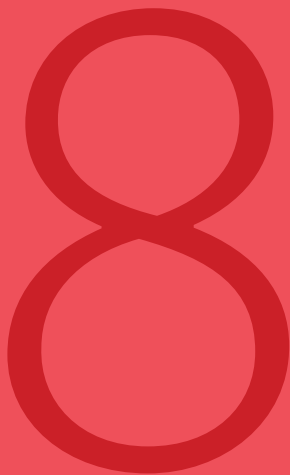




The community of San Andres in El Salvador has been affected by droughts over the last five years. WFP has implemented cash assistance in the area, paying community members to grow their own community orchard. This has enabled recipients to buy food and other basic items with the cash received.
WFP/Elio Rujano. July 2019.

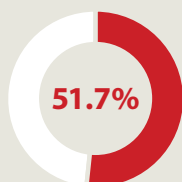


CVA & SOCIAL PROTECTION

Global objective: Build appropriate and effective links between cva and social protection

There has been increasing activity in this space, with trends in the types of actors involved and a diverse range of activities emerging, especially more strategic pre-shock engagement

BOX 8.1 Organisations linking social protection systems and CVA



of surveyed organisations (n=28) have worked with governments in the last two years and used national social protection systems to deliver CVA

Social protection has emerged as one of the main conduits for strengthening the humanitarian-development nexus. It provides an entry point for crisis response linked to development programmes and systems, while addressing underlying poverty, building resilience and supporting localisation of humanitarian action.

Since 2017, action by humanitarian practitioners in this space has grown. Fourteen Grand Bargain signatories who responded to the organisational survey reported working with governments and linking CVA and social protection (box 8.1).¹ Key informant interviews, as well as recent mapping activities and wider literature on linking CVA and social protection highlight clear trends in how action has evolved in the past two years.²



Change is certainly needed given that social assistance provision in crises is deeply problematic. Too many people in need are getting no assistance, or assistance that is unreliable or irregular. This stems from a number of factors: an insufficiency of funding in many contexts; the inappropriateness of using humanitarian aid in lieu of formal social assistance to address chronic needs in protracted crises; too little development financing in fragile contexts; and multiple types of exclusion faced by vulnerable people.” **Humanitarian Outcomes (2020)**

Trends in types of activities: At country level, most experiences documented in the previous report (up to 2017) were of linking CVA and social protection after a shock had already happened. While similar post-shock examples have emerged since then (especially in Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean), the last few years has seen more strategic engagement, for example in terms of preparation and design. Actions are going beyond implementation of response – with a focus on pre-shock feasibility assessment and options analysis, preparedness planning, capacity building/system strengthening and coordination (box 8.2 provides an example).

BOX 8.2 Preparing for early action to climatic shocks with the government of Mongolia

In Mongolia, climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of cyclical winter shocks, contributing to the growing economic insecurity of nomadic herder households and impacting on children’s education and health. The government, humanitarian, and development partners recognise the need for systems for preparedness and early action through cash assistance to buffer children against such effects. There is interest, therefore, in Mongolia in mainstreaming shock response into the national social protection system. In 2019, UNICEF commissioned a preparedness assessment to identify options for linking humanitarian response to social protection systems in Mongolia. It found strong potential for developing shock responsive social protection (SRSP) mechanisms as cash based social protection programmes are well developed across the country. These have strong implementation systems which confirm using existing systems will be faster and less expensive than providing CVA through a parallel system. The assessment identified the Child Money Programme (CMP) as the best option as it has almost 100% coverage of households with children in herder areas. Based on the assessment recommendations, UNICEF is financing and supporting the government to implement a pilot programme providing emergency top up payments to CMP recipients in areas affected by winter climatic shocks in 2019-2020. This includes i) a winter preparedness top-up for households living in high risk areas, and ii) an early action top-up for households experiencing winter shocks, to avoid negative coping strategies.

Source: Adapted from UNICEF’s cash for education business case (forthcoming)

Such action has been a core focus for both donors (such as DFID’s BASIC Framework and ECHO’s Technical Assistance Facility³) and implementers (box 8.5 provides details of UNICEF and WFP’s work). Globally there has also been action, with the creation of the Grand Bargain Cash Workstream Subgroup on Linking Social Protection and CVA, co-chaired by IFRC, UNICEF and DFID. In April 2019, the subgroup, in consultation with members, set a list of priorities for global level action focusing on mapping activities, fostering greater coordination, identifying common positions, knowledge development and sharing, and common guidance. To date, this workstream has commissioned several webinars to facilitate knowledge sharing between humanitarian and social protection stakeholders and showcase examples of the role of humanitarians in leveraging social protection systems. UNICEF has also published [guidance on shock responsive social protection](#).

