

Synthesising lessons and promising practices for country-level coordination in delivery of joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection

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The Social Protection Technical Advice, Assistance and Resources (STAAR) Facility is dedicated to expanding and improving the effectiveness of investments in both social protection approaches in crises and gender-responsive social protection.

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The report was authored by Laura Phelps (Oxford Policy Management) and Shiv Chandaria (Oxford Policy Management). This report is based on desk-based research conducted by the authors in 2024-2025, extensive key information interviews carried out throughout 2024, and participation in various coordination-focused events. These include the annual workshop of the SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection, the Donor Cash Forum, and the Forum on Building and Protecting Social Protection Systems in Fragile and Conflict Settings through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Increasing humanitarian needs coupled with social protection systems' growing capability to respond to shocks means that coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection actors is vital. As of 2025, the world faces significant challenges with 712 million people living in extreme poverty and 733 million facing hunger.¹ 52.4% of people globally are covered by at least one cash social protection benefit, leaving 3.8 billion unprotected, many of whom reside in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS).² The protracted crises the world is facing today are compounded by limited resources for humanitarian appeals, with coverage standing at just 37.3% as of October 2024, further reinforcing the case for more effective coordination.³

Global evidence demonstrates that social protection can be effectively leveraged to respond to shocks and support household resilience.⁴ When implemented through adequate, predictable responses, social protection can reduce negative coping mechanisms, thereby reducing the cost of humanitarian interventions and preventing income and asset loss by households. It can also help rebuild asset stocks, reduce debt burdens, and improve nutrition, investment, and productivity, as well as generate economy-wide multipliers.^{5,6} While there may still be a need for complementary emergency responses, the benefits of effective social protection are clear.

Research highlights how humanitarian assistance can complement and/or substitute state-provided social protection in FCAS.⁷ This complementarity is crucial in protecting households from protracted crises, with those receiving both types of assistance faring better than those with limited or no support.^{8,9} This underscores the importance of coordinating humanitarian and social protection efforts to maximise their impact and efficiency in supporting vulnerable populations in FCAS.

Official Development Finance (ODF) for social protection more than doubled from US\$ 914 million in 2018 to US\$ 2.4 billion in 2022, accounting for approximately 25% of the global total. The World Bank is the dominant source, providing nearly three-quarters of the total financing for partner countries in 2022.¹⁰ The WB has committed to expanding social protection coverage to an additional 500 million people globally by 2030, developing a more nuanced, risk-based approach to FCAS, scaling up responses to forced displacement, and strengthening partnerships.¹¹ Despite this positive picture, changes to the funding landscape in early 2025 mean that the importance of coordination is even more key.

¹ FAO (2024) 'State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report 2024'.

² OCHA (2024) 'Global Humanitarian Overview, October Snapshot'.

³ OCHA (2024) 'Global Humanitarian Overview, October Snapshot'.

⁴ Barca, V., Sharpe, J., and Flower, C. (2021) 'Social protection "killer facts"', Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service (SPACE): [SPACE Protection Killer Facts.pdf](#)

⁵ Wylde, E. and Cabot Venton, C. (2020) 'Value for money of social protection and humanitarian cash transfers in the context of Covid-19'. Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service (SPACE): [SPACE Value for Money in the COVID19 Context FINAL.pdf \(socialprotection.org\)](#)

⁶ Cabot Venton, C. (2020) 'Economics of Early Response and Resilience to COVID-19: Ethiopia Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19: Expert Advice'. DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom: [SPACE Economics of Early Response and Resilience to COVID19.pdf \(socialprotection.org\)](#)

⁷ Kreidler, C., Battas, S., Seyfert, K., and Saidi, M. (Dec 2022) 'Linking humanitarian cash and national social protection systems: Synthesis Report. Sahel adaptive social protection system'. World Bank: [Linking Humanitarian Cash Assistance and National Social Protection Systems | Humanitarian Outcomes](#)

⁸ Barca, V. (2019) 'Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises'. Tools and Methods Series, Reference Document No 26, Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (SPaH), European Commission, Brussels.

⁹ Longhurst, D. and Smith, G. (2020) 'Identifying practical options for linking humanitarian assistance and social protection in the COVID-19 response'. Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service (SPACE), DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom.

¹⁰ McCord, A., Cherrier, C., Both, N., and Bastagli, F. (2021) 'Official development assistance financing for social protection: Lessons from the Covid-19 response'. Social protection responses to Covid-19 and beyond. ODI

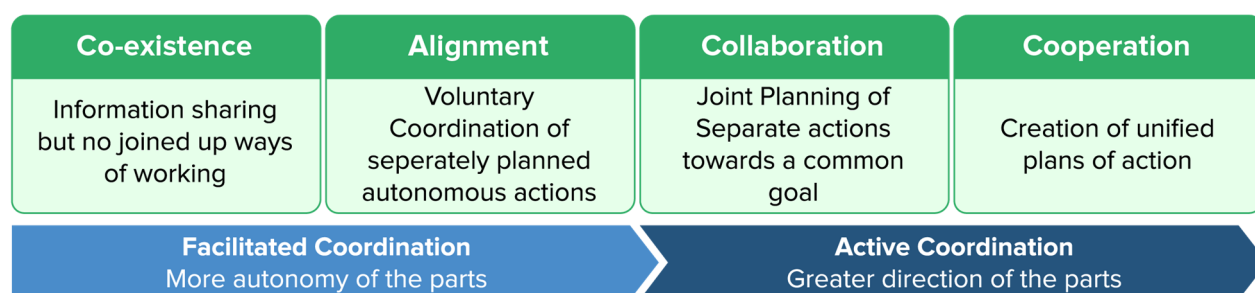
¹¹ World Bank (2024) World Bank Group Ramps Up Fight Against Global Hunger'.

What Do We Mean by Coordination Between Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection?

Coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection actors involves the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders in policy, programming, and delivery processes. It encompasses a wide range of actors, including central and subnational government departments, development partners, and civil society organisations. The specific actions, tasks, and degree of collaboration depend on the context, with coordination occurring along a continuum from simple knowledge-sharing arrangements to more complex collaboration and cooperation approaches (Figure 1).

Stakeholders in social protection encompass a wide range of actors, including central and subnational government departments, development partners and civil society organisations engaging in social protection services.¹² Whereas humanitarian cash stakeholders typically include the humanitarian country team (HCT), humanitarian and resident coordinators (HCs and RCs), donors, United Nations (UN) agencies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), members of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, local and regional government responsible for disaster management and national and or federal government, NGO's and civil society organisation.

Figure 1: Forms of coordination adapted from Swithern and Schreiber (2023)¹³



Why is Coordination Challenging?

Coordinating social protection and humanitarian assistance in FCAS remains challenging due to its multi-disciplinary nature. The inherent complexity in aligning diverse actors with distinct mandates, guiding principles, and operational frameworks across the social protection and humanitarian sectors creates significant hurdles. Fragmentation of responsibilities across government entities, limited mechanisms for inter-ministerial collaboration, a widening humanitarian funding gap and divergent operational paradigms between humanitarian and development actors contribute to these challenges.¹⁴

There are significant challenges in bridging institutional and disciplinary silos.^{15,16,17,18} The fragmentation is evident in the dispersion of responsibilities across multiple government entities, often with limited mechanisms for inter-ministerial collaboration. This institutional division is mirrored in donors, UN agencies, and development partners, where funding streams and operational structures remain largely compartmentalised. Furthermore, the divergent operational paradigms between humanitarian actors, who adhere to principles of impartiality and neutrality, and development actors, who prioritise national

¹² SPACE (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices'.

¹³ Swithern, S. and Schreiber, D. (2023) 'Co-ordination across the Humanitarian- Development-Peace Nexus'. OECD Development Co-operation Working Papers, No. 113, OECD Publishing, Paris

¹⁴ SPACE (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices'.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ EU (2019) 'Tools and Methods Series Reference Document No 26 – Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises'.

¹⁷ IFRC (2020) 'Linking humanitarian cash and social protection: Learning from the experience of eight National Societies'

¹⁸ Longhurst, D., Smith, G. et al. (2020) 'Identifying Practical Options for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection in the COVID-19 Response'.

ownership and long-term sustainability, create tensions in approaches to government engagement and programme implementation.

Why is This Paper Needed?

Recent changes in the global humanitarian architecture present opportunities for improved coordination. The establishment of the global Cash Advisory Group (gCAG) and the development of Common Principles by the SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection offer promising avenues for progress. Further, the Global Charter for Action agreed at the Forum on Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict in October 2024 highlighted a consensus on the need for further actions to improve coordination of humanitarian action and social protection.

Box1: Some key mandate, guidance and tips (see Annex 1 for further details)



2022 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Global Cash Advisory Group Terms of Reference (ToR): 'cash coordination will consider linkages with social protection systems where relevant and appropriate'¹⁹

2023 IASC New Cash Coordination Model – FAQs: 'Provide a clear and predictable entry point for linkages to social protection to the extent appropriate for the response and/or preparedness efforts.'²⁰

2023 Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection - Principle 5 'Build coordination mechanisms that link HA-SP at country, regional and global levels'²¹

New approaches and learnings are emerging on how to better support local and national systems, design interventions for marginalised populations, and develop flexible, hybrid models for social protection delivery in challenging governance contexts.

Objectives and Methodology

This desk-based research, commissioned by the SPIAC-B Working Group and FCDO, examines coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection through a review of existing literature and limited qualitative interviews with practitioners and policymakers in selected countries, including the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Ukraine, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Colombia, and the Philippines (see detailed case studies in Annex 4). The aim is to identify promising practices, lessons learned, and key enablers and constraints from 2021 onwards, building on previous research and contributing to the systematisation and institutionalisation of effective approaches. The research involved mapping existing country-level evidence, analysing promising practices in six countries, and developing a synthesis note with forward-looking recommendations.

Data was collected from 10 global and 37 country key informant interviews as well as a focus group discussion conducted at the Forum on Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict (October 2024).²² Note that this piece of work is relatively light touch, and there were challenges in accessing relevant KIs in the Philippines, Cameroon, and Colombia, especially from the government. Annex 3 provides details of those interviewed and Annex 4 includes case studies for Ukraine, Ethiopia and oPt.

¹⁹ IASC (2022) [Global Cash Advisory Group Terms of Reference 2022](#).

²⁰ IASC (2023) ['New Cash Coordination Model - FAQs'](#).

²¹ SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection (2023). [Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection](#).

²² [Forum on social protection in fragility and conflict: Building and protecting social protection systems through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus](#) October 2024.

Promising practices and lessons learned

This research builds upon earlier work from SPACE²³ and more recent work from STAAR and BASIC^{24,25} all of which highlight the importance of coordination forums and platforms that bring together social protection and humanitarian stakeholders. These platforms enable collective discussions on policy, strategy, and operational aspects of linking humanitarian cash assistance with social protection systems. Regular meetings foster mutual understanding and trust, particularly when established before crises occur, supporting collaborative decision-making and action planning (see section 2.0).

Dedicated coordination forums or platforms

Coordination forums and platforms that bring together social and humanitarian stakeholders enable crucial discussions for reaching agreements on policy, strategy, and operational aspects. These forums, especially when established before crises, foster mutual understanding and collaborative decision-making.

Coordination through CWG sub-groups

Subgroups on linking humanitarian cash and social protection within Cash Working Groups (CWGs) facilitate information sharing, capacity building, and better alignment, though they often face challenges such as overstretched coordination leads limiting their focus to technical and programmatic matters rather than strategic-level engagement. Further there is an absence of internal operational incentives and systematic frameworks for engaging with social protection systems, and a limited shared understanding on how to interact with government counterparts, especially regarding sensitive issues like transfer rates or working with under-resourced ministries.

Evolving nexus groups outside the humanitarian architecture

Evolving nexus coordination groups outside the humanitarian architecture, such as the Social Protection and Cash and Voucher Assistance Technical Working Group (SP-CVA-TWG) in oPt and similar platforms in Ukraine, Ethiopia, and Colombia, have shown promise in addressing both strategic and technical issues. These groups enhance shared understanding and dialogue, resulting in collaborative and cooperative coordination.

Despite these promising practices there is currently no standardised model for nexus coordination linking humanitarian cash and social protection. The examples of where this has evolved fall outside of the IASC CWG's, and challenges persist in reporting and strategic engagement due to their lack of connection to institutional structures like the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO).

