impacts on child labour are unclear: transfers do not appear to increase child labour, but the timing of the survey impedes its ability to disentangle transfers from the effect of the start of the school year (Schwab, 2018, p. 6). Relative to food beneficiaries, cash recipients consumed a more diverse diet: this may be due to food recipients switching to cash-crop production, so temporarily shifting to a more cereal based diet (Schwab, 2018, p. 7).

## Yemen: The World Bank's Emergency Crisis Response

As of January 2018, most Yemenis were in need of basic services, safety nets, job opportunities and livelihood support: there were also an estimated 3 million IDPs (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 14). The World Bank's Emergency Crisis Response, launched in 2016, works with UNDP and UNICEF, with project activities implemented through two public institutions, the Yemen Social Fund for Development (SFD<sup>5</sup>) and the Public Works Project (PWP) (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018).

Complementary to humanitarian efforts, this project seeks to provide a slightly longer-term perspective (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 17). This includes building the resilience of the SFD and the PWP, so that they can reach the most vulnerable populations, and sustain and maintain their existing service delivery institutions for post-conflict recovery (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 11). These two social protection institutions have a proven track-record and an ability to maintain political neutrality (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 11).

Activities were scaled-up in January 2018, and again in May 2018, due to the threat of famine: the Emergency Cash Transfer Program was launched to target Yemen's most vulnerable households and address food purchasing power constraints (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 15). Under this programme, cash transfers are issued to 1.5 million households in Yemen's Social Welfare Fund, which had ceased operating in early 2015 due to the conflict<sup>6</sup>.

As a multifaceted approach, the Emergency Crisis Response also includes:

- Public works programmes (targeting 500,000 with wage labour and livelihood support, generating 7-8 million working days), with communities selected based on available field data e.g. the number of IDPs and returnees, damaged infrastructure and scarcity and female-headed households prioritised in the targeting process. Each targeted household is offered a maximum number of work-days equivalent to USD 500 (usually 50-60 days) and can alternate work between the adults in the house. As part of the public works programme vulnerable youth receive wages but also skills training in delivering health, education and nutrition services in their communities;
- Increasing access to community assets (rural roads and water systems) through labour-intensive public works;
- Strengthening seven micro-finance institutions and 4,000 distressed micro-enterprises, typically farmers supported with seeds and other agricultural inputs as well as knowledge on sustainable farming techniques. Spill-over effects included farmers employing IDPs hosted in their communities and replication by farmers not in the project (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018).

---

<sup>5</sup> The SFD is a government institution launched in 1997 with funding from the World Bank to deliver social protection interventions: by 2010, 20% of its funding came from the government (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018). Al-Iryani, de Janvry & Sadoulet (2015, p. 322) argue that although, not without its weaknesses, the SFD is resilient and effective at delivering aid for development because of its direct relationship with communities, political neutrality, a flexible mode or project funding and operation and recognition by its beneficiaries of the importance of its interventions.

<sup>6</sup> This programme was administered by the Social Welfare Fund: its cash transfer programme had been operational since the mid-1990s but ceased functioning in January 2015 due to the conflict. For more information see: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2018/03/21/building-resilience-and-protecting-vulnerable-yemenis-through-cash-transfers>

Principles guiding the programme's design included fast disbursement arrangements to facilitate rapid response, prioritising the most pressing needs of the poor and conflict-affected populations, and ensuring political neutrality and inclusiveness (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, pp. 15-16).

Results in the first 18 months include:

- 1.45 million households (approx. 9 million individuals) supported by cash transfers, women are 45% of direct recipients;
- 90% of beneficiaries reported using cash transfers for food, medicine and to repay household debt;
- 217,000 people benefitted from wage employment (women 30%, IDPs 20% and youth 35%) (through the project's labour-intensive public works initiatives);
- More than 110,000 women and children under 5 have benefitted from nutrition-sensitive cash transfer;
- Project activities reached all 333 districts despite significant security challenges
- Project support for Village Cooperative Councils has also contributed to humanitarian efforts, for example, in 2016-2017, supported VCCs volunteered in implementing 1,121 humanitarian activities for organisations including the World Food Programme (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018).