Trends in the types of organisations engaging: This work is still predominantly ‘agency driven’, although there are increasing examples of governments proactively engaging in the space of ‘shock responsive’ or ‘adaptive’ social protection and requesting support for this. Most engagement from operational agencies since 2017 has been from UN agencies and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (RCRCM). In some countries and regions including Iraq, Malawi and in the Sahel, NGOs have played a more active role and the Collaborative Cash Delivery Network (CCD) (see box 1.8 in chapter 1) is now seeking to engage more in this space.

Limited space to engage. Some organisations – including various NGOs and also the RCRCM⁴ – expressed concerns that certain international actors (bilateral and multilateral donors and UN agencies) are dominating discussions and actions in this space at global and country levels and others risk being excluded. Research for this report highlights a trend over the past few years towards more prominent, and often joint, engagement of UN and donors compared to INGOs and other local actors including the RCRCM. This is not to say that other actors do not wish to engage – for example, the CCD has linking with social protection as a priority focus⁵ and linking is also a key part of Oxfam’s new strategy.⁶ Meanwhile some national governments interested to explore these linkages are actively approaching RCRC national societies,⁷ for example in Namibia.

Key informants for this report, and in the studies and strategy documents noted above, reflected on what these trends mean for quality CVA programming. It was acknowledged that this is a crowded space, and that to move beyond uncoordinated activities and pilot projects to a more strategic country approach will involve a certain degree of rationalisation of actors (at least in terms of implementation). In some contexts, the UN agencies can be well placed to lead dialogue with government given their mandate and wider focus on social protection, respondents acknowledged. However, there were concerns raised about the implications of this for effective and accountable programming, if a role for civil society actors (well placed to hold governments to account and to ensure inclusion of the most vulnerable) is not considered. Clear examples were highlighted where NGOs have added value, including in conflict settings where the UN cannot engage, and in providing critical analysis to improve the design of emerging social protection targeting systems, etc. There were also concerns that the debates do not sufficiently include a focus on localisation or acknowledge the role of RCRC national societies as auxiliaries to the government. Turkey, where the IFRC was awarded the contract to implement phase two of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), was cited as an example of where maintaining the engagement of a wider pool of potential actors outside the UN has been important for improving efficiency of programming and fostering further localisation.

1 In practical terms, experience to date has focused on linkages with social assistance in the form of cash-based social transfers (and the related operational systems and institutions underpinning these).

2 This includes BRC and LSE’s mapping exercise in 2018; UNICEF’s mapping of KML needs and DFID’s mapping of GB member activities on behalf of the Grand Bargain Subgroup 2019-2020; EUD (2019) Social Protection Across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: A game changer in supporting people through crises. Tools and Methods Series Reference Document No 26. EUD; CaLP’s high level briefing paper on the ‘state of play’ of linking CVA and social protection in 2020 (CaLP, 2020), and various syntheses of case studies and lessons learned (Gentilini et al. 2018; WFP 2019).

3 Under the BASIC framework, DFID has funded mapping and options analysis and multi-stakeholder engagement in Lebanon, Yemen and Jordan, as well as investing in dedicated donor coordination roles in Yemen and Lebanon. From 2017-18 ECHO funded WFP to lead a Technical Assistance Facility, operational in nine countries facing protracted crises. The aim of the Facility is to explore how social protection systems can be strengthened in fragile and forced displacement contexts, to address humanitarian needs in a more cost-effective, efficient, and predictable way. Projects were designed and managed in-country by a partnership of UN agencies and donors.

4 Mentioned by KIs for the first report as well as those in the GB consultations; also highlighted in some of the country case studies under the WFP-ECHO TA Facility.

5 CCD (2019) Inclusive Social Protection in Humanitarian Response – Is there a role for CCD? Collaborative Cash Delivery Network.

6 Oxfam (2019) Humanitarian Strategy for Inclusive Social Protection. Nairobi: Oxfam.

7 Key informant interview with British Red Cross, for the Grand Bargain social protection subgroup consultations

The roles of different stakeholders, and the actors best placed to lead this approach, are likely to vary by context. There is a need for more strategic, and inclusive, discussion, at the level of a response, on the added value for different humanitarian actors. As seen in CVA programming more generally, the challenge of linking social protection and CVA implies the need to redefine roles – away from traditional roles as ‘implementers’, towards supporting capacity development of appropriate national systems and programmes, technically sound design, and ensuring accountability.