National and sub-national government social protection coordination structures

Governments play a crucial role in coordinating social protection efforts, often through existing mechanisms that humanitarian actors may not be fully aware of or engaged with. UNICEF data²⁶ suggests that from the 110 countries where they work, 70 have government-led social protection coordination. This suggests that there is greater scope for linkages between social protection and humanitarian cash coordination leveraging government platforms, with a focus on government engagement and leadership.

Promising practices in coordination between humanitarian actors and government entities are emerging, particularly at regional and district levels within countries. This is especially evident in federated structures like Ethiopia. Regional coordination structures effectively bring together diverse government actors who may take a more pragmatic approach than the often politicised national engagement. This approach

²³ Smith, G. (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices'

²⁴ Swithern, S. (2025) 'Financing Social Protection in Protracted Crisis'. BASIC.

²⁵ Smith, G. (2025) 'Maintaining and strengthening social assistance systems in conflict settings: synthesis note', Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice and Resources (STAAR), DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom.

²⁶ UNICEF (2023) 'Internal Coordination Survey'

provides an opportunity for development partners, including those with dual mandates, to engage and support government counterparts in implementing joined-up approaches.

Dedicated and sustained incentives for coordination platforms

Donors can positively incentivise joined-up approaches in programme and policy design through creating a culture of accountability to organisational mandates, and through support to coordination platforms. Individually, and through working groups. Incentives can promote joined-up approaches by incorporating relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) into program design and incentivising the adoption of an **"if not social protection, why not?"** approach. UN agencies also play a crucial role in incentivising linkages between humanitarian and development efforts, supporting government leadership in social protection, and promoting participation in CWGs.

Major international donors can leverage their influence to incentivise leadership roles at the country level in social protection and humanitarian action, including ensuring the engagement of the World Bank in linkages, leveraging their government relationships. A cohesive approach that addresses the disconnect sometimes observed between headquarters-level donor strategies and country-level operations could ensure field personnel effectively translate high-level strategies into tangible actions.

Joined up analysis, planning, preparedness and tools

Key informants strongly advocate for linking humanitarian cash assistance with social protection systems before investing in parallel humanitarian systems, including respecting government roles in coordination. This joined-up approach, though not yet routine, is crucial for leveraging existing systems and enhancing national leadership. It involves examining how humanitarian cash can align with and strengthen social protection systems, prioritising system mapping to identify collaboration opportunities. This process requires accessible information for all stakeholders to foster a shared understanding of the landscape and potential entry points for collaboration, which can be analysed for timeliness, cost-effectiveness, and potential risks.

Effective preparedness is vital for seamless coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection interventions. This includes developing contingency plans and establishing collaborative mechanisms between development partners and government ministries leading on social protection, covering protocols for engaging with social registries, data sharing, and other key system components. By leveraging coordination platforms, countries can better respond to shocks through existing social protection frameworks, enhancing response efficiency and strengthening national systems. The use of practical, user-friendly tools (i.e. CCD Social Protection Calculator in Ukraine p 25) and participatory methods can help bridge the gap between social protection systems and humanitarian cash programming, overcoming silos and paving the way for more integrated, responsive, and sustainable assistance in crisis contexts.

Joint procedures and systems for sharing humanitarian data

Data sharing systems are essential for linking humanitarian cash assistance with social protection, though challenges remain, particularly around data protection, transparency, and updating social registries. Promising practices include efforts by UNICEF and WFP in Somalia to update digital household registrations and implement data protection protocols, which have facilitated third-party contributions to national registries. In conflict settings like Tigray, humanitarian cash systems adapted to fill gaps left by the suspended national Productive Safety Net Programme, using distinct targeting and eligibility procedures. These examples highlight the importance of accessible, transparent data systems to foster collaboration and improve response efficiency.

Effective user engagement and cross-sector coordination are critical for maximising the impact of social protection information systems. Expanding system functionality beyond targeting, ensuring data protection, and improving interoperability with other databases are strategic priorities. Strengthening dialogue among governments, humanitarian actors, and development partners is vital to address diverse data needs and risks while aligning efforts with local realities. However, many countries face challenges in sustainably funding these systems, relying heavily on external financing. Strategic engagement from

humanitarian actors on data sharing and interoperability can enhance access to social protection data and support the development of more integrated, sustainable systems.

Enablers and barriers to joined up humanitarian cash and social protection

Enablers and barriers to joined-up coordination of humanitarian cash and social protection are vital to understand to enable progress. These are outlined in section 3.0 as well as case studies (Annex 4).

Dedicated and sustained investment

Certain donors, particularly FCDO and EU/DG ECHO, have made significant efforts to finance coordination platforms and incentivise development partners to link humanitarian cash and social protection. These efforts have contributed to more joined-up approaches in countries like Ukraine, oPt, Ethiopia, and Colombia. Technically and strategically strong individuals within these organisations are overcoming institutional divides to support integrated programming and coordination platforms. However, budget cuts and humanitarian ringfencing risk reducing investments in nexus-bridging programs.

National donor coordination mechanisms can incentivise more joined-up approaches, but face limitations due to changing funding landscapes and varying levels of technical knowledge among donors. Building donors' technical capacity and establishing joint donor agreements are crucial for effective coordination. However, many donors lack the instruments, understanding and investment for joined-up approaches to bridge financing across the humanitarian-development nexus. Amid shrinking humanitarian funding and in line with mandate, OCHA and CAG at the global level prioritise delivering humanitarian cash to uphold humanitarian principles, while system strengthening approaches have received comparatively less emphasis.

Political economy of UN and strategic engagement and leadership

The landscape of humanitarian aid and social protection is characterised by complex interactions between diverse national and international actors, each with their own interests that can impact intervention effectiveness. While no entity is immune to potentially adverse incentives, properly aligned interests can drive positive outcomes. Reform efforts often face resistance from those benefiting from the status quo, or international actors reluctant to change existing systems.

The success of coordination efforts often relies on committed individuals rather than institutionalised processes, as exemplified by the SP-CVA-TWG in oPt. The roles of HC/RC, OCHA, and UNCTs/HCTs are critical in setting the strategic direction for joined-up approaches, but a gap exists due to the absence of nexus-informed leadership. OCHA has strategically moved away from nexus engagement, focusing on a facilitatory approach. Strengthening nexus engagement of pivotal roles could improve coherence and effectiveness of joined-up interventions. The World Bank is seen as crucial in facilitating government engagement in joined-up coordination, with its increasing involvement in crisis financing for fragile and conflict-affected states potentially bridging the gap between humanitarian cash and social protection.

Organisational mandates and policy across the nexus

Organisational mandates for humanitarian and development partners increasingly emphasise the importance of linking humanitarian cash assistance with social protection systems. However, this alignment is not consistently applied at the country level due to factors including leadership variations, financial disincentives, rigid organisational structures, and limited awareness of national systems. OCHA has shifted its strategic focus towards a facilitatory approach, encouraging other actors to take the lead in developing joined-up approaches between humanitarian cash assistance and social protection across the nexus. The disconnect between high-level commitments and operational realities is particularly evident in crisis contexts, where time constraints often lead to the creation of parallel response mechanisms. This is often the case in protracted crisis, despite reoccurring crisis and time for preparedness activities.

Key actors like OCHA, UNICEF, WFP, and ILO have the potential to bridge the gap between humanitarian cash assistance and social protection. OCHA's coordination mandate positions it well to promote social

protection awareness within humanitarian operations, while organisations with dual mandates or neutrality in humanitarian coordination (i.e. ILO) can provide valuable connections between sectors. However, the research suggests that OCHA's role in technical decision-making at the country level is creating confusion and tension, and there is a lack of capacity and clarity on when and how linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection should be implemented.

To address these challenges, there is a pressing need for comprehensive mainstreaming of coordination principles from the outset of humanitarian responses. This includes adopting a continuum approach from day one of interventions, rather than preparing for a future 'transition.' The SPIAC-B working group has developed a series of tipsheets to help apply their Common Principles for linking humanitarian cash assistance with social protection systems at country level.²⁷ Increasing awareness and application of these principles at the country level could enhance coordination efforts and help overcome the tendency among humanitarian actors to overlook or underestimate the potential of national social protection systems, even in challenging contexts.

Investing in technical capabilities and trust building

Effective coordination in linking humanitarian cash and social protection requires targeted, demand-driven strategic and technical assistance. Experience demonstrates that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Coordination operates along a continuum, from simple knowledge-sharing to complex collaboration frameworks (see Figure 1) involving inter-agency agreements and joint action plans. However, systemic challenges, such as inter-agency competition, shifts in donor priorities, and limited trust between actors, hinder sustainable collaboration. Building trust requires time and an understanding of the diverse interests and agendas of stakeholders. Tools like the SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection Tipsheets on their Common Principles (Annex 1) offer practical guidance for strengthening coordination, although awareness of these principles remains limited beyond technical experts.

The transition to the new cash coordination model shows progress, with 36 contexts adopting it by April 2024, but challenges persist in IASC/mixed settings. Key issues include unclear roles among stakeholders, insufficient resources for implementation, and limited local engagement. Leadership and capacity building are critical to addressing these gaps. While efforts like rotational co-chair arrangements in Ukraine promote inclusive leadership, capacity-building initiatives must go beyond technical skills to include strategic leadership and trust-building.²⁸ A holistic approach tailored to diverse stakeholders is essential for effective coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection systems.

Recommendations

Recommendations for joined up humanitarian cash and social protection are summarised below, and more details can be found in section 4.0.

Tools, guidance, and processes	• Policy notes on incentive alignment for key actors in humanitarian cash and social protection • Develop a comprehensive toolkit for humanitarian cash and social protection linkages to support nexus coordination • Advocacy for standards harmonisation • Capacity Building Tools
Donor funding	Resourcing coordination • Sustained funding for coordination platforms • Incentives for coordination and dialogue to promote shared understanding • Joint donor guidance • Capacity building for donors on nexus leadership

²⁷ CAG (2024) 'Summary Report: Light Review of the New Cash Coordination Model'

²⁸ Summary Report: Light Review of the new Cash Coordination Model

	Overcoming funding instrument gaps • DCF coordination review • Create DAC/DCF financing frameworks for social protection in fragile contexts • Actively fund SRSP analysis and roadmaps
	Setting incentives for an ‘if not social protection, why not?’ approach • Donor KPI’s for humanitarian and social protection • Leverage World Bank relationships for humanitarian and social protection linkages
Development partner support to joined-up coordination	UN agencies and development partners • Strengthen RCO/DCO Nexus Competencies • KPI’s for application of organisational mandates for joined up approaches in protracted crisis • UN / Development partners routine analysis sharing • Implement a "continuum approach" in 5 priority countries, integrating coordination roles for governments from the outset of humanitarian interventions OCHA and the global CAG • Integrate Social Protection Data into HNRP (OCHA) and Refugee Response Plans (UNHCR) Processes • Clarify the roles and responsibilities for CWG in linking humanitarian cash and social protection • Standardise CWG Tools for identifying opportunities for joined up humanitarian cash and social protection in protracted Crises CashCap, and CaLP • Continue to leverage the CashCap capacity-building agreements with UNICEF, extending to other agencies • Leverage CaLP regional coordination and joint meetings between humanitarian cash and social protection experts • Utilise CashCap experts to enhance the capacity of CWG’s
Overarching recommendations for the High-Level Panel	• Nexus Coordination Platforms • If not social protection, why not?’²⁹ feasibility framework • Establish a dedicated global fund for social protection focusing on fragility and protracted crises

²⁹ Forum on social protection in fragility and conflict: Building and protecting social protection systems through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus. Rome (2024).

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Why is linking humanitarian cash and social protection systems important?

