UNHCR Mapping of Social Safety Nets for Refugees
Opportunities and Challenges

Purpose

The aim of the mapping of social safety nets (SSN) was to explore the potential for alignment between humanitarian cash assistance and SSN in forced displacement situations. It considered various aspects of SSN, including programme design, targeting and the legal and regulatory framework. The mapping categorised 18 countries based on the opportunities and challenges with including refugees in the national social safety nets.

Rationale

While recognising an increasing trend in inclusion in national systems, refugees in particular rarely enjoy the same rights as citizens. Only in every second UNHCR operation, refugees can choose their place of residence; in less than 50% they access national health care systems; in two third they access the national education systems; and in less than 40% they are allowed to work according to law and policy and in practice. In approximately 10% of UNHCR operations, refugees are included in the national or local development plans. Initiatives related to shock-responsive social protection rarely address conflict and include displaced people.[1]

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UNHCR is placing more emphasis on the additional value of cash beyond the monetisation of humanitarian assistance through promoting financial inclusion, social protection and socio-economic development. Implemented as part of the basic needs approach, multi-purpose cash grants, which represent 60% of UNHCR's cash and link multi-sectoral cash assistance with the provision of essential services and protection, present important opportunities for leveraging social safety nets to include forcibly displaced people.

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1   source: *UNHCR Diagnostic Tool for Alternatives to Camps 2017 Global Results*

Key findings

Opportunities	Challenges
• Growing opportunities for inclusion of displaced people in national social protection systems. • The mapping found that inclusion can happen in 4 countries; may be possible in 10 countries; and will be challenging in the near future in 4 countries. • In 6 countries, UNHCR's cash assistance was to some extent aligned with the government's in terms of targeting, transfer mechanisms, transfer value and monitoring. • The interest in funding SSN in forced displacement contexts is growing among external stakeholders, notably as a potential exit strategy from humanitarian assistance and a more efficient means of managing protracted displacement. • The Global Compact on Refugees and the World Bank IDA 18 Refugee and Host Community Sub-Window provide opportunities for enhancing SSN for refugees. • Refugees are increasingly accessing national services in certain contexts.	• The majority of national social safety nets are not accessible to non-nationals. When refugees are granted partial access to SSN, full access is often limited due to restrictive legal frameworks. • Governments rarely have capacity, tools and processes in place that can adapt to the impacts of mass displacement shocks. • Complex targeting, across multiple safety nets, coordinated by numerous ministries make data analysis, accountability and coordination challenging. • Funding of humanitarian and government safety nets often differ in terms of duration, political requirements, objectives and conditions, making alignment challenging. • Refugees do not always have access to national services.

Snapshot of country-based findings

	Legal and regulatory context	Alignment of SSN and humanitarian objectives	SSN transfer design can be adapted to adress emergency needs for displacement	Targeting criteria align or can be adapted to include the most vulnerable populations	SSN coverage includes areas likely to be affected by displacement/ can be scaled up during crisis
Afghanistan					
Bangladesh					
Colombia					
Ecuador					
Iran					
Kenya					
Malaysia					
Mozambique					
Niger					
Nigeria					
Pakistan					
Rwanda					
Sudan					
Tanzania					
Turkey					
Uganda					
Venezuela					
Yemen					

Darker cells correspond to higher opportunities for inclusion of diplaced persons in SSN

The mapping looked specifically at cash-based social safety nets targeting households or individuals, including conditional cash transfer, unconditional cash transfer, conditional food/ in-kind transfer, unconditional food/ in- kind transfer, cash for work, family allowance, child allowance, non-contributory pension, non-contributory disability benefit, housing / utility subsidies and fee waivers for health and education.

The table above is a snapshot of a wide range of indicators that the mapping assessed. Country-based work is essential to further assess and develop the opportunities identified in each context. For more information on the assessment or on UNHCR and social safety nets, please contact hqcash@unhcr.org.

UNHCR and social protection

UNHCR engages in social protection with the aim to protect refugees and others of concern. UNHCR has provided humanitarian social safety nets to refugees and supported access to national social security systems for over 50 years, in line with the 1951 Convention on Refugees and the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. UNHCR engages in social protection as a means to contribute to the SDGs, notably to the commitments to *leave no one behind* and extend social protection coverage for all, including displaced people.

