Questions and comments from the audience

Q1 (From Elizabeth Kaitano, Emergency specialist/UNICEF): Does social protection work in active conflict situations where the Gvt is party to the conflict? (Connected to question 11 as well.)

It is complicated to work with the local government in this kind of a setting. For example, in 2015, in central Mali, the situation was getting increasingly worse (threats to education, meaning that schools had to be closed). In such instances, you cannot collaborate with local government departments (refer to the ‘turtle slide’ in the Webinar summary). This is because this can cause a threat to the population and your teams. In such cases, you have to take an area-based approach to analyze where and how to collaborate with government services. In this example related to Central Mali, only stand-alone implementation by humanitarians was possible in order to respect humanitarian principles, and be able to access the whole area, including zones controlled by non-state armed groups. However, at national level you can continue your collaboration with governments, e.g. you can feedback on lessons learned and what’s been working. One needs to adapt to the context and be flexible on this aspect.

Q2 (From Paul Crook): What tools were used to diagnose institutional capacity? 7 areas you stated Clement; what specific approaches used? Systems, structures, people's aptitude and attitude? Measures of how capacity is developing?

WFP has developed a specific diagnostic tool to evaluate the capacity of the MAST to manage a safety net autonomously. This tool, partly based on Henri Fayol’s theory of management, enables better pinpoint and address of capacity gaps. It assesses 7 areas of institutionalization:

- Human Resources
- Participation
- Procedures and standards
- Planning
- Coordination
- Monitoring and implementation
- Material resources

The level of institutionalization is ranked according to a scale from 0 to 5, as follows:

- 0 - None - Not involved in the program
- 1 - Informed of main developments - Informed of activities progress and key deliverables
- 2 - Consultative role - Sounding board for strategic and technical decisions
- 3 - Involvement in supervision and technical decision making - Takes active role in supervision of program activities and takes part in shaping strategy and developing technical aspects of the program
- 4 - Normative responsibility - Provides strategic orientation. In charge of supervision, accountable for respect of procedures and standards and quality of program deliverables
- 5 - Operational and normative responsibilities - In charge and accountable for implementation in addition to normative responsibility

Five main steps were followed to complete the assessment of institutionalization of the Kore Lavi program at MAST:

1. Elaboration of an assessment framework comprised of 7 evaluation criteria measuring MAST’s level of institutionalization (see above)
2. Consultations with MAST stakeholders, Kore Lavi management and field teams at central level and in 4 departmental offices
3. Evaluation of each criterion according to participants’ ratings and first-hand observations
4. Review of ratings in joint sessions with MAST and Kore Lavi teams to ensure consistency
5. Finalization of ratings and recommendations

Q3 (From Meried Mengesha): Is there an exit mechanism (for humanitarian actors) in terms of linking with social protection interventions? (Please note this is linked to questions 4 and 9)

Haiti: Regular social protection provides a medium-term exit strategy for humanitarian aid. It is specified in the national social protection and promotion policy that households affected by a shock who would fall into poverty should be integrated in regular safety’s net. There is also a dedicated chapter in the social protection policy on funding (and how the government can fund the policy). The drafting committee hired a Haitian economist to look into how the policy could be funded. They looked at analysis of the state expenditures (some ‘savings’ could be applied to social protection from energy expenditure). There is the possibility to raise taxes (fiscal pressure in Haiti is relatively low compared to other countries). Also, we are aware that the international community (like World Bank and the IMF) will be strongly involved at least in the short term to support the funding of the SP policy. In terms of government investment in the policy, WFP is trying to streamline their approach at the local level, to build capacity of local government and institutions as they will be the implementers.

Mali: There is a challenge with government-funding for SP in Mali. And the SP system is still extremely weak. The main exit strategy in this sector for humanitarian actors (facing shrinking resources, so are forced to move out anymore and focus only on acute needs) is currently the collaboration among donors, e.g. between ECHO and EUDEL.
However, we cannot as humanitarians deliver assistance in a fragmented way (e.g. do 3 months of a cash distribution and leave). We have to make significant investments, in line with WHS/GB commitments, even though we may only see a return on investment 20 years later. And when can the international community start to phase-out? When the system functions better and can take over and when there are available resources. This is not the case right now as there are enormous constraints on the national budget and SP is not a priority. At the moment there is no real exit strategy in Mali for international actors. Development donors are now involved stronger, but this is more about piloting a model/prototype that can one day be taken over. And having a good dialogue with WB who is driving the govt. There is also a safety net division within the Ministry of Social Affairs now so there is a recognition that social assistance needs attention. But Mali is not traditionally a poor country so talking about poverty is still somewhat difficult.