Project monitoring arrangements include third-party monitoring by Moore Stephens Yemen, who verify project results, check fiduciary aspects and satisfaction levels as well as outlining lessons learnt to improve project implementation (Moore Stephens, 2017). Their 2017 second quarter report found that 97% of surveyed beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the project participatory approach and interventions. As part of Moore Stephens' monitoring arrangements trained community members send daily verbal and visual feedback via mobile and cloud-based applications (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 27). A rapid text message-based monitoring mechanism to collect immediate feedback from beneficiaries on their experience with the cash transfer processes and use is also being piloted by programme staff (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 28).

### **Relevant lessons from the programme**

Al-Ahmadi & de Silva (2018, p. 23) argue that the pre-existing capacity and delivery systems of the SFD and PWP were instrumental in achieving rapid results for the emergency response programme: normally humanitarian assistance creates new emergency structures as local institutions are not able/capable to respond to the crisis. Consequently, they argue that building and investing in local capacity and national systems during peacetime enables rapid and scalable crisis response during conflict (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 23). Related to this, donor funding is critical for preserving key national service delivery institutions during conflict: in Yemen, the government's ability to fund public institutions deteriorated, threatening them with shut down (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 31).

Political neutrality and a transparent targeting strategy are essential to ensure buy-in from diverse, often opposed actors (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 25). Conflict sensitive targeting is important: it was important not only to focus on IDPs as part of the targeting formula, but returnees, communities who have experienced high levels of conflict and high levels of malnutrition in villages (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 35). The project also needed to be adaptive to conflict conditions, for example, pre-crisis social protection institutions used manual transactions for cash payments delivered by public sector provider, whilst during the crisis mobile

money has been promoted as well as delivery by commercial banks and real-time connectivity with payment agencies (Al-Ahmadi & de Silva, 2018, p. 34).

## 5. Social safety nets examples for returnees and IDPs

### Afghanistan

#### UNHCR: Voluntary Repatriation Cash Grant

UNHCR's Voluntary Repatriation Cash Grant targets eligible documented returnees from countries including Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan (UNHCR, 2018, p. 5). It is a one-off grant delivered at one of four UNHCR encashment centres in Kabul, Nangarhar, Kandahar and Herat to address returnees' immediate needs for food and shelter: it is not designed to support sustainable reintegration (UNHCR, 2018). The payment is disbursed as cash-in-hand to the head of the household in USD through a money service provider using the hawala system (UNHCR, 2018). In March 2018 the grant was USD 200 per person, with average returnee family comprising six members: USD 50 per person is calculated to account for transport and USD 150 to account for immediate needs (UNHCR, 2018). Encashment centres also offer a range of free services including polio and measles vaccinations for children and mine risk briefings (UNHCR, 2018).

The grant is monitored through face-to-face interviews with returnees at voluntary Repatriation Centres in the country of asylum and at the encashment centre on arrival and telephone call surveys conducted with returnees one to three months after return (UNHCR, 2018). Monitoring reports show 97% of the returnees spent the grant within one to two months on food, shelter and transportation and that host communities had a more positive view of returnees (47%), than IDPs (31%) (UNHCR, 2018).

A UNHCR (2018, p. 5) case study examines the impacts on the grant on returnees from Pakistan between 2016 and 2017 (UNHCR, 2018, p. 5). Key findings from the case study include the limits of the cash grant alone in addressing some of the challenges returnees face (UNHCR, 2018, p. 2). For example, returnees use the grant to rent a house or purchase land and build a home, however, poor security of tenure and quality of shelter illustrate how returnees also need access to technical and legal support, including advice of housing, land and property rights (UNHCR, 2018, p. 2). The lengthy and expensive process for recognising school certificates is a barrier to the inclusion of returnee children in the education system (UNHCR, 2018, p. 4). This suggests there may be a stronger role for actors such as UNHCR and UNICEF to advocate with the Ministry of Education to develop a simplified process (UNHCR, 2018).