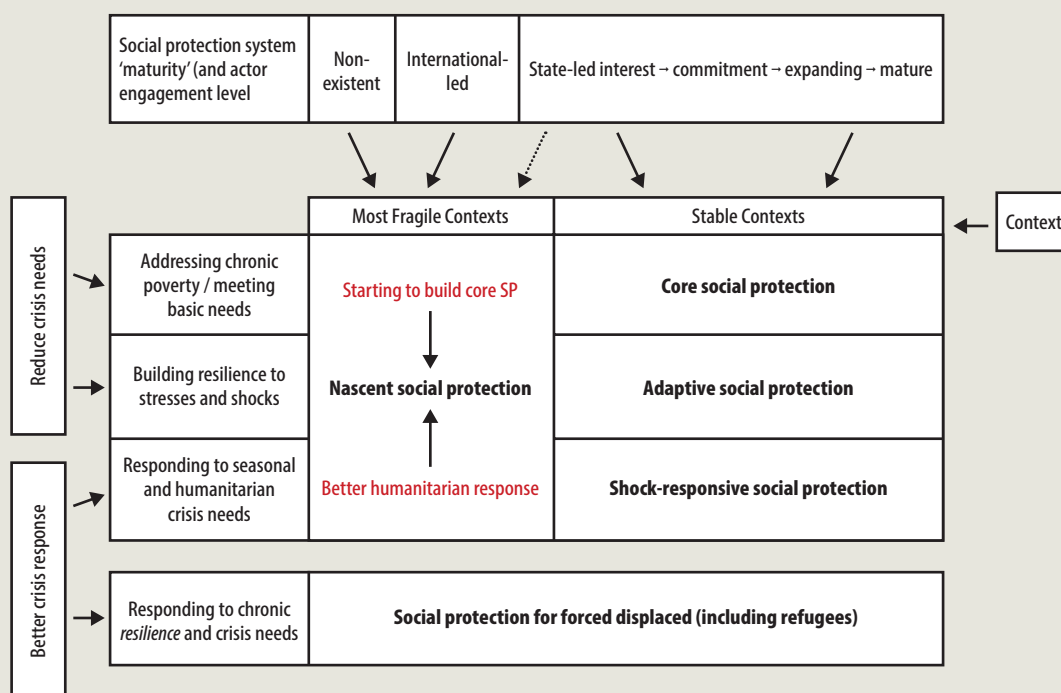
More evidence on the benefits of this approach is needed, but experiences since 2017 highlight common lessons to inform decision making

In the past 2.5 years, humanitarian practitioners have developed consistent expectations about what linking humanitarian CVA with social protection can achieve. In 2019, the Grand Bargain (GB) Cash Workstream Subgroup on Linking Social Protection and CVA hosted a workshop bringing together GB signatories with social protection practitioners. This generated consensus that establishing linkages between these areas of programming should:

- Support the most vulnerable to meet basic needs at times of crisis
- Address long-term drivers of poverty and vulnerability by finding better ways of responding to recurrent crisis
- Build on crisis response to create long-term national solutions.⁸

The sub-group captured these aspirations in a visual framework, shared in the GB Sub-workstream webinar series (box 8.3).⁹ These aspirations are consistent with expectations cited in the policy literature and guidance documents published since 2017.¹⁰

BOX 8.3 Visual framework outlining the potential role of humanitarians



Source: Grand Bargain Cash Sub-group on social protection and CVA – webinar series PPT December 2019

⁸ This includes the concepts of using social protection programmes and systems to respond to shocks (also referred to as ‘shock responsive social protection’) as well as building household’s resilience to shocks (also referred to as ‘adaptive social protection’).

⁹ Webinar recordings: Linking Cash and Voucher Assistance and Social Protection: Demystifying the entry points for humanitarians; Building Blocks: entry points for humanitarians when linking cash and voucher assistance in nascent Social Protection systems

¹⁰ Such as: WFP (2019); EUD (2019); World Bank (2020); UNICEF (2020); FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2019); CaLP (2020); ECHO (2019); Bene et al. (2018).

Strengthening and leveraging social protection systems in crisis settings is perceived to add value in terms of greater efficiency and effectiveness of aid provision while building nationally owned, sustainable



There is emerging but still limited evidence on 1) why the interaction between humanitarian CVA and SP matters; and 2) the operationalization of linkages in practice. **Holmes (2019)**

solutions. The evidence base to substantiate, or disprove, these assumptions, however, is still being built. Pilot activities and programmes have often not been rigorously evaluated and there is still little evidence to compare the added value of this approach to alternative ways of working. In 2018, DFID commissioned research investigating how linking with existing social protection systems influenced the value for money (VfM) of CVA, which partially fills this gap (the report is due to be published in 2020 and

some illustrative findings are summarised in box 8.4). Rather than confirm definitive 'added value' of this approach over alternative delivery models, the findings highlight that context plays a huge part and that linking with social protection systems can influence VfM of programmes in different ways.