Increasing humanitarian needs in a context of reducing budgets – coupled with social protection systems’ growing capability to respond to shocks and build resilience – means that coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection actors is vital. In rapid-onset crises, channelling humanitarian assistance through existing social protection systems can allow for a quick and cost-effective response. With 712 million people living in extreme poverty in 2022 and 733 million facing hunger in 2023, the need for coordinated action is urgent.³⁰ Only 52.4% of people globally are covered by at least one cash social protection benefit, leaving 3.8 billion unprotected, many of whom reside in fragile and conflict affected contexts (FCAS).³¹ These protracted crises are compounded by limited resources for humanitarian appeals, for which coverage stood at just 37.3% as of October 2024.³²

Social protection plays an important role in FCAS, helping vulnerable populations manage risks, support human development, and build resilience. By offering predictable protection against various life-cycle risks and assisting the most vulnerable members of society in coping with shocks, social protection systems serve as fundamental safety nets. In conflict-affected areas or during post-conflict recovery, these systems can significantly contribute to maintaining welfare, safeguarding human capital, building resilience and mitigating poverty rates. Moreover, in situations of protracted crises, well-established social protection mechanisms can effectively reduce reliance on international humanitarian aid, fostering greater self-sufficiency and stability within affected communities.

Connecting humanitarian interventions with social protection processes has the potential, if done well, to contribute to resilience, peace, stabilisation, and economic growth in countries in crisis.³³ By 2030, it is estimated that two-thirds of the world’s extreme poor will live in FCAS.³⁴ Social protection will therefore be an important instrument to support the most vulnerable in meeting their basic needs. Research shows that even though long-term and shock-responsive social protection is limited in FCAS, it can meaningfully contribute to maintaining, adapting, and strengthening social protection.^{35,36}

Global evidence demonstrates that social protection can be leveraged to respond to shocks and support households’ resilience.³⁷ Although there may still be a need for a complementary emergency response, effective social protection – implemented through adequate, predictable responses – can reduce negative coping mechanisms (thereby reducing the cost of humanitarian interventions and avoiding income and asset loss by households), rebuild asset stocks, reduce debt burdens, and improve nutrition, investment, and productivity, as well as having economy-wide multipliers.^{38,39} Recent research^{40,41,42}

³⁰ FAO (2024) ‘State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report 2024’.

³¹ OCHA (2024) ‘Global Humanitarian Overview, October Snapshot’.

³² OCHA (2024) ‘Global Humanitarian Overview, October Snapshot’.

³³ DG INTPA (2024) ‘Guidance Package Social Protection across the Nexus’

³⁴ World Bank (2020) World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020-2025.

³⁵ BASIC (2022) ‘Shock-responsive social protection: What is known about what works in fragile and conflict-affected situations?’

³⁶ STAAR (2025) ‘Maintaining, adapting & strengthening SP in fragile & conflict affected setting’ (unpublished)

³⁷ Barca, V., Sharpe, J., and Flower, C. (2021) ‘Social protection “killer facts”’, Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service (SPACE).

³⁸ Wylde, E. and Cabot Venton, C. (2020) ‘Value for money of social protection and humanitarian cash transfers in the context of Covid-19’. Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service (SPACE)

³⁹ Cabot Venton, C. (2020) ‘Economics of Early Response and Resilience to COVID-19: Ethiopia Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19: Expert Advice’. DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom

⁴⁰ Kreidler, C., Battas, S., Seyfert, K., and Saidi, M. (Dec 2022) ‘Linking humanitarian cash and national social protection systems: Synthesis Report. Sahel adaptive social protection system’.

⁴¹ Seyfert, K.; Barca, V.; Gentilini, U.; Luthria, M.; Abbady, S. *Unbundled : A Framework for Connecting Safety Nets and Humanitarian Assistance in Refugee Settings* (English). Social Protection and Jobs Discussion Paper, no. 1935 Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

⁴² Smith, G. (2025) ‘Maintaining and strengthening social assistance systems in conflict settings: synthesis note’, Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice and Resources (STAAR), DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom.

demonstrates how humanitarian assistance can complement and/or substitute state-provided social protection when fragility or conflict disrupts regular programming. This complementarity protects households from protracted crisis, with those receiving both types of assistance faring better than those receiving limited or no support.^{43,44}

With recent changes to the funding landscape the importance of social protection financing is key. Official Development Finance (ODF) for social protection more than doubled from US\$ 914 million in 2018 to US\$ 2.4 billion in 2022, accounting for approximately 25% of the global total. The World Bank is the dominant source, providing nearly three-quarters of the total financing for partner countries in 2022.⁴⁵ This shift toward multilateral financing indicates a more stable and potentially sustainable funding approach, including design, digital, and technical assistance that could strengthen joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection efforts. The World Bank has committed to expanding social protection coverage to an additional 500 million people globally by 2030, developing a more nuanced, risk-based approach to FCAS, scaling up responses to forced displacement, and strengthening partnerships.⁴⁶

1.2 What do we mean by coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection?

Coordination of social protection refers to the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders in policy, programming, and delivery processes, working together to reduce vulnerability and alleviate poverty. It involves the alignment of all stakeholder activities at both programme and administrative levels, aiming to achieve clearly identified and shared objectives coherently and holistically. Stakeholders in social protection encompass a wide range of actors, including central and subnational government departments managing design, implementation, and financing of social protection policies and programmes; development partners providing financial or technical support; and civil society organisations engaging in social protection services.⁴⁷

Similarly, coordination in humanitarian cash focuses on bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a cohesive and principled response to emergencies.⁴⁸ Stakeholders typically include the humanitarian country team (HCT), humanitarian and resident coordinators (HCs and RCs), donors, United Nations (UN) agencies, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), members of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, local and regional government responsible for disaster management and national and or federal government, NGO's and civil society organisations. The specific actions, tasks, and degree of collaboration depend on the context, with coordination occurring along a continuum from simple knowledge-sharing arrangements to greater degrees of alignment, as well as more complex collaboration and cooperation approaches involving shared activity design, delivery systems, and resources as outlined in Figure 1.

⁴³ Barca, V. (2019) 'Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises'. Tools and Methods Series, Reference Document No 26, Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (SPaN), European Commission, Brussels.

⁴⁴ Longhurst, D. and Smith, G. (2020) 'Identifying practical options for linking humanitarian assistance and social protection in the COVID-19 response'. Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service (SPACE), DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom.

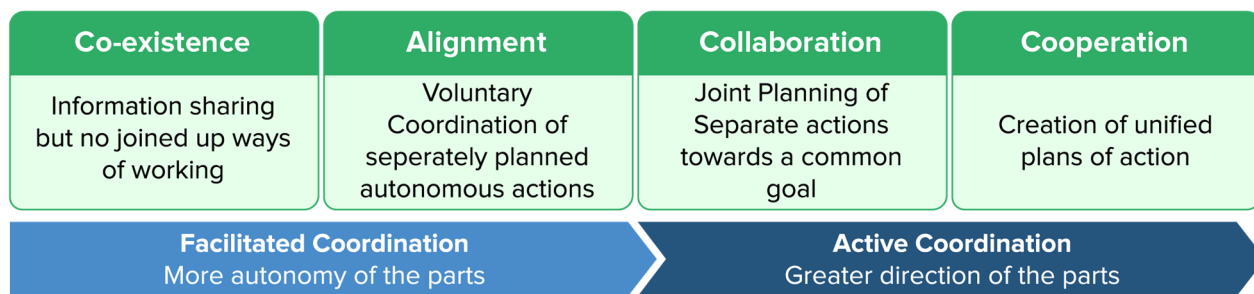
⁴⁵ McCord, A., Cherrier, C., Both, N., and Bastagli, F. (2021) 'Official development assistance financing for social protection: Lessons from the Covid-19 response'. Social protection responses to Covid-19 and beyond. ODI

⁴⁶ World Bank (2024) World Bank Group Ramps Up Fight Against Global Hunger'

⁴⁷ SPACE (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices.

⁴⁸ OCHA definition

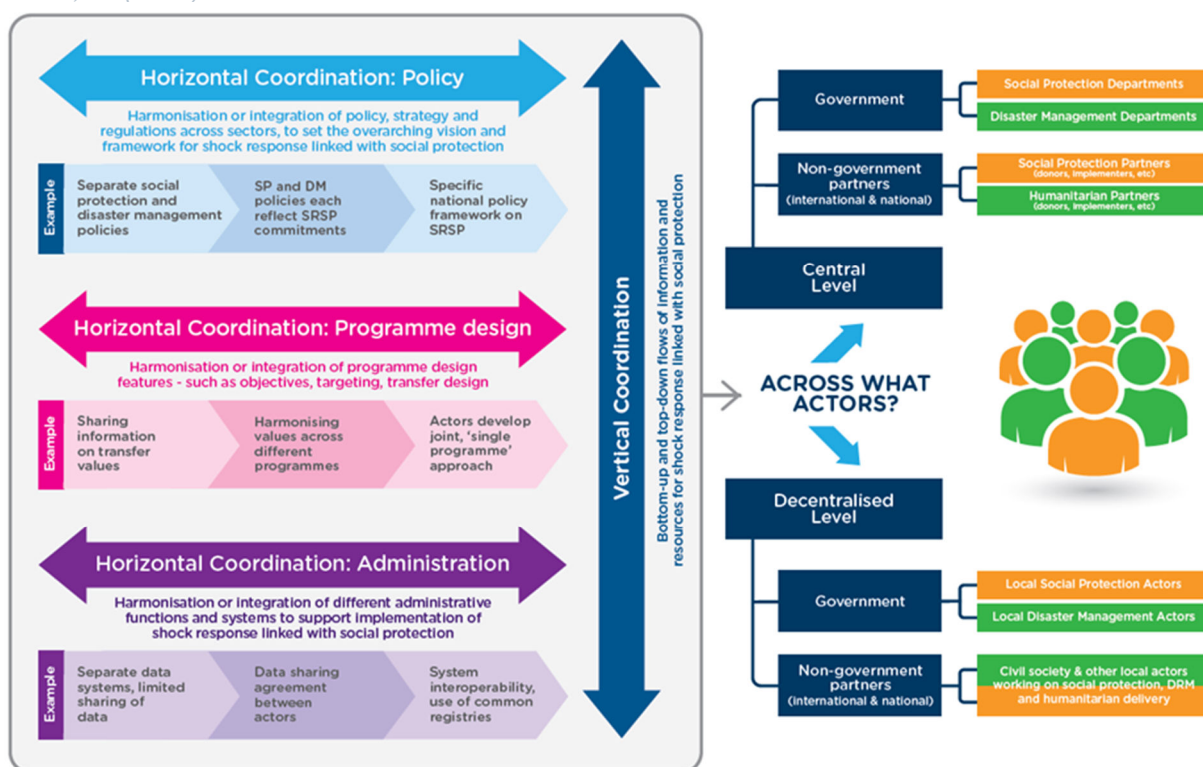
Figure 1: Forms of coordination - Adapted from Swithern and Schreiber (2023)⁴⁹



Coordination of joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection bridges the development-humanitarian divide, involving a broader range of stakeholders. This form of coordination incorporates actors from both social protection and humanitarian systems, working together on policy, programming, and delivery processes in a harmonised manner. This collaboration and cooperation create synergies and promotes unified thinking and planning to achieve common objectives (see Figure 1).

Both humanitarian and national social protection systems require multi-level coordination, at both horizontal (across government departments and organisations) and vertical (from centralised to more localised actors) levels (see Figure 2). This encompasses various domains, including strategic or policy-related actions, and more operational aspects concerning technical design and implementation processes.

Figure 2: Levels and domains for coordination of shock responses linked with social protection. From: Smith, G. (2021)⁵⁰



⁴⁹ Swithern, S. and Schreiber, D. (2023) 'Co-ordination across the Humanitarian- Development-Peace Nexus'. OECD Development Co-operation Working Papers, No. 113, OECD Publishing, Paris

⁵⁰ Smith, G. (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices', Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert Advice Service (SPACE), DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom.

1.3 Why is coordination challenging?

Coordinating social protection and humanitarian assistance in FCAS remains a critical challenge due to its multi-disciplinary nature. This stems from the inherent complexity in aligning diverse actors with distinct mandates, guiding principles, and operational frameworks across the social protection and humanitarian sectors. Social protection and disaster management responsibilities are often spread across different ministries and departments, with parallel systems for international humanitarian assistance. Communication barriers and limited cross-sector understanding further complicate coordination. Differing mandates, interests, and guiding principles between humanitarian and development actors create disconnect and can lead to tensions, especially in approaches to government engagement. Overcoming these challenges requires bridging these silos across multiple levels, which although a complex task is essential for effective coordination and implementation.⁵¹

There are significant challenges in bridging institutional and disciplinary silos.^{52,53,54,55} The fragmentation is evident in the dispersion of responsibilities across multiple government entities, often with limited mechanisms for inter-ministerial collaboration. This institutional division is mirrored in donors, UN agencies, and development partners, where funding streams and operational structures remain largely compartmentalised. Furthermore, the divergent operational paradigms between humanitarian actors, who adhere to principles of impartiality and neutrality, and development actors, who prioritise national ownership and long-term sustainability, create tensions in approaches to government engagement and programme implementation.