Only a small minority of male returnees used the grant as a springboard for livelihood investments (UNHCR, 2018, p. 2). A lack of jobs was reported by interviewees as a key challenge and in some cases drove further migration, including back to Pakistan (UNHCR, 2018, p. 2). Solutions to overcome this problem could include engagement, support and coaching potential returnees in their country of asylum to capture existing skills and explore livelihood opportunities in return areas, and providing part of the cash grant as start-up capital for some returnees (UNHCR, 2018, p. 2).

The cash grant alone is not helping returnees to avoid risks and ensure a safe return in non-conflict-affected areas (UNHCR, 2018, p. 2). Returnees are often victims of secondary

displacement due to conflict in their areas of origins and become IDPs (UNHCR, 2018). A proportion of the returnees interviewed for the case study had originally returned to their villages in their rural areas of origin before moving to either Kabul or Mazar within one to three months due to insecurity, localised conflict and coercion and extortion practices by 'anti-government elements' (UNHCR, 2018, p. 12).

The case study found a number of limitations with the programme's design and operation including:

- The grant does not address gender norms;
- It is unclear how the value of the repatriation grant has been determined and it would benefit from redefinition and a clear strategy for future adaptations in value: in this context collaboration with other actors, including the Cash Voucher Working Group members and the IOM would be beneficial;
- There is no consistency across returnee monitoring reports in terms of data collected and presentation of findings;
- Challenges with tracing returnees, particularly in urban/peri-urban areas and areas outside of the government's control: one of the reasons for this is returnees' lack of access to SIM cards on arrival into Afghanistan. UNHCR has taken steps to combat the SIM card problem: advocacy by UNHCR has resulted in the Government agreeing that returnees can obtain a SIM card with a Voluntary Repatriation Form, instead of a national identification card (which many returnees did not have after years in exile). From March 2018, UNHCR will facilitate the distribution of SIM cards at encashment centres, which include USD 2 monthly credit for a period of three months;
- More work is needed ensure that returnees have adequate information to make the decision to return, including communication campaigns in countries of asylum to ensure potential returnees have accurate and timely security information;

### **Cash transfers for IDPs and returnees**

The IOM (International Organization for Migration) supports undocumented returnees from Pakistan and Iran with a one-off unrestricted cash transfer, calculated and delivered to the head of the household at four border crossings (UNHCR, 2018, p. 8). The transfer consists of two components: transportation (an average of USD 25-50 per person) and USD 100 per household for non-food items (UNHCR, 2018, p. 8).

ECHO (the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) support targeted IDP households with cash transfers (UNHCR, 2018). Implemented by NGO partners, including the Norwegian Refugee Council, beneficiaries receive two cash instalments across two consecutive months (UNHCR, 2018, p. 7). The transfer amounts have varied across partners. However, in May 2018, the Afghanistan Cash and Voucher Working Group (bringing together organisations working in cash and voucher transfers) set a value for the multipurpose cash assistance package based on a calculation of the food, kitchen kits, shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene, fuel, health expenses and transportation needs of a 7 person conflict-affected IDP household<sup>7</sup>. The

---

<sup>7</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018:  
[https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/erm\\_8\\_mpc\\_basket\\_may\\_2018.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/erm_8_mpc_basket_may_2018.pdf)



most vulnerable households will receive two months assistance, and less vulnerable households will receive one month's assistance<sup>8</sup>. Month one has a value of AFN 17,000 and month two of AFN 11,000<sup>9</sup>. Household vulnerability is determined by factors including the food consumption score, female/child/elderly headed household, and debts above AFN 8000<sup>10</sup>.

