World Food Programme

Quick WFP Guidance for Planning an Intervention through Government Social Protection systems in preparation or during an Emergency

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Before you plan to channel an emergency response through national Social Protection schemes that support households and individuals—or make use of the delivery systems that support them—it is essential to review the government's planned and ongoing activities, and your relationship with them. This will help you to:

► understand the extent to which emergency needs overlap with those served by these regular social protection programmes
► assess the political, financial and operational feasibility of working with or through national social protection schemes
► understand the positive and negative consequences of the options (e.g. so as to avoid inadvertent disruption of a social protection programs' core objectives for the exclusive benefit of the emergency response); and
► fill gaps, avoid duplication and minimize incompatible and contradictory responses (e.g. one agency undertaking food for work while another carries out free food distribution in the same area).

You should also familiarize yourself with the main interventions undertaken by the government's development and humanitarian partners for the same reason, and to explore opportunities for collaboration and/or alignment. Don't forget that, in some countries, the Ministries in charge of Social Protection and national agencies for emergency responses may not be aligned or, responsibility for social protection or disaster response may be delegated to subnational levels of government; so, you may need to understand policies and programmes at that level, too. In the rest of this section, 'government' refers to the level of government that is appropriate in your context.

What might it mean to channel an emergency response through national Social Protection schemes?

A government may have many different types of programme providing cash or in-kind transfers to address the needs of poor or vulnerable people, or those affected by disasters. They may vary in their objectives, duration, target population, scale and quality. Some may be run by the government ministry responsible for social protection (see definition below); others may be run by, for instance, a specialist food security agency, or a disaster management authority.

In designing an emergency response, how might you wish to interact with these schemes? You may wish to explore whether it is appropriate to:

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1. Design a separate emergency response, but share some of the delivery systems of the government social protection schemes (e.g. assessment forms, databases, payment service providers, procedures for M&E, personnel)
2. Deliver extra emergency-related support (top-ups) to the government's social protection scheme's existing beneficiaries
3. Assist the government to temporarily expand its social protection programme to households newly affected by the emergency.

In these circumstances, partnership opportunities between WFP and the government may range from sharing information and experience from your previous emergency response activities, to providing technical assistance to the design of the intervention, to supporting the government's own implementation (e.g. by sharing relevant data), to building government staff capacity, to running the intervention yourself if requested by the government.

What is Social Protection?
Social protection policies and programmes are principally owned by governments and are designed to protect people from shocks and stresses throughout their lives. Some programmes serve a 'protective' function, providing long-term assistance to the poorest or most disadvantaged individuals, or those who have no other means of support. Others serve a more 'promotive' function, aiming to help people move permanently out of poverty, such as through linking them to livelihood opportunities.

The types of social protection programme most likely to be relevant to your planned emergency response are the non-contributory social assistance programmes, sometimes termed 'social transfers' or 'safety nets', which deliver cash or in-kind transfers to people in need. These include e.g. **cash transfer schemes, public works** and **school feeding programmes**.

Other types of social protection include e.g. social insurance schemes (not only formal contributory insurance such as pension contributions, but also e.g. crop and livestock insurance) as well as some subsidies, social care services, some labor market interventions and facilitated access to basic services (e.g. exemptions from user fees for health or education for poor households).

Is it always a good idea to link up with these government social protection schemes?
No, not necessarily—it will always depend on the context, the nature of the emergency, the nature of existing programmes and government capacity. In any situation you may find it more appropriate to link up with one programme than another, or perhaps with none. You may conclude that the government's personnel or delivery systems related to social protection may be overwhelmed if you try to use them for the emergency while they are still being used for their core purpose; or, conversely, a partnership may prove efficient and free up government resources for further responses. You can greatly improve the prospects for mutually beneficial collaboration through developing good working relationships and a clear understanding of the government's activities on social protection during a non-crisis time.

To determine whether it's a good idea to channel an emergency response through national social protection schemes, think of the '5R's above. Weigh up whether and how the options will improve on alternative emergency responses in relation to seven criteria:

1. **Meeting the needs**—Will crisis-affected people get the right assistance in the right way, to achieve the right objective?
2. **Coverage**—Will the right people be reached? If some people in need will be missed out, by what alternative method will they be supported?
3. **Timeliness**—Will the assistance come at the right time?
4. **Predictability**—How predictable will the delivery of support be for the intended beneficiaries? How predictable / reliable is the funding stream?
5. **Avoiding duplicatio**n—Does the use of the national scheme streamline the number of agencies duplicating similar work, or does it increase duplication?
6. **Sustainability.** Does it strengthen the government's capacities and ownership of both the social protection programme and the emergency response in the longer term, or does it weaken it? How will the assistance be withdrawn once the crisis ends, without having created false expectations from beneficiaries about the nature of the government's support?
7. **Cost**—Is it cheaper or more expensive than alternatives (bearing in mind the other six points, i.e. considering cost-effectiveness, not cost alone)?