BOX 8.4 How linking with existing social protection systems affects value for money of CVA – evidence from research

- Context plays a huge part in the extent to which the decision to link with social protection will affect the VfM of CVA. This includes the type and scale of the crisis, the social protection system context, wider enabling environment, and the way of linking.
- Linking encapsulates multiple operational design decisions, which vary depending on the approach that is chosen. For example, it will influence the choice of payment mechanisms, contractual relationships, and the extent to which underlying operational systems and processes are used. Each of these decisions can affect the VfM of assistance, in different ways.
- Linking can affect different elements of VfM (economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity) in varying ways, presenting trade-offs that must be understood. For example, where they are robust, making use of pre-existing operational systems and processes can improve timeliness and cost efficiency of delivery. This can then have knock on positive effects on effectiveness if it means assistance can be provided quicker or can cover more households. However, this may also require time for coordination and negotiation which can increase set up time. Linking with social protection systems can also bring additional political pressures to bear on the setting of transfer values which could undermine effectiveness unless measures are taken to resolve this.
- Programmes linking with social protection often aspire to strengthen the national system and/or to improve access to social protection. While these are desirable, experience also shows that these take time to achieve and must be carefully planned for and resourced.

Source: Juillard, H., Smith, G., Maillard, C., Jourdain, J., Vogel, B., Shah, V. and Weiss, L. (2020). Cash assistance: how design influences value for money. Paris: KAC

Nevertheless, from documented experiences of linking to date,¹¹ there are common lessons emerging to inform the future direction of this programming – several of which key informants also highlighted.

A typology of options for how existing social protection systems can be used is becoming clear. What this means in terms of 'actions' to enable this, needs more crystallisation. In 2018, OPM published a 'typology of options' that described four ways in which existing national social protection programmes and systems may be used to provide assistance to people during crisis. This guidance has been widely disseminated and has helped humanitarian actors to define what 'using social protection systems for shock response' might look like.¹² However, as experience grows it is becoming clear that i) there are a range of

11 Including: WFP (2019) and accompanying case studies; EUD (2019) and accompanying case studies; World Bank (2020); CaLP (2020); ECHO (2019); Seyfert et al. (2019); CaLP (2018); Juillard et al. (2020); Goodman et al. (2019); Smith (2019); Maunder et al. (2018); Morey and Seidenfeld (2018); and published and unpublished feasibility studies.

12 O'Brien, C., Scott, Z., Smith, G., Barca, V., Kardan, A., Holmes, R., Watson, C., and Congrave, J. 2018b. Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research: Synthesis Report. Oxford: Oxford Policy Management.

different pathways and processes through which such end goals can be realised and ii) there are different entry points for humanitarian actors to engage in these processes, beyond putting funds through national systems.

Both the UN and independent key informants raised concerns that some agencies were interpreting the typologies too simplistically without having the skills required for a broader systems approach. For example, agencies might focus on the design elements of vertical expansion without looking at the related policy implications. Recent analyses have begun to make progress in breaking down these pathways and the respective roles of national and international agencies¹³, but more work is needed on this. From experience to date it is also clear that MPC is the main, though not the only¹⁴, entry point, since for the most part social protection programmes aim to make a fungible contribution to a household's budget.

The theory of change for how humanitarian actors can link with, and contribute to, building emerging national systems needs more attention. OPM's typology included a fifth option: alignment, defined as aligning elements of social protection (or disaster risk reduction) and humanitarian interventions with one another, for influencing future social protection system development and/or integration of the humanitarian caseload. While there are different ways that existing social protection systems can be used, and rationale for doing so, are clear and tangible, 'alignment' remains ill-defined. It has become a catch-all term for a range of activities that could contribute to system building, however, it is not always clear what is being aligned, or for what purpose. Initiatives described under alignment incorporate a huge range of activities (box 8.5). Both humanitarian actors and those working in long-term social protection¹⁵ would benefit from greater clarity on how these areas of programming can be brought together and what these actions can expect to achieve.

BOX 8.5 Aligning humanitarian assistance and social protection – how this was conceptualized in different ECHO TAF countries

- **Iraq:** Identifying opportunities to transition the chronically poor and vulnerable from humanitarian CVA to assistance under national schemes.
- **Afghanistan:** Bringing humanitarian actors together in a more systemic approach, as a starting point for developing the nascent social protection system.
- **Somalia:** Consolidating and transferring specific systems to government (recipient data and MIS).
- **Niger:** Aligning NGO programmes alongside the social safety net to fill gaps in the food security response.

Source: WFP (2019)

'Good social protection' is an essential pre-requisite. For social protection to be effective at building the resilience of, or responding to any additional needs of people affected by crises, national social protection systems must be:

- a) well designed
- b) have good coverage of populations in need
- c) provide adequate levels of support
- d) have systems and processes that function well in normal times and
- e) continue to function during disasters.

¹³ Seyfert, K., Barca, V., Gentilini, U., Luthria, M. and Abbady, S. (2019) Unbundled: A framework for connecting safety nets and humanitarian assistance in refugee settings. Social Protection and Jobs Discussion Paper No. 1935. World Bank

¹⁴ For example, the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education programme in Turkey is designed as a cash for education intervention.

¹⁵ Including government departments, UN, NGOs, and development donors.

All this requires investments that ensure longer term financing and strengthen the long-term capacities and systems of national social protection schemes. Development actors generally lead these activities, however humanitarian actors have an important role to play in this space, to ensure a crisis lens is applied to the design and implementation of these strategies (see box 8.5 for UNICEF and WFP's experiences).