The global humanitarian funding gap has widened significantly over the past decade, as needs have consistently outpaced available resources. By the end of 2023, the requirements for UN-coordinated appeals reached an unprecedented US\$ 56.7 billion, with only 38.3% of these needs met.⁵⁶ This severe shortfall has forced humanitarian agencies to focus to the most critical life-saving interventions, leading to a reduction in funding⁵⁷ social protection system strengthening approaches.⁵⁸

The absence of a formal, systematic coordination structure encompassing development and humanitarian actors across the nexus that can support joined up humanitarian cash and social protection is a serious challenge. While existing mechanisms like Cash Working Groups (CWGs) have made some progress in fostering linkages between cash assistance and social protection programmes, there is potential to further enhance coordination and synergy across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

KI's noted communication and knowledge gaps between sectors impede effective coordination and knowledge transfer. Practitioners often employ sector-specific terminology and demonstrate limited cross-sectoral understanding of systems and best practices. This lack of a common lexicon and shared operational framework hinders integrated approaches to joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection. International humanitarian assistance is frequently provided in parallel to national social protection structures, with limited interaction between humanitarian actors and social protection working groups or task forces. The separate funding channels within donor organisations and implementing agencies further reinforce these operational silos, complicating efforts to develop common ground, collective end goals, and shared ways of working that leverage the comparative advantages of each sector.

⁵¹ SPACE (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices'.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ EU (2019) 'Tools and Methods Series Reference Document No 26 – Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus. A Game Changer in Supporting People through Crises'.

⁵⁴ IFRC (2020) 'Linking humanitarian cash and social protection: Learning from the experience of eight National Societies'.

⁵⁵ Longhurst, D., Smith, G. et al. (2020) 'Identifying Practical Options for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection in the COVID-19 Response'.

⁵⁶ OCHA (2023) 'Global Humanitarian Overview 2023, December Update'.

⁵⁷ KII OCHA.

⁵⁸ Swithern, S. (2025) 'Financing Social Protection in Protracted Crisis'. BASIC.

The centralisation of decision-making processes in humanitarian cash and social protection initiatives is a critical challenge. Studies^{59, 60, 61} highlight that humanitarian cash and social protection programmes in fragile and conflict affected contexts are dominated by bilateral and multilateral donors and UN agencies with limited input from central government representatives. This approach risks excluding sub-national authorities and organisations representing civil society and disadvantaged groups, contradicting commitments made under the Grand Bargain for greater localisation of humanitarian aid and improved integration of gender equality and social inclusion in humanitarian responses.

Facilitating coordination is complex and requires individuals with the appropriate soft skills, technical knowledge, authority and capacity. Coordinating across the nexus entails managing a range of mandates, agendas, and interests among a diverse group of actors. Managing this space requires individuals adept at navigating these competing interests to lead actors in the same direction. Often individuals who facilitate coordination are double or triple hatting, limiting their capacity to coordinate in these challenging environments. Additionally, social protection actors may not have a full understanding of humanitarian cash, and vice versa. This lack of knowledge can create barriers to identifying and implementing linkages for joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection.

1.4 Why is this paper needed?

While effective coordination at a country level remains a challenge, research carried out four years ago identified a range of potentially promising practices emerging in the response to Covid-19 and other crises.⁶²

Meanwhile, in the past two years, building on the Grand Bargain⁶³ there have been renewed, stronger, and more specific commitments to tackle this problem. Recent changes to the global humanitarian architecture with the establishment of the Cash Advisory Group (CAG) (see Annex 1 for further information) and the development of the Common Principles by the Social Protection Interagency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection may already have contributed to overcoming some coordination challenges. Meanwhile, the Global Charter for Action agreed at the Forum on Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict in October 2024⁶⁴ highlighted a consensus on the need for further actions to move the dial on coordination of humanitarian action and social protection. In 2025, this will be a priority focus of a UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)-funded High-Level Panel on Enhancing Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict.

Box1: Some key mandate, guidance and tips (see Annex 1 for further details)



2022 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Global Cash Advisory Group Terms of Reference (ToR): ‘cash coordination will consider linkages with social protection systems where relevant and appropriate’⁶⁵

2023 IASC New Cash Coordination Model – FAQs: ‘Provide a clear and predictable entry point for linkages to social protection to the extent appropriate for the response and/or preparedness efforts.’⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Longhurst, D., P. Harvey, R. Sabates-Wheeler, R. Slater, et al. (2020) ‘Linking social protection and humanitarian cash and voucher assistance’. Cash Learning Partnership, London.

⁶⁰ Sabates-Wheeler, R. and D. Longhurst (2020) ‘Integrating Humanitarian Response with Social Protection Systems: Limits and Opportunities’. Policy Briefing, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, UK.

⁶¹ The Grand Bargain Sub-Group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection (2021) ‘Learnings on linking humanitarian cash and social protection’.

⁶² SPACE (2021) ‘Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices’.

⁶³ Grand Bargain 2.0 (2022) ‘Cash Coordination Caucus. Outcomes and Recommendations’. Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Geneva.

⁶⁴ Global Charter Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict (2024) [Charter and Forum papers](#)

⁶⁵ IASC (2022) [Global Cash Advisory Group Terms of Reference 2022](#)

⁶⁶ IASC (2023) [‘New Cash Coordination Model - FAQs’](#)

2023 Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection - Principle 5 'Build coordination mechanisms that link HA-SP at country, regional and global levels'⁶⁷

In this context it is vital to capture, synthesise, and share the achievements, promising practices, and lessons from coordination efforts in the last few years. Learning from promising practices can be useful for actors in other countries to adopt for their own contexts. Meanwhile, findings on promising practices and key enablers and constraints to coordination can inform the direction of the abovementioned global policy dialogue processes.

Research on the coordination of humanitarian cash and social protection interventions in fragile and crisis-affected contexts is still limited. This paper builds on the growing body of literature including Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19: Expert Advice (SPACE) (2021)⁶⁸ and other research.⁶⁹

This is an opportune moment to strengthen coordination efforts. Development actors are increasing their commitment and engagement in humanitarian settings. The intersection with climate shocks and need for climate finance to reach FCAS are also being increasingly recognised. New approaches and learnings are frequently emerging on how to better support local and national systems, design interventions for marginalised populations, and develop flexible, hybrid models for social protection delivery in challenging governance contexts.

1.5 Objectives and methodology

This research (see Annex 2 for a more details) is desk based and draws on existing literature and evidence, complemented by limited qualitative primary data collection with practitioners and policymakers at the global and country levels.

The countries were selected to explore different experiences and coordination practices, and include the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Ukraine, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Colombia, and the Philippines. Primary data was collected from 10 global and 37 country key informant interviews (KIIs), as well as a focus group discussion conducted at the Forum on Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict (October 2024)⁷⁰ Note that this piece of work is relatively light touch, and there were challenges in accessing relevant KIIs in the Philippines, Cameroon, and Colombia. Annex 3 provides details of those interviewed.

The research aims to capture promising practices and lessons learned, with a view to systematising and institutionalising approaches and making progress on overcoming constraints. As noted above, it was informed by SPACE (2021)⁷¹ as well as related Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice and resources (STAAR) and Better Assistance in Crises (BASIC) research. The work was commissioned by the SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection and FCDO, was funded by FCDO, and has CAG as a special user.

The research involved the following activities:

1. Map existing country-level evidence on coordination mechanisms between humanitarian cash and social protection actors.
2. Analyse the mapped evidence for six countries to capture emerging learning and promising practices.

⁶⁷ SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection (2023). [Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection](#).

⁶⁸ SPACE (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices'.

⁶⁹ Kreidler, C. et al. Linking Humanitarian Cash Assistance and National Social Protection Systems: Flagship Report (English). Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme. World Bank.

⁷⁰ Forum on social protection in fragility and conflict: Building and protecting social protection systems through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus. Rome (2024).

⁷¹ SPACE (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices'.

3. Develop a synthesis note providing cross-case analysis and forward-looking recommendations for the SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection member engagement at the country level, with case studies on Ukraine, oPt, and Ethiopia.
4. Create a two-page framing paper for the SPIAC-B working group and FCDO.
5. Deliver a validation session to the annual SPIAC-B 'Linking humanitarian assistance and social protection' group meeting.
6. Deliver a learning session to introduce the assignment outcomes to selected actors from FCDO and other interested parties.

2. PROMISING PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The findings in this chapter focus on coordination platforms and wider tangible practices that enhance coordination.

2.1 Dedicated coordination forums or platforms

SPACE (2021)⁷² found that coordination forums and platforms bringing together social and humanitarian stakeholders enabled the collective discussions needed to reach high-level agreement on policy and strategic issues, and for designing the technical and operational aspects of design and implementation. Bringing stakeholders together in a regular manner helped to foster mutual understanding and trust. Where these existed and functioned well ahead of a crisis, this supported collaborative decision making and action planning.

The findings from this research reinforce these findings and highlight the importance of dedicated platforms for supporting joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection. From the six case study countries selected, Ethiopia, oPt, Ukraine, Colombia and Cameroon fall under the new global IASC structure (see Box 2) whereas the Philippines sits outside of this and is supported by the regional CWG. Figure 3 outlines the cash coordination structure at country level under IASC. Detailed case studies for Ethiopia, Ukraine and oPt can be found in Annex 4.

Box 2 Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC)



Inter-Agency Steering Committee (IASC)

In early 2022, the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) endorsed a new model for cash coordination with the goal of ensuring predictable, accountable, and timely coordination of cash assistance that is adaptable and built on the principles of localisation and accountability. Key features of the new model include.

- The Inter-Sector/Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (IS/ICCG), under the existing chair (OCHA for IASC/mixed coordination or UNHCR for refugee coordination arrangements), is responsible for overall cash coordination.
- Establishing and/or formalising the Cash Working Group (CWG), to report to the IS/ICCG. CWGs in IASC/mixed settings would have non-programmatic and programmatic co-chairs.
- Establishing a global Cash Advisory Group (CAG) to support country level cash coordination technically and in terms of capacity building.²

⁷² Smith, G. (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices'

Figure 3 Cash Coordination Structure at Country Level.



2.1.1 Coordination through CWG sub-groups

There are promising practices from CWG's and subgroups on linking humanitarian cash and social protection, **but they do not provide a comprehensive solution to inherent coordination challenges**. These subgroups are effectively working to share information, build capacity, better understand the landscape, and work toward better alignment (see examples below). However, CWG coordination leads are typically overstretched, often double or triple hatting, and have a high turnover. Due to these challenges the focus is primarily technical and programmatic rather than strategic-level influencing and engagement with donors and the government.



Cameroon: The CWG launched a taskforce on CVA linkages to social protection in 2022. It is led by UNICEF, with broad attendance from the UN, World Bank, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), DG ECHO, (I)NGOs, and several government ministries. The taskforce focused on generating dialogue between humanitarian and development actors, scoping the social protection system, conducting mini capacity building sessions for CWG members, including on Shock Responsive Social Protection (SRSP), mapping key actors, and identifying opportunities for linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection.⁷³

However, interviewees highlighted several interconnected challenges hindering effective coordination for both IASC and non IASC CWG subgroups. A lack of political will among humanitarian actors was frequently cited, alongside conflicting organisational agendas, increasing competition for power, position, and resources, and a lack of understanding regarding social protection systems. Additionally, many actors struggle with how to engage with government counterparts within complex political economies. Many actors also lack the necessary understanding and capacity to engage effectively, with humanitarian actors not fully understanding what joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection would look like in practice and vice versa. Additionally, there is a notable absence of shared understanding from CWGs on how to interact with government counterparts within the complex political economy of social protection systems – especially as connections between humanitarian cash and social protection typically occur through direct interactions between agencies and government ministries. This includes limited grasp of sensitive issues, such as determining appropriate transfer rates or working with severely under-resourced ministries.