## Iraq: cash transfers

Cash transfers have been a critical part of both the humanitarian and government-led response to the crisis in Iraq (Smart, 2017, p. 1). Iraq's established social transfer system, functioning markets in government-controlled areas and financial service providers who had maintained access to areas of displacement across the country provide a solid foundation for a cash-based response to humanitarian needs (Smart, 2017, p. 5). However, Smart (2017) argues that technical and contextual factors have limited the uptake of cash programming at scale and maximising the potential of cash transfers will require coordination and leadership and agreement on basic technical components of cash programming.

Recipients of cash transfers include Syrian Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq (mainly living outside camps) and IDPs (there are an estimated 3 million across Iraq) (Smart, 2017, p. 5). Data on the volume of assistance delivered through cash and vouchers is limited (Smart, 2017, p. 7). Assistance includes conditional and unconditional cash transfers (e.g. in 2014, refugees received cash for work transfers and livelihood grants) and vouchers, paper coupons or digital credit, that must be spent on specific goods and services from certain vendors (Smart, 2017, p. 7, p. 9)<sup>11</sup>. By 2016, cash-based assistance was estimated at USD 72 million (Smart, 2017, p. 9). The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan includes a one-off transfer of USD 360 to newly displaced households, with a second-line response of two additional transfers of USD 360 to the most vulnerable within this group and the host community (Smart, 2017, p. 10<sup>12</sup>).

---

<sup>8</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018:

[https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/erm\\_8\\_mpc\\_basket\\_may\\_2018.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/erm_8_mpc_basket_may_2018.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018:

[https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/erm\\_8\\_mpc\\_basket\\_may\\_2018.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/erm_8_mpc_basket_may_2018.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018:

[https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/erm\\_8\\_mpc\\_basket\\_may\\_2018.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/erm_8_mpc_basket_may_2018.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Between 2014 and 2016 key features of cash-based assistance included: 65% of cash transfers were unconditional, 5% were cash for work programmes, 5% were vouchers, 2% were conditional, 23% were unspecified (the project description referred to cash, but little information was given on the modality) (Smart, 2017, p. 10).

<sup>12</sup> The transfer value was determined on the basis on the Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket developed by the Cash Working Group and partners (Smart, 2017, p. 10). Agencies can reduce the amount of the transfer if they are aware of other assistance the household is receiving, e.g. removing the food component of the calculation if the household receives food assistance (Smart, 2017, p. 11). The MPCA strategy has been criticised for not taking into account a wider range of beneficiary groups; assistance is perceived as an entitlement programme, and there is duplication with cluster responses and no clear exit strategy (Smart, 2017, p. 11).

Actors implementing cash transfers include:

- The Iraqi government through the Ministry of Displacement and Migration and the Public Distribution System between 2014 and 2016, provided a one-off transfer via cash or the QI card to displaced households that were registered with the Ministry. The programme ended in 2016 due to financial challenges. Humanitarian agencies criticised the programme for bias in registration and concerns about the transparency of the distribution process (Smart, 2017, p. 11).
- UNHCR manages a cash transfer programme including nearly 15,000 refugee families with multipurpose cash grants. They have piloted bank transfers, mobile money and an Iraqi Smart Card System (the QI card) (Smart, 2017, p. 9).
- WFP has progressively shifted from direct food aid to the provision of cash or vouchers. In 2015, it began providing unconditional cash transfers and vouchers in its IDP response and in 2016, it introduced the WFP SCOPE Card, a smart card distributed to money transfer companies. By the end of 2016, WFP was reaching 550,000 IDPs across Iraq with a monthly cash transfer (Smart, 2017, p. 10). It is the largest cash transfer provider in Iraq (Smart, 2017, p. 12).