Preparedness planning is key to understanding entry points and constraints before a crisis occurs.

The research for this report highlights the importance of acting in advance of an emergency. Preparation



is necessary because of the time needed to understand the entry points for and constraints to linking social protection and humanitarian systems, to build relationships, and develop the policies, procedures, expertise, and systems needed to make social protection programmes and systems both resilient and crisis-responsive. Preparedness is wide ranging and has included assessing national social protection systems, analysing, and comparing policy options, investing in human resources and systems, developing standard operating procedures, and making links to early warning systems. Some of the most successful programmes have engaged in preparedness and reached agreements prior to a crisis (see box 8.5). Humanitarian actors' engagement in preparedness actions should be undertaken in a systematic and coordinated way to ensure a strategic approach which avoids confusion and duplication of efforts. A recent report on the assessment of learning/knowledge gaps on linking CVA and social protection

It is all about preparedness. If we do pre-crisis mapping and assessment, focused on government system and local actors it saves time when the crisis hits and allow a better informed decision making on the choice of implementation model, including how to build a continuity between a short term and longer term approaches. It also requires donors to fund preparedness as a priority. **UNICEF**

Almost everywhere where linking CVA with social protection has worked, activities started before the crisis. **CaLP**

also highlighted this, revealing a need for more joint assessments of social protection systems and more transparency on the findings.¹⁶

Simplicity and flexibility in systems and design leads to success. Where national social protection programmes and systems have been effectively scaled up or used to deliver assistance following a crisis, a consistent feature of success has been the ability to adapt or simplify regular processes to accommodate the new realities and constraints of the emergency, as well as the different needs and constraints of the groups affected by the disaster.

Government buy in and leadership is critical for going beyond options analysis to mobilising action.

National governments are the rightful duty bearer for social protection and own the underlying processes and systems. While some programme approaches linking with social protection will continue to be designed and managed by humanitarian organisations outside government, access to and use of any underlying data or systems must still be authorised by government. There are various actions that can help to generate this buy in – such as government engagement from the outset; guaranteeing support from donors to reduce the risk that government will be left holding the bill; and joint action planning. Turkey is a good practice example of early engagement, where the government and UN agencies worked collaboratively to design the refugee response linked with the existing social protection system. Further, WFP and UNICEF, as well as the World Bank, have been engaging with various governments on assessments and joint action planning.¹⁷

Coordination is essential, on multiple levels. The actors involved in social protection, and linking social protection and humanitarian action, are much more diverse than in CVA. Coordination is needed between siloed humanitarian and development mechanisms and funding streams. This includes coordination between:

- Government departments working on social protection programmes, social registry management, disaster risk management and early warning systems
- Government and international actors

¹⁶ Pelly, I. and Rizvi, Z. (2019) The Assessment of Learning / Knowledge Needs on Linking CVA and Social Protection. Report commissioned by UNICEF on behalf of the Grand Bargain Cash Workstream Sub-group on Linking Social Protection with Humanitarian Cash.

¹⁷ Including for example Jamaica, the Philippines, Armenia, Kenya, Iraq, etc.

- National actors at central and local levels
- Agencies and donors working in humanitarian and development (long-term social protection) fields.

At a strategic level, coordination is needed to develop a common vision; to build a coherent and systemic approach and to have full appreciation of the trade-offs involved and negotiate compromises. Operationally, coordination is required to support joint assessments, data sharing, system interoperability, harmonised design, and gap filling within the whole of cash response (WCRS). There is no 'one size fits all' solution to linking humanitarian response to national social protection systems and collaboration will vary according to context¹⁸. The current sector-based humanitarian coordination system does not easily allow for coordination on linking with social protection, which is often inherently multisectoral. Within these constraints Cash Working Groups (CWGs) are emerging as a useful forum for bringing together some of these disparate actors, as seen for example in Nigeria.

BOX 8.6 Linking CVA and social protection – the approaches and experiences of UNICEF and WFP

Since 2017 both UNICEF and WFP have made strategic commitments to linking humanitarian assistance and social protection, where feasible and appropriate. For WFP, social protection is a key means for engaging with the GB commitments to localisation and supporting national governments and is aligned with their global organisational strategic plan (2017-21) for achieving zero hunger. Meanwhile for UNICEF, which engages on social protection policy and programming as a core sector in development settings, social protection approaches in emergencies are now embedded in their core commitments for children and included in annual reporting frameworks. While each organisation is pursuing a strategy linked with its mandate and expertise, there are several areas of convergence:

Internal capacity building: Both organisations are actively investing in the internal expertise, guidance and systems needed to expand focus on linking social protection, including creation of new dedicated roles and developing global guidance and training.