As no programmes are likely to contribute to an improvement in all seven areas, there are necessarily going to be trade-offs and a subjective prioritization will need to be made. This will also need to consider the context, including the level of political acceptance, budgetary feasibility and any security implications. Build on previous experience where possible.

Tips

- ✓ Any strengthening of national social protection schemes in *non-crisis* times can help build household resilience and reduce the burden in subsequent emergencies. WFP may also be able to help in this regard. (How to do this is outside the scope of the present guidance).
- ✓ The more preparation you do with the government in preparation for an emergency—exchanging information, setting up protocols etc.—the easier it will be for both you and them to use its social protection systems or programmes in the emergency.
- ✓ Be clear about the purposes of linking up with national social protection systems. Avoid any misunderstanding between yourselves and the government. Are you expecting the government to pay for part of the emergency response, and/or to contribute their resources to the intervention? Or will the interaction improve overall efficiency for both parties?
- ✓ If you are in a context where there is no functioning government social protection scheme, you can still bear in mind how you might eventually be able to link up or share your knowledge with a future scheme. Can you document your activities, or design your emergency response in a way that it might be able to be taken on by governments later (if sustainability is important)?

What to know?

Below is a list of questions to guide WFP country offices in evaluating the feasibility and desirability of partnering with national schemes to channel WFP-supported emergency assistance[1].

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[1] This draws heavily on Oxford Policy Management's toolkit of shock-responsive social protection, funded by DFID. More detailed guidance is available there (see resources at the end of this section).

Remember! If you are reading this in a non-crisis time, can you plan an exercise to collect much of this information already? It is, of course, possible to collect this during an emergency, but it's more comfortable to do so as part of your preparedness activities.

STEP	QUESTIONS
Step 1: Understand the crisis that you're aiming to address	*Your first task is to understand the nature of the problem you're addressing. Without this, you cannot determine the most appropriate response. Using your assessment of the situation and needs from section 2, remind yourself:* • What are the characteristics of the crisis? Are you preparing a response to a one-off, short-term shock, or is this a protracted crisis? Does it occur every year (e.g. an annual lean season)? Is it slow- or rapid-onset? Is it a complex crisis with multiple dimensions (such as a drought in a conflict area)? • What is its impact? Think in terms of the number of people affected, who and where they are, and what needs they face. Is WFP aiming to improve food security, or nutrition, or both?
Step 2: Initial scan of institutional context	*Understand which the key government agencies are (at national and local level), their policies, political interests, and their partnerships and coalitions:* • Who are the actors responsible for: (i) national emergency response (ii) social protection? What are their key policies / plans / protocols? • Are there other relevant policies, strategic plans and programmes of action that WFP operations should support (food security and nutrition, school feeding, disaster risk reduction and management, resilience, growth processes)? Who is responsible? • What are the strengths and weaknesses of the institutions? What are the power dynamics and their level of influence? • What is the hosting government's level of interest in partnering with WFP (both to implement specific activities and to absorb inputs, such as training)? • What are the reputational risks for WFP to partner (or not) with the government and national social protection programme? • Is there an evolving interest among development stakeholders and government to set up humanitarian assistance (in-kind or CBT) through governmental structures? Does the government already have a clear process and Standard Operating Procedures for the use of national schemes to absorb international emergency assistance? • Are there donors and/or NGOs working on longer-term development issues, research/academic institutions, local civil society willing to link their activities with humanitarian work? *Coordination / Information sharing* • Is there a capacity and a clear intent of the government stakeholders to coordinate and share information internally and with humanitarian actors at the time of crisis? • What are the existing institutional coordination mechanisms for the different relevant stakeholders in social protection and emergency response? • How well have they previously collaborated in the event of shocks?
Step 3: Rapid mapping of relevant government social protection related programmes	*Understand what key programmes these agencies run and how well they work:* • What functioning national social protection schemes and emergency response interventions are there? For each in turn, what are their key features? Consider: o objective