### **Challenges in government and international community support for transfers**

At the national level, the Iraqi government accepted the operation of humanitarian cash transfer programmes with the caveat that they do not duplicate the government-led cash response (Smart, 2017). However, Smart (2017, p. 5) argues that there appears to be no means to effectively coordinate or verify beneficiaries to avoid duplication: given the lack of information about who had received government transfers, humanitarian agencies relied on beneficiary self-reporting. As there is little incentive to self-report, it is likely there was duplication of transfers (Smart, 2017, p. 13). There is also tension around targeting between the government and humanitarian agencies: Iraq's longest-running social transfer system, the PDS, is not means tested and is provided to all Iraqis, in contrast, humanitarian transfers are heavily targeted (Smart, 2017). The government's fiscal crisis also means that transitioning the humanitarian social protection caseload to government-led social protection systems is not feasible (Smart, 2017 pp. 13-14).

Humanitarian inter-agency politics and problems with inter-agency collaboration including discussions over where cash sits within the humanitarian system and agreement on basic principles and areas for action, have complicated efforts to use cash effectively and at scale (Smart, 2017, pp. 5-6). For example, the Cash Working Group (CWG), established in 2014 under the leadership of the UNHCR and Mercy Corps, developed a Survival Minimum Expenditure Basket to standardise transfer values for multipurpose cash assistance (unconditional and unrestricted transfers designed to address a range of needs) (Smart, 2017). However, it is not used by UNHCR (who calculate based on household size) and WFP (basket of food goods calculated by its Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping unit) (Smart, 2017, p. 12).

Different transfer values means it can be unclear to beneficiaries, communities and government officials why different individuals receive different amounts (Smart, 2017, p. 12). Agencies also have different information management platforms linked to different delivery mechanisms (Smart, 2017, p. 15). Use of multiple platforms is inefficient and donors to Iraq have highlighted the need to adopt a single system to manage and track cash transfers (Smart, 2017, p. 15). There is likely

to be significant under-reporting as data on cash programmes has not been systematically uploaded to the OCHA's reporting system or the in-country reporting system (Smart, 2017, p. 9).

A lack of effective financial service providers capable of physically delivering cash assistance means agencies have had to rely on money transfer companies, including the more informal hawala network (Smart, 2017). For example, this network is responsible for the physical distribution of cash in WFP's cash transfer programme (Smart, 2017, p. 12). The limited availability of an effective electronic transfer is a key challenge in using cash assistance at scale (Smart, 2017).

## Sudan

Sudan has suffered from continuous armed conflict, particularly in Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile states (Machado, Bilo, Soares & Osorio, 2018, p. 278). Social protection programmes target IDPs (estimated at 1.98 million in November 2017), returnees (estimated at 386,000 in November 2017) and refugees (approximately 2 million across Sudan) (UNOCHA, 2018). The UN estimates that a further 500,000 displaced people live in host communities and settlements in Darfur: only IDPs who live in camps are registered (UNOCHA, 2018). It is not possible to access conflict-affected populations and IDPs in non-government controlled areas (UNOCHA, 2018).

IDPs and returnees often have particular needs (UNOCHA, 2018). For example, returnees often need support to settle in their former places of origin, either as temporary humanitarian assistance until their traditional livelihoods are restored, or in terms of available public services (UNOCHA, 2018). Internally displaced children need school feeding programmes (UNOCHA, 2018).

Sudan has a number of government-led social protection programmes, but spending on social assistance is low: 0.6% of GDP in 2015 (Machado et al., 2018, p. 278). Ministry of Security and Social Development is responsible for implementing social protection policies, with 18 poverty reduction centres are responsible for implementation at the local level (Machado et al., 2018, p. 278). For example, Shamel provides unconditional cash and in-kind transfers, water services, housing and nutritional support including school feeding programmes to Sudan's poorest households in 9 states with plans to roll-out to all 18 (Machado et al., 2018, p. 279). Other programmes include the Zakat Fund, which provides cash transfers, subsidies, services and productive support as well as education fee waivers and student support grants to students from poor households to pursue higher education. The fund operates as a semi-autonomous agency affiliated to the Ministry of Security and Social Development and in 2016 it reached 2.16 million households (Machado et al., 2018, p. 279). No information could be found about whether these government-led social protection programmes include returnees or IDPs, however, information on humanitarian support from international organisations was easy to locate.