Assessment and preparedness planning: Since 2017, UNICEF has developed a social protection system readiness assessment tool and guidelines, to support country offices and national governments in assessing feasibility and analysing options for linking CVA and social protection. This also identifies opportunities for linking in integrated or multisector programming across sectors. This has been piloted in 9 countries globally and is due to be launched in 2020. Between 2017-18 WFP conducted nine country studies, with ECHO support, exploring how social protection systems can be strengthened in fragile and forced displacement contexts. This work helped to frame the organisation's current thinking and strategic approach. WFP has developed a SRSP Basic Capacity Assessment Tool to assist countries with response analysis in this area.

Governments at the centre: Both tools focus on identifying ways to support national efforts rather than simply humanitarian organisations using national systems. WFP's also includes a focus on how to orient future activities to fill gaps. They see their added value in enabling the move from internationally led responses to nationally led responses.

Working together: WFP and UNICEF are working closely together in several countries on linking CVA and social protection (including Kenya, Dominica, Malawi, Turkey). Both are currently in high level discussions on the possibilities of harmonising their tools and approaches for SRSP to avoid lack of coordination and duplication at country level.

¹⁸ Gentilini, U., Laughton, S. and O'Brien, C. (2018) Human(itarian) Capital? Lessons on Better Connecting Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection. Social Protection and Jobs Discussion Paper No.1802. World Bank.

BOX 8.6 Linking CVA and social protection – the approaches and experiences of UNICEF and WFP (cont)

Lessons learned:

- The importance of **working together** with governments and other key stakeholders.
- Investing in 'good social protection' – programmes and systems - is an important foundation.
- Preparedness is key to SRSP, and causal and response analysis is key to preparedness.
- The importance of cross-government engagement (Ministries of DRM, social protection, finance, sector leads, etc) to ensure effective coordination and political buy-in.
- Assessments and strategy development should be supported by multi-disciplinary teams.
- This is a long-term investment: Institutionalisation and rollout of approaches across the organisation has taken time, while moving from assessment to concrete actions requires time and resources.

Source: Gentilini et al. (2018); UNICEF (forthcoming); and Kilis with WFP and UNICEF.

Linking will not always be appropriate and where it does take place it will not meet all needs.

Identifying the best approach to using or strengthening social protection systems must be based on in-depth country level analysis and linking should not be done for the sake of it, but because it is



We need to identify the places where this approach makes a huge amount of sense – where government are leading, engaged, committed. And accept that perhaps in other places it won't work. CaLP

expected to provide the same or a higher quality response than can be achieved through a parallel system. To date, it is not possible to tell whether linking is equal to or better at meeting needs, ensuring greater coverage of the population, improving timeliness of response, ensuring accountability to affected populations, ensuring predictability of support, reducing duplication of effort, or contributing to strengthened capacities and systems. Even in the most enabling of contexts, it has not been possible for

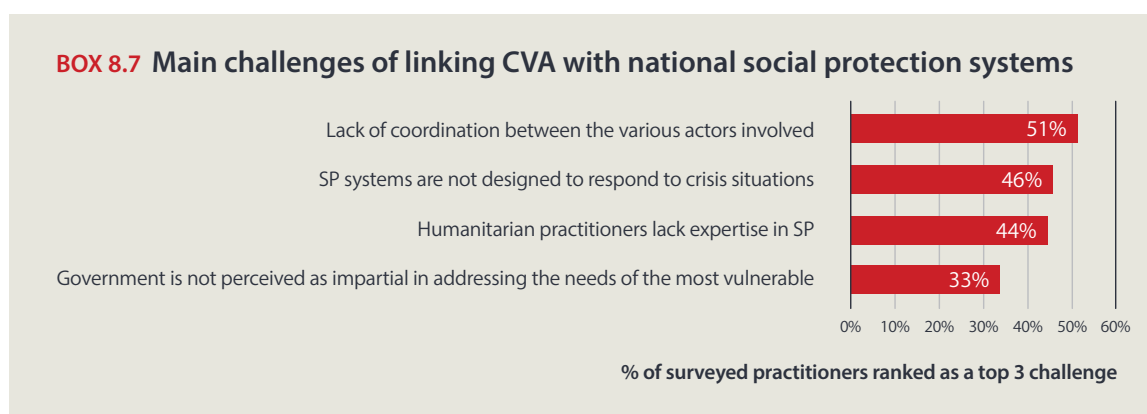
social protection to meet all cash-related needs. In many cases, it will be necessary for humanitarian and development actors to continue to work through parallel systems in the coming years as ways of working in this space continue to evolve. Linking CVA with social protection needs to find its place in whole cash response system and must be well coordinated with the wider work of humanitarian cash actors to complement and fill gaps in any social protection response. Box 8.6 looks at the work that UNICEF and WFP have been doing on this.