To support international protection and solutions for forcibly displaced people, UNHCR uses social protection to help provide predictable cash and in-kind assistance, and access to social services and decent work opportunities. This is done in partnerships with governments, development actors, the private sector and humanitarian and other partners. Increasingly, UNHCR will work to extend shock-responsive social safety nets to include forcibly displaced people whilst helping to protect national social safety nets from the impact of mass displacement.

UNHCR can support governments and partners to strengthen their capacity in terms of civil registration, protecting refugee rights and support to essential services. UNHCR implements social protection and other sustainable programmes through the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, the *Policy on Alternatives to Camps* and the global strategies on health, education, child protection, livelihoods and shelter.

For example, UNHCR operations are enrolling refugees in safety net programmes in Ecuador, Costa Rica, Brazil, Bolivia, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela and South Africa. UNHCR operations in Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Kenya, Djibouti and Iran support the enrolment of refugees into national health insurance schemes (or with the private sector in the case of Malaysia) whilst downscaling humanitarian support as people are increasingly able to pay into health insurance schemes.

UNHCR promotes an enabling protection environment where the legal, policy and administrative framework of the host country provides refugees with freedom of movement and residence, permission to work, and access to basic services and social safety nets as members of the communities where they are living. Leaving no one behind is essential.

Protection and Solutions that Leave No One Behind

UNHCR and Social Protection

Making social protection inclusive and protection sensitive	Strengthening national systems and capacity	Supporting governments on civil registration, national registry, and targeting	Advocating for refugee rights and providing evidence for inclusion	Aligning UNHCR's humanitarian assistance with the national systems
Technical assistance to national governments • Facilitate access to social welfare services for displaced persons. • Take into consideration protection concerns of persons with specific needs (including child protection and gender considerations). • Strengthen coexistence with nationals and integration (including facilitating contribution to the formal economy, remittances etc.) • Ensure data protection. • Strenghten the link between social assistance and complementary protection activities and referral.	**Capacity strenghtening of national governments** to improve the quality of essential services accessible to both displaced people and nationals: • training • staffing, infrastructure and material • monitoring systems. **Advocacy with donors and development actors** • To support national systems and delivery of essential services. **Preparedness and contingency planning ahead of shocks** • Help build humanitarian mechanisms into national social safety nets allowing scale up of support around disasters and crisis to displaced and host families. • Advise governments on measures that mitigate the impact of displacement on national social services.	**Technical support on civil registration** • Diagnosis of systems requirements to register displaced people. • Provision of systems such as UNHCR's registration software *proGres* and the cash management system *CashAssist*. **Contribution to protection sensitive targeting** • Advice on the specific vulnerabilities of refugees to be considered when targeting social assistance such as the lack of documentation and links between protection issues and poverty.	**Advocate for refugee rights and the benefits of inclusion** • Build a business case to incentivize governments to take on non nationals using evidence and best practice. • Advise governments on key measures to put in place to mitigate impact of displacement on national social services. • Advocate for a legal framework ensuring displaced rights, including the right to work, financial inclusion, access to services and non-discrimination. **Build evidence on positive outcomes of refugee contribution to national systems** • Mapping of countries favorable to provide access to national social protection to displaced persons. • Collect evidence and good practice to encourage uptake of the approach by other countries. • Collect evidence of contribution of refugees to the national economy, taxation and social service systems.	**Mirror existing national systems to design, target and deliver monetized humanitarian assistance** • Vertical expansion: top-ups to current beneficiaries. • Horizontal expansion: temporary inclusion of new beneficiaries. • Piggybacking: using part of an established social protection system to deliver assistance. • Shadow alignment: developing a parallel humanitarian response that aligns with current social protection systems. **Advocate for a basic needs approach, linking multi-sectoral cash assistance with the provision of essential services** • Advocate for national systems that support both poverty reduction and protection outcomes. • Include monitoring of refugees and host families' well-being. **Complement national social protection systems when they do not cover the basic and protection needs** • Use humanitarian cash to top up the national social safety nets. • Subsidize access to specific social services. • Provide specific protection services not covered by family services in the national social welfare system. **Use locally-led or private-sector mechanisms to complement and/or replace humanitarian assistance and local safety nets** • Civil solidarity and micro-finance networks. • Private health insurance schemes. • To enhance livelihoods and employment opportunities. • Leverage private sector for access to sustainable livelihoods.