### Cash transfers

The World Food Programme, with support from UKaid, supports IDPs in the Otash camp in Darfur<sup>13</sup>. In 2016, WFP transitioned to cash based transfers in the camp, as opposed to

---

<sup>13</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018: <https://insight.wfp.org/from-displacement-to-business-opportunities-wfp-sudans-cash-transfer-programme-18caf660c559>

vouchers, which has given recipients freedom of choice and generates income and the influences the economic growth of the local market: small-traders in the camp purchase goods from the local town market and sell them in the camp, generating an income for their families<sup>14</sup>. Other elements of WFP's work in Sudan include:

- School feeding programme for 28,000 students in South Kordofan State displaced from their areas of origin due to conflict<sup>15</sup>;
- Food assistance, delivered by the Sudanese Red Crescent and other NGO partners;
- A beneficiary Complaints and Feedback Mechanism call-centre in North Darfur: by September 2018, it had received 205 complaints, 78% of calls were related to cash assistance activities (particularly cash cards), 97% of the queries were placed by female callers, in response WFP is hiring female operators;
- A pilot hydroponics project to improve the livelihoods of displaced people in Beliel Camp, Nyala in conjunction with FAO who will train beneficiaries;
- Heavy rains and floods pose a critical challenge to operations as they block road access and delay assessments and distributions;
- The drawdown of the African Union/UN Hybrid operation in Darfur has resulted in WFP prioritising areas that do not need an armed escort to access (WFP, 2018b).

## Syria

Syria had a number of pre-crisis government-led social protection systems, which functioned to varying degrees (Machado, Bilo, Soares & Osorio, 2018, p. 290). These included a contributory pension scheme, a 2011 programme, the National Social Aid Fund (cash-transfers for low-income families) which was discontinued after public uprisings, and cash transfers for people with disabilities (Machado et al., 2018, p. 290). Most state-run programmes have now been suspended (Machado et al., 2018, p. 291).

Machado et al. (2018, p. 291) argue that it is vital to work towards reactivating pre-crisis schemes and integrate humanitarian cash transfers programmes into existing social services to guarantee a smooth transition to public ownership once conditions allow. Their report indicates that negotiations and discussions are taking place with senior government officials to restructure the support provided, adjust the programme to the post-crisis situation and reactivate it: however, no further information could be found on this.

### Cash transfers

In 2016, UNICEF introduced a cash transfer programme to support families with children with complex disabilities (Machado et al., 2018, p. 290). This scheme also includes case management by social workers hired through NGOs in coordination with the Departments of Social Affairs and Labour (Machado et al., 2018, p. 296). Initial activities focused on Aleppo, but it has since been rolled out to other areas and reaches 9,000 families with cash transfers of USD

---

<sup>14</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018: <https://insight.wfp.org/from-displacement-to-business-opportunities-wfp-sudans-cash-transfer-programme-18caf660c559>

<sup>15</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018: <https://insight.wfp.org/more-than-just-a-meal-sudans-school-lunches-4aed4f6fabd>

80 every two months: this includes families who have been displaced and are living in temporary accommodation<sup>16</sup>. Displacement is also a barrier to children with disabilities' education as it prevents access to special schools: cash transfers can be used to pay for transport to school<sup>17</sup>. Geographical locations for the project are selected on the basis on identified vulnerabilities in the early livelihood and recovery sector, high percentage of displaced people, relatively stable operating environment and assessed presence of NGOs that could act as implementing partners (Machado et al., 2018, p. 296).

UNICEF's facts and figures for the first quarter of 2018 shows that against a target of reaching 12,200 families with regular cash transfers between January and March 2018, only 1,500 were reached<sup>18</sup>. No explanation for this could be found during the timeframe of this review.