In fragile states and with protracted conflicts, the goal should be working towards systems that can deliver more predictable, efficient, and less fragmented transfers than humanitarian efforts alone. Such systems should provide the building blocks for future state-led programmes. In situations of protracted displacement, the goal should be to ultimately integrate internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees into national social protection systems where they exist. UNHCR, for example, have synthesised key considerations required for aligning humanitarian cash assistance for refugees to national social safety nets.¹⁹ For refugees to fully access the social protection system, that is, for complete 'alignment', preconditions such as the right to work and supportive legal and regulatory frameworks need to be in place. For many countries this is not currently an option.

¹⁹ UNHCR (2019) Aligning Humanitarian Cash Assistance with National Social Safety Nets in Refugee Settings. Key Considerations and Learnings. UNHCR.

Challenges that humanitarian actors face in institutionalising this approach require global and local strategic action

The findings of the practitioner survey (box 8.7) show that the main perceived challenges of linking CVA with social protection systems remain the same as in 2017. These challenges concern difficulties in working across disciplines and organisations, and of maintaining adherence to humanitarian principles when programming through, or linked with, a system that was not designed for this purpose. As mentioned in the previous report, such approaches can raise issues in relation to the accuracy of targeting humanitarian caseloads and leaving no one behind, establishing transfer values based on humanitarian needs, and maintaining impartiality and neutrality. Literature, key informants, and consultations with the GB cash workstream sub-groups²⁰ all raised similar issues.



Lack of common understanding between humanitarian and development actors (and between different humanitarian actors) has been identified as a persistent challenge for conceptualising the linkages between CVA and social protection, including what actions are included and the terminology used. Going forward, this is a priority area to address under the workplan of the Grand Bargain Cash Workstreams' Subgroup on Social Protection, with development of a common glossary and briefing papers, and a planned workshop to bring key stakeholders from both disciplines together to finalise them.

Capacity gaps risk vulnerable groups' exclusion from assistance. Linking CVA and social protection requires skills and competencies that go beyond those commonly used in the humanitarian sphere.



CaLP should play an important role in defining what that (SRSP) profile could look like, those that would be most fit to engage with social protection and develop the adequate capacity building support to meet the gap. **Independent**

This includes technical experience in social protection programming, as well as competencies to engage with governments in policy dialogue. For example, several documents²¹ highlight concerns about using poverty targeting in shock responsive social protection. If technical expertise to critique the use of poverty targeting is not brought into discussions on shock responsive social protection or attempts to link, there may be a risk that vulnerable groups are excluded from assistance. The GB report on learning and knowledge needs for linking CVA

and social protection²² identified the need for people with a 'mixed profile' combining humanitarian and social protection competencies, which is currently extremely limited within organisations or amongst consultants and other independent actors. The siloed approach within organisations is seen as a clear impediment to more effective linkages. The report concludes that knowledge management and learning efforts should aim to build this 'mixed' profile, by bringing humanitarian and social protection actors together, and upskilling existing staff. Key informants for this report similarly identified concerns about the continued reliance on consultants to support linking efforts, and the need to better institutionalise these capacities.

²⁰ Including Holmes (2019), Humanitarian Outcomes (2020), the on-going consultations of the GB Sub-Group membership being funded by DFID BASIC, to develop a common work plan for the group, and the GB workstream on localisation led by Oxfam and SDC.

²¹ Maunder et al. (2018); Smith (unpublished).

²² Pelly and Rizvi (2019)

There are also different levels of understanding and experience of what this linking means among different humanitarian organisations, with some organisations still requiring support to understand the foundational concepts. In addition, there are capacity issues to resolve for national social protection actors. This raises the question of whose capacities need building and where investments should be made, to support greater localisation of this approach. While the Grand Bargain Subgroup Workstream on Linking Social Protection and CVA made recent progress in mapping the knowledge and learning needs of its members, some stakeholders point out that this is very much the perspective of international humanitarian agencies, excluding those organisations and departments that are arguably some of the most important for putting discussions into practice. That international organisations and governments still lead such activities, reflects a wider challenge for ensuring governments and local actors are placed at the centre – something certain key informants for this study and the GB subgroup consultations mentioned.

In 2020, CaLP commissioned a review of the latest developments in social protection and CVA linkages to understand both development and humanitarian perspectives on progress and bottlenecks.²³ The review argued that certain unhelpful assumptions underlie approaches at present: that linkages are nearly always the right thing to do, that linking is achievable if only the right concept and technical solutions were to be identified and that different approaches to the state are more important than recognised. The authors conclude that development and humanitarian actors need to go ‘beyond the basics’ and focus on the outcomes they want to achieve rather than the process. So, efforts at linking might go beyond:

- Ministries of social protection – to find new and different institutional partnerships e.g. ministries of education, health, DRR, etc.
- The usual countries – to capture a broader range of contexts, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS) and low income states (this would help avoid any tendency to extract best practice from particular contexts to apply elsewhere without taking enough account of contextual differences)
- Focusing on technical capacity and hard skills – to developing functional capacity and soft skills, so that better training and technical assistance would include secondments, coaching and peer-to-peer learning approaches.