STAAR Ethiopia Research⁷⁴ into *Synthesising lessons and promising practices for country-level coordination in delivery of joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection.*

Survey results indicate that the major actors - humanitarian actors, coordination actors and development stakeholders - lack knowledge and understanding of each other's structures and coordination mechanisms, making it difficult to work together.

There is a clear need for greater awareness raising and familiarisation of each other's systems, processes and coordination mechanisms. Guidance on how to engage is also needed alongside

⁷³ Cameroon CWG (2022) 'ToR: CVA and SP Linkages Taskforce'

⁷⁴ Bezuneh, B., Mohiddin, L. and Taylor, M (2025) 'Barriers, Challenges and Opportunities of Humanitarian Cash and Coordination Actors to Accommodate PSNP beneficiaries in Conflict Settings', Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice and Resources (STAAR), DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom

capacity building to address gaps in technical expertise and leadership, additional barriers to meaningful participation.

The implementation of the IASC cash coordination model in various contexts i.e. Ukraine has revealed challenges, particularly regarding government involvement in countries with more developed systems. A key learning is the importance of contextualising global coordination models to local realities, balancing government participation with adherence to humanitarian principles. Instead of adopting a risk-avoidance strategy that limits government involvement, KI's report that a de-risking approach could allow for more nuanced discussions on integrating government capacity while maintaining humanitarian independence. This experience highlights the need for flexibility in applying coordination models and the potential benefits of leveraging government engagement in cash coordination when appropriate.



In Ukraine, implementation of the IASC cash coordination model revealed some challenges, particularly regarding government involvement. A key observation of KI's is that the model was implemented without fully considering the strong position of more developed governments in cash coordination. Finding ways to leverage the government's capacity and engagement in cash coordination while maintaining humanitarian principles could have enhanced the overall effectiveness of the response. While several areas were identified to strengthen linkages between humanitarian cash assistance and social protection, progress was limited by the absence of a platform to bring together humanitarian and social protection actors.⁷⁵ The CWG launched a task team on 'Linking Humanitarian Cash Transfers to Social Protection', in October 2022, but its function did not evolve beyond information sharing, due in part to the lack of social protection capacity amongst development partners, and it was deactivated in July 2023. This learning contributed to the PeReHID initiative which was embedded within the Ministry of Social Policy. Challenges faced related to the role out of the new IASC model, which includes looking at linkages to social protection, and a lack of common language between the GoU and humanitarian actors. This experience underscores the need for more robust mechanisms to facilitate collaboration between humanitarian cash initiatives and existing social protection systems in complex operational environments.

2.1.2 Evolving nexus groups outside the humanitarian architecture

There are promising practices in evolving nexus coordination groups that fall outside of the current humanitarian architecture, and which are proving capable of addressing both strategic and technical issues. These include both broader nexus platforms and specific groups that focus on linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection. Across the six case study countries, there are a range of platforms including the Social Protection and Cash and Voucher Assistance Technical Working Group (SP-CVA-TWG) in oPt (see Box 3), the PeReHID in Ukraine⁷⁶ (see Box 4), the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) in Ethiopia⁷⁷ (see Box 5), the Adaptive Social Protection Roundtable in Colombia (see Box 6), the Issue Based Coalition (ICB) on Social Protection in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).⁷⁸ In addition, there is strong collaboration between the regional CWG and social protection platform for West and Central Africa.

Key benefits of these groups include bringing together actors using common language to generate shared understanding and dialogue in order to develop early and proactive coordination with national governments at both the strategic and technical levels. This trust building has positive outcomes including greater transparency and data sharing, as well as joint advocacy for policy alignment and social protection reforms.

⁷⁵ See WFP's Social Benefit top-up cash assistance programme: WFP (2024) 'National Social Protection System Support in Ukraine – Social Benefits Top-up'

⁷⁶ PeReHID (2024) [PeReHID Strategic Roadmap](#)

⁷⁷ Ethiopia CWG (2024) 'Strategic Advisory Group ToR's'

⁷⁸ ICB on Social Protection in the Arab Region/MENA

These platforms have often received dedicated capacity and funding, which has enabled collaboration and cooperation moving toward unified plans of action (see Figure 2). However, there are challenges in reporting and strategic engagement, given that these groups are not connected to institutional structures such as the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO). This highlights the urgent need for more robust coordination mechanisms to fully realise the potential of the HDP nexus in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Examples of these dedicated platforms are further outlined below:

Box 3 Social Protection and Cash and Voucher Assistance Technical Working Group (SP-CVA-TWG) in oPt



OPT SOCIAL PROTECTION-CASH & VOUCHERS ASSISTANCE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (SPCVA TWG)

The SP-CVA-TWG was established in 2022 as part of the European Union (EU)-funded project 'Strengthening Nexus Coherence and Responsiveness in the Palestinian Social Protection Sector'. Led by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), with the International Labour Organization (ILO) serving as the secretariat, the group aims to bridge humanitarian aid and social protection efforts, focusing on three key workstreams:

1. Routine social protection
2. SRSP
3. Referrals.

Supported by STAAR, the initiative gathers and shares information before developing prototypes to enhance coordination. The SPCVA-TWG paused some of its workstreams following October the 7th. and in 2024, workstream 1 was restructured into a spearhead group with two specific focus areas: i) data sharing, and the 'triple strand safety net' (3SSN). These involved the MoSD, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

To foster collaboration, ILO engaged Ingenious Peoples Knowledge (IPK)⁷⁹ to facilitate trust and relationship-building, leading to a shared mission statement and roadmap. The SP-CVA-TWG emphasises practical coordination rather than mere information exchange, creating a space for active problem-solving among stakeholders, and identifying the root causes of barriers to coordination.

MoSD's sustained commitment and ILO's impartial support to humanitarian engagement have been crucial, ensuring alignment between humanitarian efforts and long-term development strategies. Additionally, the STAAR technical adviser has provided essential support to maintaining relationships, integrating lessons from global social protection practices to improve response adequacy and system effectiveness.

This approach, which emphasises the importance of the soft skills required for coordination, has led to a significant strengthening of joined-up approaches and collaborative outcomes between organisations that previously did not collaborate. This platform was formed to meet an unmet need and has been successful in trust building and shared outcomes, but the working group has met challenges because it is not recognised by the humanitarian architecture.

Box 4 PeReHID in Ukraine



UKRAINE PEREHID INITIATIVE⁸⁰

The PeReHID initiative is a collaborative effort linking humanitarian assistance with Ukraine's social protection system. Prior to the PeReHid there was no platform for nexus coordination, and the CWG subgroup on linking humanitarian cash and social protection had failed to progress past information sharing and was deactivated in 2023. The Ministry of Social Policy (MOSP) is

⁷⁹ <https://i-p-k.com/>

⁸⁰ For more information on PeReHID, see: [PeReHID Strategic Roadmap](#) (2024)

the chair (under government order 186-N,⁸¹ providing a legal framework) and UNICEF is the co-chair. It also includes the participation of other actors who have been active in this space, like the Collaborative Cash Delivery (CCD) network. The Steering Committee has strategic dialogue with the MOSP and humanitarian and development donors and manages the PeReHID Technical Assistance facility, which maintains relationships with implementing partners and the CWG.

To ensure a successful transition, PeReHID is continuing to meet people's immediate needs through supporting humanitarian assistance, as well as identifying and piloting 'transitional pathways' to move caseloads from humanitarian support to social assistance. Its work is broken down into three distinct phases:

- **Phase 1** focuses on building mutual understanding, where the humanitarian system acknowledges and begins to utilise the social protection system.
- **Phase 2** operationalises the transition of the humanitarian caseload, supporting stakeholders in implementing the recommendations outlined above.
- **Phase 3** seeks to interlink systems where social protection responds to most needs while the humanitarian space addresses critical needs.

PeReHID recommends that humanitarian assistance continues to be provided to affected populations who have faced idiosyncratic shocks that exceed the coping capacity of households, live in frontline areas with access barriers to social assistance and markets, and face critical humanitarian needs and have insufficient access to social protection.

PeReHID is effectively meeting future needs through strengthening and reforming Ukraine's social protection system, through 1) Programme design, registration, and targeting; 2) Data protection, data sharing, and information management; and 3) Governance and coordination.

With PeReHID scheduled to be phased out in March 2025, a subgroup on the linkages between humanitarian assistance and social protection within the Sectoral Working Group on Social Protection (SP SWG) is set to succeed it, marking the institutionalisation of linkages within existing coordination structures.

Box 5 strategic Advisory Group (SAG) in Ethiopia



ETHIOPIA STRATEGIC ADVISORY GROUP (SAG)⁸²

Growing humanitarian needs in Ethiopia over the past decade have led to an increase in humanitarian organisations in the country and an expansion of cash assistance programmes. The CWG was reestablished in 2016 to coordinate these efforts. Effective coordination between humanitarian aid and Ethiopia's national Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is crucial to addressing the overlapping challenges of conflict, poverty, and vulnerability. Prior to the creation of the SAG, CWG leads lacked the capacity to engage strategically with the government and donors.

The SAG was established to enhance decision making and facilitate discussions between humanitarian and governmental actors, including the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC), the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. SAG members were elected to represent the perspectives of the larger CWG, with seats for government.

The SAG was valued by the PSNP Donor Working Group and some members of government as the strategic link between technical provision of humanitarian cash and the PSNP.

One example of this is the Shock Responsive Cash Transfer, implemented by UNICEF and regional labour and social affairs bureaus to meet the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Tigray and nearby regions during the conflict. Since the PSNP is not portable, this programme assists IDPs who cannot access their PSNP benefits, reaching 62,000 households in 2023.

Despite its strategic importance, the SAG was disbanded in 2024 due to inconsistent government participation and perceived inefficiencies. Discussions are ongoing to replace it with a subgroup focused on linking humanitarian cash with social protection or reestablishing it under a revised mandate with support from the World Bank, DG ECHO, and FCDO.

⁸¹ MOSP (2023)

⁸² For more information on SAG, see its ToR: [Ethiopia Cash Working Group – Strategic Advisory Group](#)

Box 6 Adaptive Social Protection Roundtable in Colombia



COLOMBIA ADAPTIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION ROUNDTABLE

The government and WFP formed an Adaptive Social Protection Roundtable as a platform to promote coordination (separately from the CWG subgroup mentioned above) between the government ministries responsible for social protection and disaster response.⁸³ Chaired by the Administrative Department for Social Prosperity and the National Unit for Disaster Risk Management, with the National Planning Department providing technical support and WFP as the technical secretariat.⁸⁴ A KII informed us that, once the group's roadmap, strategy, and other analysis have been completed, it will prioritise coordination with humanitarian actors to seek complementarities in response. They added that, despite having a government committed to adaptive social protection, Colombia's humanitarian actors have limited engagement in this group and with government social protection actors in general.

Despite these evolving platforms and promising practices there is currently no standardised model for nexus coordination linking humanitarian cash and social protection. The examples above have evolved to include technical and strategic coordination and fall outside of the IASC CWG work to link humanitarian cash and social protection. These needs have evolved to reflect gaps in the humanitarian architecture, for example, when a Humanitarian Needs Response Plan is being developed, the HC goes to each of the clusters to capture the cumulative needs, after which the IASC allocates budgets to the response plan. This does not take into account which households are receiving social protection support from the government or involve a gap analysis identifying possible humanitarian complementarity but instead treats households in isolation from their social protection assistance. KI's believe that social protection should fall within the scope of the RC/HC's, but there were concern that this was not universally upheld, which has implications for country leadership and limits the opportunities to work alongside governments in developing SRSP and strengthening social protection systems. This is further complicated by the challenges related to interministerial coordination of social protection from the government side, as these vary in their functionality and inclusion of humanitarian actors.

2.1.3 National and sub-national government social protection coordination structures

Governments, as legitimate actors, have existing coordination mechanisms for social protection that humanitarian actors may not be aware of or invited to attend. UNICEF data⁸⁵ suggests that, out of the 110 countries it works in globally, 70 have government-led social protection coordination, 61 have non-government social protection coordination mechanisms, 54 have humanitarian cash coordination mechanisms, and **48** have humanitarian cash and (gov or/and non-gov) social protection coordination. This suggests that there is greater scope for linkages between social protection and humanitarian cash coordination, with a focus on government engagement and leadership.