## 6. References

- Al-Ahmadi, A., A. & de Silva, S. (2018). *Delivering Social Protection in the Midst of Conflict and Crisis: The Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project*. World Bank Social Protection & Jobs Discussion Paper No. 1801. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/217071538405216183/pdf/130400-WP-PUBLIC-REVISED-P159053-SPJDiscussionPaperOctDeliveringSocialProtectionintheMidstofConflictandCrisisTheCaseofYemen.pdf>
- Al-Iryani, L., de Janvry, A. & Sadoulet, E. (2015). The Yemen Social Fund for Development: An Effective Community-Based Approach amid Political Instability, *International Peacekeeping*, 22:4, 321-336, DOI: 10.1080/13533312.2015.1064314
- Aurino, E., Tranchant, J., Diallo, A., S., & Gelli, A. (2018). *School Feeding or General Food Distribution? Quasi-Experimental Evidence on the Educational Impacts of Emergency Food Assistance during Conflict in Mali*. UNICEF Office of Research: Innocenti Working Paper, <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Aurino%20et%20al%20for%20WEB.pdf>
- Browne, E. (2015). Social protection: Topic guide. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. <http://gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/SocialProtection.pdf>
- Harvey, P., Holmes, R., Slater, R. & Martin, E. (2007). *Social Protection in Fragile States*. Paper prepared for OECD DAC Povnet. London: ODI. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/4547.pdf>
- Holmes, R. (2010). *The Role of Social Protection Programmes in Supporting Education in Conflict-affected Situations*. Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011, The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001913/191354e.pdf>

---

<sup>16</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018: [https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/syria/70207\\_100833.html](https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/syria/70207_100833.html)

<sup>17</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018: [https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/syria/70207\\_100833.html](https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/syria/70207_100833.html)

<sup>18</sup> Accessed 7 November 2018: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/unicef\\_facts\\_and\\_figures\\_social\\_protection\\_1st\\_q.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/unicef_facts_and_figures_social_protection_1st_q.pdf)

Machado, A., C., Bilo, C., Soares, F., V., & Guerreiro Osorio, R. G. (2018). *Overview of Non-contributory Social Protection Programmes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region Through a Child and Equity Lens*. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth & UNICEF.

[http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/eng/JP18\\_Overview\\_of\\_Non\\_contributory\\_Social\\_Protection\\_Programmers\\_in\\_MENA.pdf](http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/eng/JP18_Overview_of_Non_contributory_Social_Protection_Programmers_in_MENA.pdf)

Moore Stephens. (2017). *Third Party Monitoring Report: Second Quarter Report January- March 2017*. Sana'a, Yemen: Moore Stephens,

<https://info.undp.org/docs/pdc/Documents/YEM/2nd%20TPM%20Report%20Final%20Revised%20Final%20Q2%20TPMA%20Report%20Jan%20-%20March%202017%2010%20July%202017WB.pdf>

O'Brien, C., Scott, Z., Smith, G., Barca V., Kardan, A., Holmes, R., Watson, C. and Congrave, J. (2018). *Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems research: Synthesis report*. Oxford Policy Management, Oxford, UK. <https://www.opml.co.uk/files/Publications/a0408-shock-responsive-social-protection-systems/srsp-synthesis-report.pdf?noredirect=1>

Pain, A. (2012). *Livelihoods, basic services and social protection in Afghanistan*. SLRC Working Paper 3, <https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/Livelihoods-basic-services-and-social-protection-in-Afghanistan.pdf>

Pain, A., Jackson, A., Huot, D., & Minoia, G. (2017). *Transforming Afghanistan? Seeking Coherence Between Technical Solutions and Political Processes: Lessons from the Field*. SLRC Briefing Paper, <https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/Transforming-Afghanistan-Seeking-coherence-between-technical-solutions-and-political-processes-lessons-from-the-field.pdf>