There is a need to **move away from siloed and agency-specific projects and initiatives towards more strategic country level dialogue, planning and coordination across agencies and disciplines.** Some

BB

We are working on social protection in Jordan, but we were not aware of and have not seen the DFID BASIC ToR for developing options for linking CVA and social protection in Jordan. **Respondent in the Grand Bargain consultation**

good recent progress was recognised, such as the various country-level efforts under DFID’s BASIC framework and ECHO’s TAF, to support collective identification of options and strategic planning. At the same time, stakeholders noted examples of humanitarian and development actors forging ahead on their own activities in the same country with no coordination or overall strategic approach. Different agencies are also developing in house analytical tools rather than common tools, while assessments that have been

conducted have not been widely shared. There are exceptions, for example, UNICEF is due to make its Social Protection System Readiness Assessment Tool and guidance publicly available in 2020.

Improving coordination is a key priority of the Grand Bargain (GB) Cash Workstream Subgroup on Social Protection’s workplan. This GB subgroup, the Social Protection in Crises group on socialprotection.org, and CaLP are in discussions to move towards a shared workplan which would include a mapping of linkage programming and the development of case studies, guidance documents and tip sheets, amongst other activities.

23 Humanitarian Outcomes (2020) High-level Briefing Paper on Linking Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash and Voucher Assistance. Oxford: CaLP.

Wider agency concerns can influence programme direction at the expense of quality. Some key informants highlighted the perception that the decisions of agencies to link CVA and social protection are



There is a lot of jumping on the bandwagon because of a fear of being left behind. A great example is the cyclone Idai response in Malawi. One agency was proposing to work through the social protection system and provide top ups to existing beneficiaries. But these beneficiaries were not in the areas worst affected by the floods. The desire to link got in the way of good response analysis.

Anonymous

Vested interests create disincentives to progress. There are competing platforms operating in Somalia that organisations have invested heavily in and may, understandably, be reluctant to relinquish.

WFP (2019b)

not always being driven by evidence of what works best for people, but by agency concerns to retain their relevance in a competitive and rapidly evolving space (see chapter 3 for more on this in relation to the design of operational models). Operational agencies can perceive donor interest and trends towards this way of working (even though the evidence base is not yet built) and see it as important to carve out a niche in this space. This self-interest can be a barrier to more strategic coordination and detrimental to programme quality since it reduces information sharing and leads to competing agendas.

Unrealistic horizons for planning, supporting, financing and exit.

Linking CVA and social protection is a process, not a discrete timebound activity. Experiences to date, even where government capacity exists, show how long things can take to move beyond an assessment, or pilot programme, to institutionalisation. Lessons learned from the WFP-managed ECHO Technical Assistance Facility show that such support, while crucial, is just the starting point, and a longer-term commitment from humanitarian and development actors, and especially donors, is needed to

achieve any tangible progress. WFP and UNICEF raised concerns that current financing does not incentivise the system strengthening that is required for shock responsive social protection. Humanitarians need to better understand the funding mechanisms and channels for social protection at country and global levels, from both government (considering different funding mechanisms between ministries) and external sources. Some key informants, and literature, highlight the need for greater realism about the challenges of such complex approaches and the need for medium to long term technical and financial assistance. The efforts of donors to finance across the nexus were welcomed but more is needed (for example, in Lebanon – EU Trust Fund). The Global Social Protection Week at ILO in December 2019 recommended establishing multi-donor trust funds and working through ministries as a possible approach.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Determining if linking CVA to social protection is appropriate, and how this can be done effectively, is a complex process requiring engagement from a broad range of stakeholders, who may not have prior experience of working together. To make further progress, the following actions are recommended:



Humanitarian and social protection actors should **start from a focus on outcomes for affected people** when considering if, how, where, and when to link CVA and social protection. They should also recognise that linking CVA to social protection will not always be appropriate, may not meet all needs, and that the right mix of programming will depend on the context.



Humanitarian and social protection actors should build on, collect, and share evidence systematically to develop a better **understanding of the different options for linking, using, or developing the systems that support linking CVA and social protection.**



Humanitarian and social protection actors should base decision making on the **efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and sustainability** of different approaches on evidence, recognizing the inevitable trade-offs.



Donors should develop and fund **longer term funding frameworks** that encourage cooperation and coordination between humanitarian and development actors and greater programming flexibility.



Humanitarian and social protection actors should ensure **better coordination between social protection, disaster risk management, other national stakeholders, and humanitarian agencies:**

- **At country level**, to support government engagement and leadership, collective response, and agreement on the added value and roles for different actors – leading to stronger preparedness, strategic engagement, and clear financing.
- **Globally**, to strengthen sharing of tools and response analysis, analyse the **added value of humanitarian actors** and influence the discussion on **engagement and leadership.**

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