There are promising practices in coordination between humanitarian actors and government regional and district levels within countries, especially within federated structures such as in Ethiopia. Regional coordination structures are effective at bringing diverse actors together from the government, who may not be so engaged in the political economy of national-level ministry engagement. This can be an effective way for development partners to engage, including those with dual mandates who can support government counterparts with joined-up approaches. Although these platforms may face resource and capacity constraints, it is recognised that they can effectively manage interministerial relationships.

⁸³ WFP (2024) 'WFP Colombia Annual Country Report 2023'

⁸⁴ Mesa de Protección Social Adaptiva (2023) 'Documento de Coordinación de Trabajo – Mesa De Protección Social Adaptativa'

⁸⁵ UNICEF (2023) 'Internal Coordination Survey'



In Ethiopia, there has been a solution-oriented approach to the coordination of humanitarian assistance and links to social protection at the regional and district levels. The Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) serves as the central hub for coordinating information and resources during incidents, coordinating disaster management, allocating resources, managing information, and providing strategic direction. It also works closely with government line bureaus, other zones/woredas, and various sectoral task forces led by government agencies and supported by UN partners. This model emphasises a unified approach, including linkages with the national PSNP, ensuring effective information sharing between actors and complementary resource allocation of humanitarian assistance across different levels of government and humanitarian partners. This has effectively bypassed some of the federal level coordination challenges, but care needs to be taken that divergent approaches across the country do not lead to further challenges later down the line.

2.2 Dedicated and sustained incentives for coordination platforms

Dedicated and sustained incentives can help to build consensus among diverse actors with different mandates and interests (see section 3.2), especially when structural disincentives exist for collaboration.

Donors (individually and through donor working groups) have the potential to positively incentivise joined up approaches in programme and policy design, as well as creating a culture of accountability to organisational mandates and support coordination platforms (see case studies in Annex 4 which exemplify the joined-up approaches supported by FCDO and ECHO/EU). This switch to actively taking an **‘if not social protection, why not?’** approach could move the dial from assuming humanitarian cash will be delivered through parallel systems to questioning if it is the most appropriate and cost-effective approach, will strengthen the linkages. A unified delivery model isn't necessarily the *only* path forward, but a strong analytical foundation is critical for selecting the most effective approach. Without it, especially when navigating donor priorities, there is a risk of perpetuating existing patterns

KIs believe that incorporating relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) into program design and staff performance reviews could help drive progress in this area.⁸⁶ There is broad agreement that social protection systems can be leveraged for SRSP,⁸⁷ thereby reducing the need for parallel humanitarian programmes, but this has not yet been systematised within donor mechanisms with clear incentives and available nexus financing. The joint Donor Statement on Humanitarian Cash Transfers is built on the Common Donor Approach and Common Donor Messaging on Humanitarian Cash Programmes in the Response in Ukraine.⁸⁸ This agreement specifies that *‘We support linking to and coordinating with inclusive shock-responsive social protection systems in Ukraine (vertical and horizontal)’* and is a step in the right direction. KIs stated that there needs to be a joint donor position on joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection that reflects the SPIAC-B Common Principles for linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection⁸⁹ and can be adapted according to context with institutionalised coordination mechanisms and clear accountability structures.



STAAR ETHIOPIA RESEARCH⁹⁰ into Synthesising lessons and promising practices for country-level coordination in delivery of joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection Found that 100 percent of respondents agreed with the statement: **“Coordination is necessary and should include both technical and strategic discussions with respective development and humanitarian donors, multilateral institutions and agencies”**.

⁸⁶ Adapted from the Carla Lacerda Insights Forum on Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict. Hosted on LinkedIn in November 2024

⁸⁷ Sabates-Wheeler, R. and Longhurst, D. (2020) ‘Integrating Humanitarian Response with Social Protection Systems: Limits and Opportunities’. Policy Briefing, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, UK.

⁸⁸ OCHA (2024) ‘Common Donor Messaging on Humanitarian Cash Assistance in the Response in Ukraine’

⁸⁹ SPIAC-B (2024) ‘Compendium of Tips. How to operationalise the common principles for linking humanitarian assistance and social protection’ (draft)

⁹⁰ Bezuneh, B., Mohiddin, L. and Taylor, M (2025) ‘Barriers, Challenges and Opportunities of Humanitarian Cash and Coordination Actors to Accommodate PSNP beneficiaries in Conflict Settings’, Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice and Resources (STAAR), DAI Global UK Ltd, United Kingdom

UN agencies, as ‘intermediary’ donors (some with dual mandates), have a key role to play in incentivised linkages as the ‘humanitarian’ and ‘development’ caseloads in protracted contexts often overlap. However, there is often a distinct lack of cohesion on social protection coordination and complementarity at a national level between UN actors, including OCHA, and this can have an impact on the linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection. The UN has the legitimacy to engage with the government, and many of its agencies have dual mandates that enable them to coordinate across the nexus. However, OCHA is the lead for the HRPs, and people in need (PiN) figures, and a recent reprioritisation on humanitarian scope means that they can be at odds with UNICEF, WFP, which have a dual mandate and are increasingly joining the dots on operational PiN analysis. By supporting government leadership in social protection (which in protracted crises may require sustained capacity building), UN partners can enable engagement across the nexus on linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection. This needs to be complemented through the humanitarian cluster system, encouraging government social protection participation in the CWG wherever possible.

Major international donors, including the UK and EU, could leverage their influential positions to incentivise leadership roles at the country level in social protection and humanitarian action, including ensuring the presence of the World Bank. These donors are uniquely positioned to foster consensus on context-appropriate reform priorities that align with local political and economic realities. A critical enabler for this leadership role is the integration of development and humanitarian funding streams within donor organisations, and given the World Bank’s critical role in social protection financing its presence is essential. Concurrently, international implementing organisations must address the disconnect between headquarters-level strategies and country-level operations. This necessitates a more cohesive approach that ensures field personnel – both technical staff and senior management – are effectively translating high-level organisational strategies into tangible actions on the ground.⁹¹

2.3 Joined-up analysis, planning, preparedness, and tools

The vast majority of key informants believed that linking humanitarian cash and social protection should be considered before the design of or further investment in parallel humanitarian systems, and that government representation and mandates need to be respected in the coordination of humanitarian cash and social protection.

Joined-up assessment and planning is crucial for designing humanitarian assistance that leverages existing systems and enhances national leadership; however, this is still not routinely happening. A joined-up approach involves intentionally examining how humanitarian cash assistance can leverage, align with, and contribute to strengthening social protection systems and builds upon findings from the SPACE research.⁹² By prioritising the mapping of social protection systems, actors can identify opportunities for joined-up approaches (e.g. as seen under the SP-CVA-TWG). This process requires information on social protection system mapping to be readily accessible to all stakeholders, fostering a shared understanding of the existing landscape and potential entry points for collaboration, which can be analysed for timeliness, cost-effectiveness, and potential risks (including risks to humanitarian principles).



In Madagascar, 10 emergency principles for joining humanitarian cash and social protection were developed to guide coordination under a regulatory framework, sharing information, conducting joint analyses, harmonising procedures, joint advocacy, and a common commitment to linking humanitarian cash and social protection.⁹³

In oPt, a UNICEF SRSP assessment led to the identification of six potential ways the National Cash Transfer Programme and associated social protection systems could be utilised by government partners during a crisis. Out of these six options, four were incorporated into an SRSP readiness action plan. The plan includes activities such as confirming

⁹¹ Archibald, E. (2024) ‘How to do political economy better in conflict settings’.

⁹² Smith, G. (2021) ‘Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices’

⁹³ Ministry of Population, Social Protection and Promotion of Women Madagascar (2016) ‘Madagascar cash in emergencies principles’

and testing the feasibility of the options, piloting them, and engaging in policy dialogue over a three-year period (starting in 2023). The findings highlight that making informed decisions about SRSP options is complicated by the fragmentation, complexity, and coordination challenges present in the social protection system of oPt.

Further, our KIIs revealed that effective preparedness is essential for seamless coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection interventions. This involves developing comprehensive contingency plans in protracted crises and establishing collaborative mechanisms between development partners and government-led social protection coordination groups. Such preparedness efforts should include specific protocols for engaging with social registries, data sharing, and other key components of social protection systems. By leveraging coordination platforms countries can better position themselves to respond to shocks through existing social protection frameworks, including risk management and fiscal space analysis. This approach not only enhances the efficiency of responses but also strengthens national systems and promotes sustainable solutions to recurring crises. The use of practical, user-friendly tools can be transformative in bridging the gap between social protection systems and humanitarian cash programming.



The CCD Social Protection Calculator in Ukraine allowed humanitarian agencies to directly interact with the social protection system, estimating household eligibility for various benefits and amounts. The calculator effectively demonstrated that the Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) targeting framework was inadvertently excluding the same vulnerable groups as the Government of Ukraine's system. This evidence, presented through clear graphs and data from the calculator, communicated the need for better alignment and coordination with social protection systems. By providing an intuitive interface, it eliminated the need to navigate lengthy analytical reports, making social protection linkages more accessible and actionable for humanitarian actors.⁹⁴ This approach not only enhanced understanding but also facilitated more informed decision making in cash programme design, ultimately strengthening the nexus with social protection systems.

In Ethiopia, following a request by the PSNP Donor Working Group (DWG), the GoE produced with the Donor Coordination Team (DCT) a rapid 'traffic light assessment' (TLA) tool to assess the impact of the conflict on PSNP operations. The TLA was first implemented by regional governments in conflict-affected woredas of Afar and Amhara between January-April 2022. The use of the TLA was subsequently expanded to Tigray by WFP in late 2022. The tool provides evidence on the extent of damage and readiness of woredas⁹⁵ to resume PSNP operations and ranked them red-amber-green. Triangulation using security data from UNESSS helped to reinforce confidence in the TLA, that was appreciated by donors as it afforded them an understanding of what was happening "on the ground". The TLA was used to inform additional monitoring exercises in red and amber woredas and World Bank and MOF recovery planning.

- Red woredas: PSNP operation was not yet considered feasible
- Amber woredas: Appropriate to restart PSNP operations.
- Green woredas: Woredas are non-war affected and PSNP is continuing as usual⁹⁶

Further, FCDO is planning mapping of basic service functionality through humanitarian partners to inform PSNP donors about potential gaps.

⁹⁴ For more information, see [Webinar - Linking Social Protection to Short-term Humanitarian Aid Response: Walk the Talk](#) (from timestamp 1:09:00 onwards).

⁹⁵ By recording the presence of PSNP staff/frontline implementers (including kebele-level staff and committees) as well as PSNP management; the status of facilities (presence/functionality of cars, bank branches, food distribution infrastructure, PSNP payment system including the PASS); and accessibility, security and displacement.

⁹⁶ Amhara region used dark green, light green and amber with the following definitions: "Green" woredas are non-war affected and where the PSNP is continuing as usual and "light green" woredas that were affected by war, but PSNP has started with physical capacity constraints and, Amber woredas are still under war and PSNP has not started (Source: Amhara and Afar PSNP Traffic Light Assessment Results Analysis – shared by PSNP DWG)

These approaches underscore the importance of developing tools and processes that not only gather information but also foster meaningful engagement and shared understanding among diverse actors in the humanitarian and social protection spheres. Such participatory methods can help overcome the silos that often hinder effective coordination and pave the way for more integrated, responsive, and sustainable assistance in crisis contexts.

2.4 Joint procedures and systems for sharing humanitarian cash and social protection data

KI's report the importance of procedures and systems for sharing humanitarian cash and social protection data in linking humanitarian cash and social protection. Some potentially promising practices are emerging, but still face challenges related to data protection. While humanitarian actors may have increased access to social protection registry data, there are nonetheless still challenges related to how often the data has been updated and whether there is transparency related to the inclusion formula. Humanitarian actors are also contributing to and strengthening social registries.⁹⁷ For example, in Somalia UNICEF and WFP led on updating the digital registration of households for the universal social registry.⁹⁸ Here, data protection protocols are helping to overcome constraints to third-party implementors contributing data to national registries. For example, Tigray (Northern Ethiopia) was equated to working in an active conflict between 2020 and 2022, with the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) operations paused for an extended period while continuing efforts were made to get as much humanitarian assistance into the region as possible. Suspension of PSNP operations in Tigray took place in June 2021 at which point the government agreed to Third Party implementation (TPI). Therefore, after June 2021, all assistance in Tigray fell under the humanitarian assistance umbrella, with targeting, transfer values, and eligibility following different procedures to those laid out under the PSNP.