Samuel Hall. (2014). *Social Protection System: An Afghan case study*. Commissioned by UNICEF Afghanistan, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF-Social-Protection\\_Final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF-Social-Protection_Final.pdf)

Schwab, B. (2018). *Comparing the Productive Effects of Cash and Food Transfers in a Crisis Setting: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Yemen*. UNICEF Office of Research: Innocenti Working Paper, <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/965-comparing-the-productive-effects-of-cash-and-food-transfers-in-a-crisis-setting-evidence.html>

Slater, R., Mallet, R., & Carpenter, S. (2012). *Social protection and basic services in conflict-affected situations: what do we know?* SLRC Briefing Paper 2, <https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/Social-protection-and-basic-services-in-conflict-affected-situations-what-do-we-know.pdf>

Smart, K. (2017). *Challenging the system: humanitarian cash transfers in Iraq*. ODI Working Paper 508. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11420.pdf>

UNHCR. (2018). *Multi-purpose Cash and Sectoral Outcomes: Afghanistan Case Study*. <http://www.cashlearning.org/downloads/multi-purpose-cash-and-sectoral-outcomes---afghanistan-case-study.pdf>

UNICEF. (2017). *UNICEF Annual Report 2016: Afghanistan*. [https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Afghanistan\\_2016\\_COAR.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Afghanistan_2016_COAR.pdf)

UNICEF. (2018). *UNICEF Annual Report 2017: Afghanistan*.

[https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Afghanistan\\_2017\\_COAR.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Afghanistan_2017_COAR.pdf)

UNOCHA. (2018). *2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Sudan*.

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan\\_2018\\_Humanitarian\\_Needs\\_Overview.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sudan_2018_Humanitarian_Needs_Overview.pdf)

World Bank. (2018). *The State of Social Safety Nets 2018: Report Overview*.

<http://www.sipotra.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/The-State-of-Social-Safety-Nets-2018.pdf>

World Bank. (2018b). *Implementation, Completion and Results Report on a grant in the amount of SDR 13.2 million (US\$20 million equivalent) to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for an Afghanistan Pension Administration and Safety Net Project (P113421)*. Social Protection & Labour Global Practice: South Asia Region,

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/988361531334187508/pdf/ICR00004385-07052018.pdf>

World Food Programme. (2018). *WFP South Sudan Food Assistance for Assets (FFA)*. Factsheet.

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP%20SSD%20FFA%20Factsheet%20May%202018.pdf>

World Food Programme. (2018b). *WFP Sudan Country Brief September 2018*.

[https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000099825/download/?\\_ga=2.145401588.1101945868.1541516991-503056557.1537354578](https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000099825/download/?_ga=2.145401588.1101945868.1541516991-503056557.1537354578)

## Acknowledgements

We thank the following experts who voluntarily provided suggestions for relevant literature or other advice to the author to support the preparation of this report. The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the opinions of any of the experts consulted.

- Keetie Roelen, IDS
- Paul Harvey, Humanitarian Outcomes
- Valentina Barca, Oxford Policy Management

## Suggested citation

Cooper, R. (2018). *Social safety nets in fragile and conflict-affected states*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

## About this report

*This report is based on six days of desk-based research. The K4D research helpdesk provides rapid syntheses of a selection of recent relevant literature and international expert thinking in response to specific questions relating to international development. For any enquiries, contact [helpdesk@k4d.info](mailto:helpdesk@k4d.info).*

*K4D services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations working in international development, led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), with Education Development Trust, Itad, University of Leeds Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), University of Birmingham International Development Department (IDD) and the University of Manchester Humanitarian and Conflict Response Institute (HCRI).*

*This report was prepared for the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) and its partners in support of pro-poor programmes. It is licensed for non-commercial purposes only. K4D cannot be held responsible for errors or any consequences arising from the use of information contained in this report. Any views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of DFID, K4D or any other contributing organisation. © DFID - Crown copyright 2018.*