STEP	QUESTIONS
	o the targeted beneficiaries (who they are, how many, geographical coverage) o nature of the benefit (what is provided, frequency, duration, transfer value, conditionality) o delivery method (bank account, mobile money, cash in hand, voucher etc.) o capacity (what staff, what other resources are used) o links to complementary initiatives • How are these programmes judged to have performed with respect to meeting the needs of the population? How resilient are they to a crisis? • Have these programmes previously been used to respond to a crisis context? In what way? How effective was this?
Step 4: Rapid mapping of delivery systems	*Besides the delivery systems used for specific programmes, what other national systems exist that WFP might draw upon in an emergency response?* *Beneficiary identification & targeting* • For a potential emergency response through national systems, have potential beneficiaries been pre-identified, and/or have some criteria been agreed for a speedy targeting at the time of crisis? *Registry* • Is there a national policy on data protection? • Is there a centralized national registry system for the population in the affected area? If yes, is it digital or paper form? How does it fare on five key criteria: (i) Completeness—who is listed (ii) Relevance—What variables it contains (iii) Quality—How rigorously the data were collected (error checks etc.) (iv) Data currency—has the list been updated regularly? (v) Accessibility—Can it be shared? By whom and with whom? Is there a clear procedure shared with everyone? Who can make changes? • If there is no centralized national registry, do programme-specific beneficiary databases exist? How do they fare on the above five criteria?
Step 5: Funding arrangements	• Who is WFP expecting to pay for the emergency response—WFP (using donor-funded resources), the government itself, or a mix of the two? How much will it cost? • If the government has agreed to pay: does it have a contingency fund or insurance payout that can be immediately used for the emergency response, including one that can be accessed by a social protection scheme if this is the planned design? • If WFP will pay: to what extent will funds pass through government systems, and how feasible is this? Or will WFP fund its activities separately, overlapping with the government only in terms of using non-financial resources such as staff or databases?
Step 6: Assessing the potential for a rapid response through national social protection systems	*Understand how closely the government programmes already match the required response, the ways in which they can be adapted if required, and any unintended consequences.* *To what extent do government programmes and systems already match the required response?* • How many and what proportion of the total emergency-affected regions / districts / households could be potentially covered by the social protection scheme? *Looking at each of the programme features identified in step 3: to what extent can each of these features be adapted to an emergency context? For example:* • Are the social protection schemes' targeting systems capable to respond to the emergency context by adjusting: o the number of recipients / demographic and geographical coverage; o targeting method;

STEP	QUESTIONS
	o the enrolment process (temporary targeting process, ID requirements, application processed waivers, etc.) • Can the nature of the benefit be adjusted (what is provided, frequency, duration, transfer value, waiving of conditionality)? • Is there an existing and well-functioning assistance delivery mechanism that can accommodate additional demand in the event of an emergency? • Do any financial service providers in affected areas already have a stand-by agreement with the government to facilitate transfers in the event of shock? • Can the social protection scheme access / increase its human and technical resources to respond to emergencies within existing institutional structures? • Is the social protection beneficiary registration system able to include new beneficiaries without significant delay? • Is the government willing and able to introduce adjustments to these features? Is this more or less efficient and effective than alternative solutions? See the seven criteria listed earlier in this subsection (meeting needs / coverage / timeliness / predictability / avoiding duplication / sustainability / cost) *Consider unintended consequences:* • If you propose to make permanent changes to a social protection programme for using it better in an emergency, will this negatively affect its core objective and impact? • If you decide to design your own emergency response, but share some elements of existing delivery systems, will this overstretch existing resources? • If you propose to provide top-up support to existing national social protection beneficiaries, how will you reach crisis-affected people who are not already beneficiaries? Is there a risk of a negative impact on people's perceptions of the generosity of the core programme, or social tension provoked by WFP giving extra support to people who are perceived to be already getting assistance? • If you propose to temporarily bring extra people into a national programme, are these people who would not normally be eligible? Does this cause confusion about the programmes objectives? Does the programme have the resources to manage the extra caseload? How will these people be removed after the emergency is over?

 Additional Resources

WFP resources
• Safety Nets and Social Protection Basics and Concepts:
https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000069523/download/
• Safety Nets and Social Protection - Engagement with Governments and Partners:
https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000069524/download/
• Safety Nets and Social Protection – Design and Implementation:
https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000069526/download/
• Assessment of National SSN for CBT during Emergencies:
http://newgo.wfp.org/documents/asessment-of-national-ssn-for-cbt-during-emergencies and
http://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp288159.docx

- Other Key Resources on Social Protection:
  https://docustore.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/manual_guide_proced/wfp272475.pdf

External resources
- Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Toolkit (Oxford Policy Management, 2018, funded by DFID): https://www.opml.co.uk/files/Publications/a0408-shock-responsive-social-protection-systems/srsp-toolkit.pdf
- The Social Protection Floor Initiative (SPF-I):
  http://www.socialsecurityextension.org/gimi/gess/ShowWiki.action?wiki.wikiId=1128
- The World Bank Social Protection and Labor: http://go.worldbank.org/FJ6LLR2LU0
- The Inter-Agency Social Protection Assessment/SPARCS, guided by the SPIAC-B:
  http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowProject.do;jsessionid=NXMW7dC3PM1JRhhrWAAuKLUg9ayBibGzO-5la2cbZZiKrfWzsg0I!-32886377?id=1625