Q4 (From Nupur Kukrety): Haiti is a very useful example of how to design a humanitarian cash programme to develop a nascent social protection system. Congratulations to the teams that worked on it. Have any efforts been made beyond the capacity building (training and learning visit) such as channeling funds through the government or supporting the government to generate resources for implementing and managing the programme in future?

Starting in 2018, WFP has been requested to assist the GoH in formulating a new social protection strategy and key building blocks of a social protection system. One of these building blocks is the social registry SIMAST, a database developed by the MAST starting in 2013 which includes information on all households of the areas surveyed, capturing data demographic and socio-economic conditions for all household members as well as precise geolocation through GPS. The current SIMAST database provides evidence on the livelihoods of more than 376,059 households, representing about 1,880,000 individuals, or 17.3% of the population in 8 departments.

The GoH is still trying to build a reputation that reflects good governance and transparency. Most of the international partners are a bit reluctant to trust the GoH with their funds due to lack of accountability mechanisms. However, they are starting to make progress if we consider the fact that the International Development Bank recently granted more than $28 million dollars to the Haitian Government for a youth-based social safety net. Although the activities will be directly implemented by certain international NGOs (such as CARE, CRS, CECI, PADF etc.), the leadership will be assumed by the GOH through FAES (Social and Economic Assistance Funds). Also, the ministry of social affairs and labor continues to play a key role in implementing the EU-funded social safety nets as part of the 11th Development European Funds. It is worth noting that with the existence of the national policy on social protection, funds will be more likely channeled through the Government of Haiti.

Q5 (From Archieval Molos - Archie from Red Cross): Just wanted to ask about what was the strategies used to resolve the unstable network coverages in rural areas considering that the mechanism used is dependent on telecommunications.
In the areas with unstable network coverage, a two-folded strategy was used to address the situation: 1) Digicel provided mobile antenna to defuse the situation on the short term and allow the beneficiaries to access their food commodities; 2) Digicel deployed technicians to improve signal bandwidth in the areas of interventions on the long-term. It was a win-win approach – as Digicel managed to build its reputation by providing better service quality to the rural population and the population benefited from stronger network coverage to communicate (more money for Digicel vs better service quality for the population).

Q6 (From Meried Mengesha): Is there any targeting mechanism in humanitarian situation of social protection intervention?

Thank you for the question. This is planned as a stand-alone topic for a future webinar as it is a gap that has come up in our assessment on knowledge needs.

Q7 (From Paul Crook): The blocks - Childhood, Social Health and Old Age, Labor Employment and Employability with the Shock responsive element - would like to look more closely at the underlying element in each column as seek to build a building block approach Somalia.

Thank you for the question. Please refer to the first webinar on the topic which address the ‘building blocks’ in more detail (https://socialprotection.org/linking-cash-and-voucher-assistance-and-social-protection-demystifying-entry-points-humanitarians).


Q8 (From Ria Lewis): I’m Ria from WFP Rome (Cash-Based Transfers). My question is: how can humanitarians think more proactively on linking humanitarian and social protection programming when deciding on transfer modalities?

Thank you for the question. This is planned as a stand-alone topic for a future webinar as it is a gap that has come up in our assessment on knowledge needs.
Q9 (From Larissa Pelham): Across these two programmes, how much were these programmes driven and funded by donors and how much by the government themselves? And what is the timeline - or even opportunity for government running and funding these programmes?

Please see questions 3 and 4 above for related answers.

Q10 (From Larissa Pelham): How much was civil society engaged, consulted in these processes - at which points in the process and going forward (ie through the accountability process - if this exists); and to what extent do the panelists think the engagement with civil society was genuine, and embedded now and going forward? or if not substantial, then what would they like to see done differently?

Haiti: A broad coalition of actors was mobilized for the National Social Protection and Promotion policy development, including state institutions, IOs, NGOs, and civil society. National consultations were held and was an opportunity to get large scale feedback and buy in on the policy. All 10 departments of Haiti were involved with 40-50 representatives of departmental authorities, municipal authorities (urban and rural), NGOs and community-based organizations.

At a reasonable cost, national consultations provide numerous benefits. They
- increase the legitimacy of the policy;
- allow to test the content and to gather extensive feedback to improve the policy;
- facilitate appropriation and augment the acceptability of the policy among key stakeholders, including civil society.