After 7 October 2023, the SP-CVA-TWG in Gaza restructured to include a spearhead group including data sharing. This led to the successful sharing of the MoSD Social registry list (85,000 beneficiaries) to humanitarian cash actors for use in targeting recipients. Despite the absence of formal data-sharing agreements, positive relations between the MoSD and humanitarian actors because of the SP-CVA-TWG trust-building facilitated the sharing of this data. However, after implementing their response and delivering cash assistance based on data from the MoSD social registry, humanitarian actors were hesitant to share information about who had received assistance with MoSD due to concerns around humanitarian data protection principles. According to KIIs, this reluctance has adversely affected trust between these parties.

The Government of Ukraine's initial attempt to create a self-registration database, eDopomoga, highlights both the potential and pitfalls of national-led initiatives in crisis response. Several legal, regulatory, and institutional challenges halted its development.⁹⁹ For example, the lack of a comprehensive de-risking strategy to explore what data could be shared, assess associated risks, and establish informed consent measures hindered effective collaboration. In KIIs, we were informed that humanitarian actors were not comfortable with the idea of hosting humanitarian data on government systems. As a result, humanitarian organisations chose to rely on alternatives like Building Blocks,¹⁰⁰ a parallel blockchain network created by WFP that identifies MPCA recipients using national government tax IDs,¹⁰¹ and SIDAR, a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Platform to deduplicate cash for shelter.¹⁰² From February 2022 to September 2023, these deduplication efforts saved US\$ 163.2 million.¹⁰³ This experience suggests that national leadership in registration and

⁹⁷ Barca, V., Kreidler, C., Silva-Leander, S., Ouedraogo, S., Blundo, and Beazley, R. (2024) 'The challenge of coordination and inclusion: use of social registries and broader social protection information systems for capturing multiple vulnerabilities in West Africa' WFP.

⁹⁸ STAAR (2025) 'Maintaining, adapting & strengthening SP in fragile & conflict affected setting: Somalia Case Study'

⁹⁹ PeReHID (2024) 'Alignment and Complementarity Between Humanitarian Cash Transfers and the Social Protection System in Ukraine'

¹⁰⁰ For more information, see: [Building Blocks: WFP Innovation](#)

¹⁰¹ WFP (2022) 'Building Blocks Ukraine Inter-Organizational Usage'

¹⁰² PeReHID (2024) 'Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: Compendium'

¹⁰³ PeReHID (2024) 'Humanitarian Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: Recommendations for a Better Cash Response'

enrolment phases could be beneficial but requires a carefully considered de-risking strategy and meaningful collaboration with humanitarian actors from the outset.

In the Philippines, the Department of Social Welfare and Development information management system (Listahanan) has the potential to provide humanitarian agencies with lists of affection populations. However, during the Odette response, inaccuracies in the Listahanan required extensive verification, leading to delays in aid delivery. Additionally, a decentralised government structure complicates coordination, as agencies engage with various levels of government—municipal, provincial, regional, or national—based on their prior relationships. This decentralisation often resulted in different agencies accessing and using varying data sources, increasing the risk of duplication and inconsistent aid delivery timelines. Agencies working with local government units closer to affected communities generally obtained data faster and completed their response efforts sooner than those dealing with higher levels of government. These challenges highlighted significant weaknesses in the coordination system, emphasising the need for standardised operating procedures.¹⁰⁴

User engagement and cross-sector coordination is essential for maximising the impact and effectiveness of social protection information systems. Strategic implications for strengthening information systems include broadening their ambition beyond targeting functions, ensuring data protection, and improving interoperability with other government and development partner databases. KI's believe there is a pressing need to focus on the use of the data collected for humanitarian actors moving beyond poverty targeting to address a wide range of population groups and risks. Additionally, reinforcing strategic coverage that is data informed and aligned to needs is crucial. Ultimately, the success of these systems hinges on strengthening dialogue with current and potential users (government and development partners) to address their data needs and concerns, treating social registries as a means to an end rather than an end in themselves.

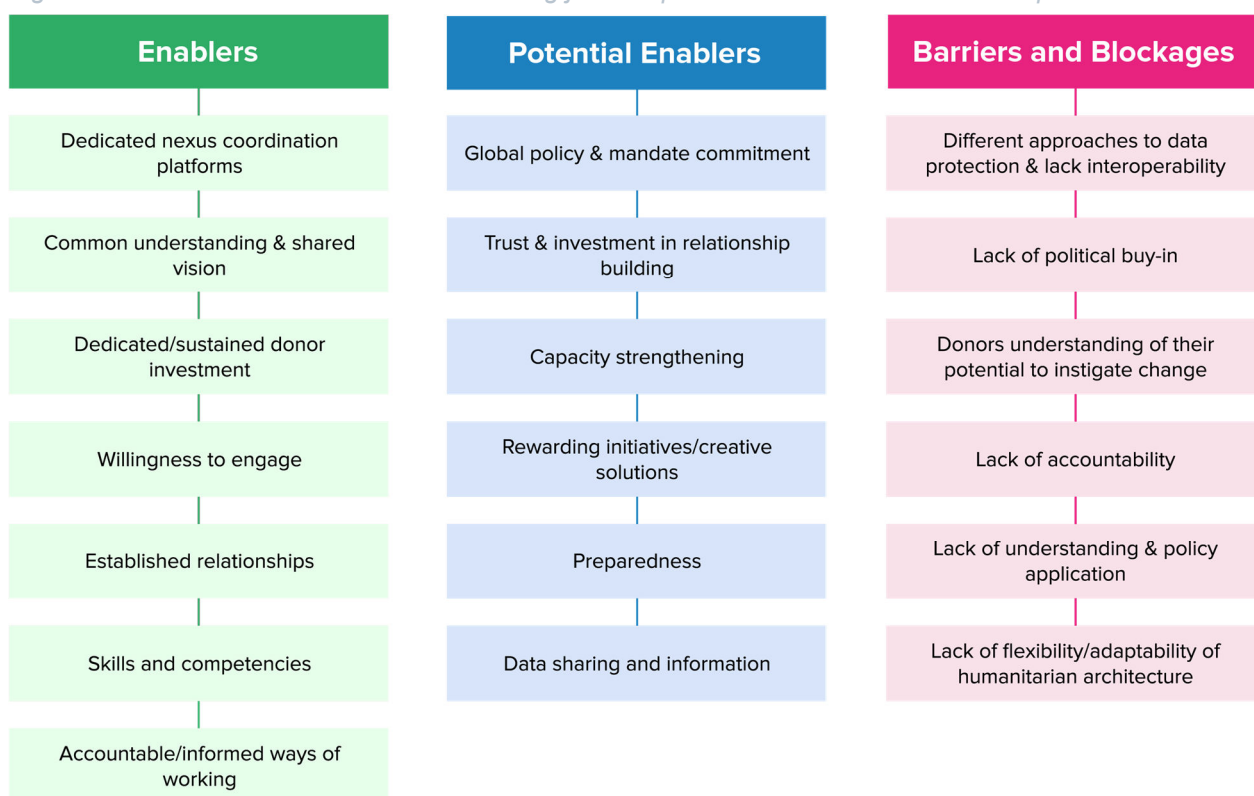
Despite growing institutionalisation through policies, strategies, and legislation, many countries struggle with sustainable funding and capacity for their social protection information systems. The majority of social registries rely heavily on external financing, particularly from the World Bank, which constrains domestic institutionalisation. Strategic engagement from humanitarian actors on appropriate data sharing and interoperability could enable better access to social protection data and support system strengthening.

2.5 Enablers and barriers to joined-up coordination of humanitarian cash and social protection

Enablers and barriers to joined-up coordination of humanitarian cash and social protection are vital to understand to enable progress. These are outlined in Figure 4 below, and in the case studies (Annex 4). The 'Enabling' indicators are key to setting the groundwork for effective coordination, whereas potential enablers further facilitate the process, and barriers and blockages were identified as factors undermining the success of coordination.

¹⁰⁴ Philippines CWG (2022) 'Humanitarian Cash Transfer – A Reference Guide for Practitioners in the Philippines'

Figure 4: Enablers and barriers to coordinating joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection



2.6 Dedicated and sustained donor investment

Certain donors have made clear and sustained efforts to finance coordination platforms and to incentivise development partners to link humanitarian cash and social protection. FCDO and the EU/DG ECHO have led the way in this, making a significant contribution to more joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection (see examples on Ukraine, oPt, Ethiopia and Colombia Boxes 3, 4, 5 and 6). However, these approaches have been spearheaded by individuals and, while they are becoming a more common approach, this is not the case globally.

Technically and strategically strong individuals within the EU, DG ECHO, and FCDO are overcoming institutional divides (e.g. DG ECHO and INTPA) to support joined-up programming and coordination platforms, but challenges remain. However, where donors did have specific funds or programmes to bridge the nexus (e.g. Germany's TDA, or some of Sweden's work in the Sahel) budget cuts and humanitarian ringfencing mean that these investments are reducing. Willingness to coordinate in donor forums can similarly be affected by capacity to coordinate (e.g. in Ethiopia, Somalia, Yemen, and Ukraine), and this includes time for technical analysis. In Somalia, a technical group was created to inform the donor coordination group to address this issue, while in Ukraine an informal Donor Cash Forum (DCF) was created as a platform to write common cash messaging and influence other donors. This included linking humanitarian cash and social protection and was later used to influence the formal Ukraine Donor Working Group.

National donor coordination mechanisms can incentivise more joined-up approaches through well-informed, committed leaders who act as champions, but this is hampered by certain limitations. For example, FCDO in its role as a donor and UNICEF in its role as a donor for implementing partners play a key technical and strategic role in the Ethiopian Donor Working Group. However, the changing landscape of donor funding can complicate coordination efforts, as budget cuts result in a lower national presence and investment, while others lack the technical knowledge to take the lead in decision making. Therefore, building donors' technical capacity and joint donor agreements for promoting coordinated oversight across is crucial for effectively managing power dynamics among agencies.



In Ukraine, while some donors provided incentives for linking humanitarian assistance to social protection, there remain challenges. FCDO played a key role in raising awareness on coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection, leading to the funding of the PeReHID, and funding the reactivation of SP SWG and its planned subgroup on the linkages with humanitarian assistance through the SPIRIT programme. However, the absence of preparedness measures at the onset of the response – particularly regarding humanitarian actors' understanding of the social protection landscape – hindered the development of social protection-informed humanitarian responses. Further, the high turnover of donor staff at the start of the response (i.e. BHA's DART 6 weekly staff turnover) made it more challenging to engage in coordinated delivery.

However, many donors lack the instruments, investment and understanding of joined up approaches, to bridge financing across the humanitarian–development nexus,¹⁰⁵ as well as clear positions on linking humanitarian cash and social protection. This means that there can be a lack of coherence within and between donors. If donors do not have an internally cohesive approach across the nexus, it is very unlikely that they will invest in broader intra-donor coordination

At a global level, OCHA and CAG are clear that, in light of the reduction in humanitarian funding, the priority should be on delivering humanitarian cash to uphold humanitarian principles rather than supporting system strengthening approaches. With 90% of funding for humanitarian cash assistance going to protracted crisis, OCHA's focus is on rapid onset, unpredictable shocks to align with the CWG's strategy.¹⁰⁶ This means that humanitarian funding for system strengthening (including for social protection systems) has been cut, with implications for the delivery of joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection.

2.7 Political economy of donor and UN strategic engagement and leadership

The landscape of humanitarian aid and social protection is characterised by a complex interplay of interests among diverse national and international actors involved in aid design and distribution.

These interests, which are often misaligned, can significantly impact the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions. No entity, whether at the organisational or individual level, is immune to incentives that may lead to adverse impacts. However, it is crucial to note that interests, when properly aligned, can also drive positive development outcomes.