Within the policy we have also identified some institutional arrangements for the set up and implementation of the policy such as the creation of a civil society committee that can follow up on social protection initiatives.

Similarly, engaging civil society from the very beginning and in every step of the implementation process greatly contributed to the success of the Kore Lavi. The ongoing community consultations helped build a sense of ownership that motivated the community leaders to invest their time and energy in making sure that things go smoothly. Most of the local leaders conducted social audits, participated in market price monitoring, home visits and voucher distribution and exchange events.

Mali: On the one hand, this is very difficult to work on with local and national NGOs; it’s not that they are good or not good (i.e.: capacity). It’s more an issue of neutrality. Local organizations are facing lots of pressure from local power holders, population, groups, so it is sometimes easier for them to be backed by an international NGO less affected by this pression. On the second hand, international NGO have human resources who cost more than national NGOs and some donors don’t want to pay for these extra costs. Overall, it’s a big challenge but are trying to make it work.
Q11 (From Glenn Hughson - ICRC): Breathing some life back into Elizabeth’s question of social protection in a conflict setting when the government is a party to the conflict - especially when there is no access to the social protection by the vulnerable in the opposition areas. how does that work in Mali? or anywhere else really? thoughts from others?

(See question 1 for answer)

Q12 (From Thakur Dhakal): How do you see acceptance of the government on forecast based financing particularly in cash. Government is not willing to give cash based on forecasting? but only after the shocks targeting affected population. Is there any experience around the world on this?

The goal of Kore Lavi was to sensitize the Haitian Government into financing – from the national budget – social protection activities that prioritize fair and objective targeting, gender responsiveness, accountability and transparency and provided them with proper tools to be able to manage autonomously and effectively those programs. The GoH does have social safety net programs – such as CAS (Social Assistance fund), Ti manman Cherie (Sweet mom), Panier Solidarité (Solidarity food basket), Kore Etidyan (Support to Students) and so on. However, those programs are politically motivated and are not transparent. Again, with the national policy on social protection, it is expected that the GoH will conduct include that in the national budget. A next step would be to explore how these can be linked to forecast-based financing (FBF), in collaboration with partners. Although WFP is implementing FBF programs in Haiti, early actions at community and government level based on credible forecasts do not include yet cash assistance before the occurrence of the shock.

Q13 (From Sergiu Buruiana): Can you share some thoughts about how single social registry can be used in emergency in Western Africa?

Supporting national governments on building social registries is a World Bank initiative, which started in middle-income countries about 20 years ago, e.g. in Latin America. Testing this work in lower income countries, and even fragile and conflict-settings is very recent and there is not yet much experiences to be shared. The Malian SR was officially launched in Nov. 2019, but is not yet fully functional, and it does not include a shock-responsive component. In other African countries, such as Somalia, CAR, Chad, work is still in its infancy.

Q14 (From Kayira Fidele, SP Officer PMSAN): In Haiti after Kore Lavi program, what is really the impact of the program at grassroot level.

The impact can be summarized as follows:

- **Achieved impact at scale.** More than 525,000 Haitians in more than 23 communes benefitted from Kore Lavi social assistance programming. In fiscal year 2018 alone, Kore
Lavi reached 90,790 people directly to improve their food and nutrition security and resilience to climate change, indirectly benefitting a further 4,000 people.

- **Linked program beneficiaries to program vendors.** Program beneficiaries receive food vouchers to cover nutritional needs and can use them to pay for food with Kore Lavi food vendors.

- **Improved living conditions.** Using food vouchers freed up household income to spend on other things. Each household decided how to spend money according to their own needs. 59% used extra income to pay for school fees, 36% saved in a Village Savings and Loan Association, 28% to pay for medical fees, and 23% to invest in agricultural endeavors.

- **Built access to finance and credit.** 36,122 women and 14,980 men gained access to financial and credit institutions through CARE’s Village Savings and Loan Associations. The 1,241 VSLA groups mobilized a savings of $1,634,409 and have a 68% credit utilization rate. More than 750 VSLA groups have been organically created without direct technical support from CARE.

- **Strengthened the local economy.** 96% of businesses in the program had higher profits, 34% of farmers are increasing their productivity, and 61% of farmers have hired more labor – creating jobs the Haitian economy desperately needs.

- **Increased Resilience.** 22% of VSLA members versus 16% of non-VSLA members followed resilient pathways.