Reform efforts in such contexts often face substantial resistance from those benefiting from the status quo. This resistance can come from national actors who profit from patronage opportunities or control over aid distribution, as well as from international actors who may be reluctant to implement changes that could undermine their roles or privileges. The misalignment between carefully calibrated headquarters strategies and country-level actions often stems from personal or organisational stakes in maintaining existing systems. Further, the lack of consensus among development partners and donors on necessary reforms presents another hurdle. While there is often agreement on the need for change toward more joined-up approaches, there is also a reluctance to take bold steps toward radical transformation. This hesitancy can be driven by incentives to maintain the rationale for an agency's or individual's presence, despite the overarching goal of international development to ultimately render external assistance unnecessary.¹⁰⁷

The success of coordination efforts often relies on the commitment of key individuals rather than institutionalised processes. For example, the success of the SP-CVA-TWG in oPt is driven by the commitment of key individuals in ILO, the MoSD, the CWG, and STAAR, among other operational agencies. Committed individuals have pushed for more frequent meetings, bilateral meetings with key actors, and regular adaptation and re-evaluation of the technical focus and agenda of meetings.

¹⁰⁵ Swithern, S. (2025) 'Financing Social Protection in Protracted Crisis'. BASIC

¹⁰⁶ This is taken from a discussion with the OCHA HO conducted as part of this study.

¹⁰⁷ Archibald, E. (2024) 'How to do political economy better in conflict settings'

The roles played by the HC/RC, the OCHA, and UNCTs/HCTs are critical in setting the tone and strategic direction for a joined-up approach. Together they are well positioned to lead strategic discussions with the development and humanitarian donors and partners on humanitarian cash and social protection. However, KI's report that a gap exists as a result of the absence of nexus-informed leadership and ownership. Consequently, technical experts (who do not have the legitimacy to hold senior leaders to account) are trying to bridge this gap. Further, there appears to be little strategic high-level engagement where the humanitarian and development partners and government can come together to agree a joint approach. The majority of KIs believe it is important for OCHA to possess strong nexus awareness and practical knowledge of joined up approaches. However, OCHA has made strategic moves away from nexus engagement, focusing instead on a facilitatory approach that places the onus on others to develop a joined-up approach.¹⁰⁸ Strengthening the nexus engagement of these pivotal roles could significantly improve the coherence and effectiveness of joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection interventions. There needs to be strategic and technical leadership for nexus coordination that strengthens accountability. This could be at a strategic level, e.g. the World Bank playing a more facilitatory role in bringing government representation into coordination platforms.

Indeed, interviewees suggest that the World Bank holds a crucial role in facilitating government engagement in joined-up coordination. Historically, the Bank's focus on routine social protection means that it has not engaged in humanitarian cash coordination, but increasingly its engagement in crisis (not humanitarian) financing for FCAS means that it has a role to play in the linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection.



In Ethiopia the World Bank is actively engaging in humanitarian cash linkages with both the PSNP (the government social assistance programme) and the humanitarian country team. It is early days, but there are discussions on the most appropriate platforms for this (currently conducted through the Donor Working Group for PSNP). Moreover, World Bank KIIs expressed a belief that there should be nexus coordination mechanisms in protracted crisis that are led by the government and that provide opportunities to link humanitarian cash and social protection guided by a nationally agreed roadmap. That said, the World Bank (as a key player) does not often engage in CWGs and is noted to have been reluctant to engage in the nexus coordination efforts of other donors.

2.8 Organisational mandates and policies across the nexus

Organisational mandates for humanitarian and development partners, including UN agencies, governments, and donors (see Annex 1 for more detail), are increasingly clear on the importance of linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection. However, this is not being coherently or universally applied at the country level. This disconnect stems from several interconnected factors:

- » Leadership and mandate interpretation vary significantly at the country level, often influenced by individuals' previous experience and exposure.
- » Financial and structural disincentives create perverse incentives that hinder effective coordination, with organisations holding dual mandates facing competition for funding and operational space.
- » The rigidity of humanitarian and development structures perpetuate these silos and hinder coherence and meaningful collaboration and cooperation at country level.
- » Additionally, limited awareness among international humanitarian actors about national development structures and social protection systems further complicates coordination efforts.
- » This situation is compounded by limited time and resources to deliver assistance during a humanitarian response, making it vital to engage with national systems (which may require significant

¹⁰⁸ OCHA KII

time and investments to rapidly scale up) during the preparedness phase, especially for protracted crises.¹⁰⁹



In Ukraine, the CCD Calculator (see Box 2 and Annex 4) and associated training helps humanitarians to quickly understand the social protection benefits a household is entitled to, which can inform decisions on gaps or overlaps in humanitarian assistance.¹¹⁰ This in turn has enabled agencies to apply their nexus mandate in an informed way. Limited knowledge and understanding of the social protection system on the part of humanitarian actors, and vice versa, limits opportunities to apply mandates across the nexus. KIIs from all six country case studies recognised this as a challenge, and efforts are being made to strengthen capacities.

In oPt diverging mandates and funding, as well as a tendency for self-preservation on the part of programmes and actors, were identified as key constraints to coordination in the SPCVA-TWG workshops in March 2023 (see Annex 4). Although oPt has a social protection strategy, programmes, and a limited social registry, some humanitarian actors did not consider evaluating how their programmes could complement the national social protection system through filling gaps on delivery and policy. This is something the SP-CVA-TWG was set up to try to work on, particularly through the 3SSN focus area.

OCHA has the legitimacy to play a key role in IASC/mixed settings in leading the humanitarian cash response to be social protection sensitive, including promoting the linkages through coordination. While this is happening in Cameroon, it is yet to be central to coordination in the other countries studied. The RC/HC are key to this, as they hold the nexus advisory structure and could demonstrate leadership in bringing together the humanitarian cash and social protection spaces. OCHA's coordination mandate and expertise in humanitarian response make it well suited to promoting social protection awareness within humanitarian operations.¹¹¹

UNICEF, WFP, and other organisations with a dual mandate in humanitarian action and social protection can also provide a valuable bridge between these sectors, and ILO's neutrality in the humanitarian and nexus space (see the oPt case study in Annex 4 and Box 1 for details) can complement the efforts of each of these. Together, these agencies and others can leverage their respective strengths to enhance the coordination and integration of humanitarian cash and social protection approaches, ultimately leading to more coherent and sustainable responses in crisis contexts.



In Cameroon, the OCHA Co-Chair of CWG and an OCHA technical advisor to the CWG with support from the Chair of the Social Protection Task Force, are actively engaging government. In the CWG workplan, the co-chair is responsible for supporting government in setting up a regulatory framework for data protection and for liaising with other nexus, localisation, and social protection groups for joint discussions on best practices for humanitarian cash and social protection.

Coordination of humanitarian cash assistance and social protection systems presents both progress and ongoing challenges, particularly in aligning high-level commitments with operational realities. For example, while the global OCHA and CAG teams demonstrate cautious engagement with the inclusion of principles on cash coordination including *‘cash coordination will consider linkages with social protection systems where relevant and appropriate’* and *CWG* (see Annex 1 on Global Commitments),¹¹² this research suggests the emerging understanding of the potential value of joined-up cash and social protection from the OCHA CWG non-programmatic co-chairs at country level is inconsistent, and KIIs reported that OCHA's role in technical decision making is creating confusion and tension. Further, there is a lack of clarity on when it is relevant and appropriate and to what degree the linkages are expected (facilitated discussions or collaborative outcomes). Linked to this, the development partners often play a technical co-chair role alongside OCHA and KI's report that alignment with the non-

¹⁰⁹ OCHA (2015) 'Fit for the Future Series: An end in sight: Multi-year planning to meet and reduce humanitarian needs in protracted crises'

¹¹⁰ CCD (2024) 'CCD Social Protection Calculator Template'

¹¹¹ OCHA KII referring to 'Global training on humanitarian cash and social protection linkages' held in November 2024

¹¹² IASC (2022) 'Global Cash Advisory Group Terms of Reference 2022'

programmatic co-chair is key for linkages with social protection. However, there can be a lack of clarity between programmatic and non-programmatic co-chairs that create confusion, and KI's would appreciate further support from the CAG in clarifying the delineation of roles.

To address this gap, KI's stated that there is a pressing need for more comprehensive mainstreaming of coordination principles from the outset of humanitarian responses. Rather than preparing for a future 'transition', the focus should be on implementing a true continuum approach from day one of the humanitarian intervention. This shift in mindset and practice would foster more seamless integration between humanitarian cash assistance and existing or emerging social protection systems. The SPIAC-B working group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection has developed Common Principles (see¹¹³ for linking humanitarian cash assistance with social protection systems, developed jointly by technical experts from over 30¹¹⁴ that will be sensitised in early 2025. While this research found some awareness of the common principles, there is scope to increase awareness and application at country level to enhance coordination efforts.

Humanitarians often overlook governments mandates for coordinating social protection resulting in missed opportunities to harness national systems. KI's identified a tendency among humanitarian actors to assume that national systems may be compromised or unable to meet the needs of the affected populations despite a lack of gap analyses. This leads to the design of parallel response mechanisms that do not leverage existing government systems or fulfil organisational mandates to link humanitarian cash and social protection. While this approach may stem from a desire to ensure humanitarian principles and rapid and effective assistance, it may inadvertently overlook opportunities to engage with and strengthen national systems – even in challenging contexts (see Annex 4 for case studies on oPt, Ukraine, and Ethiopia).



The commitment level of key staff at MoSD in oPt to coordination has been high throughout the last two years, particularly at the technical level. This includes their openness to engaging in discussions with humanitarian actors while understanding and acknowledging their own constraints in funding. It has been critical that MoSD has been engaged in the process from the development side. As a nexus coordination group, the SP-CVA-TWG would not be as effective without the engagement of government, as other long-term UNRWA and WFP programmes are ultimately considered (and largely funded) through humanitarian resources and are not considered to be development programmes. However, there is still resistance from a number of humanitarian actors to working with the MoSD, citing humanitarian principles.

2.9 Investments in technical capacities and trust building

Experiences demonstrate that targeted and demand-driven strategic and technical assistance to support coordination processes is important for higher degrees of collaboration and joined-up outcomes. However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach¹¹⁵ coordination occurs along a continuum, ranging from simple knowledge-sharing arrangements to more complex frameworks involving inter-agency agreements and joint action plans (see Figure 1). Individual technical assistance assignments alone cannot resolve systemic issues such as inter-agency competition or shifts in donor priorities and building trust between actors is critical for achieving sustainable coordination. However, this process takes time and requires a deep understanding of the interests and agendas of different groups.

¹¹³ SPIAC-B (2023) 'Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection'

¹¹⁴ SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection (forthcoming) 'Tipsheets for applying the Common Principles for linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection'.

¹¹⁵ STAAR (2023) 'What have we learnt about using technical assistance to strengthen coordination?'



Experience from the oPt highlights the importance of a trust-building approach in technical assistance, rather than an authoritative one. This strategy focuses on nurturing relationships that empower local stakeholders to communicate their needs effectively. The timing of engagement with specific actors is crucial, as it can create opportunities for influence. While sustained and embedded technical assistance is vital for fostering trust and facilitating progress in coordination, on-the-ground presence remains irreplaceable for understanding the local political economy and developing sustainable solutions. This approach emphasises the value of relationship-building, strategic timing, and continuous local engagement in achieving effective technical assistance outcomes.

Technical guidance can support capacity strengthening. For example, SPIAC-B Tipsheets for applying the Common Principles, developed by the SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) and Social Protection will provide practical tips for strategic and technical engagement around actioning the principles. Some KIIs recognised that the Common Principles are not widely known outside of technical experts who work in the nexus space, but they could be used to guide strategic engagement and have buy-in from the broad SPIAC-B membership.



In Cameroon, a Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) five-day training course was provided to strengthen the CVA and social protection capacities of both the government and development partners. The government presented on social protection and humanitarian actors outlined planned responses across the geographical areas of intervention using the SPIAC-B Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection.¹¹⁶

Dedicated human and financial resourcing for CWGs are vital to ensure effectiveness. The CAG Light Review¹¹⁷ found that the transition to the new cash coordination model has shown progress, with 36 contexts adopting it by April 2024. However, significant work remains, particularly in IASC/mixed setting. The main challenges include clarifying roles and responsibilities among stakeholders, adequately resourcing the new model and effectively promoting local engagement. The CAG's role in setting standards and guidance has been well received. A task team on resourcing the cash coordination transition was established in April 2023 by the CAG and DCF to prepare a comprehensive resourcing plan. However, concerns persist about the lack of concrete funding commitments and unclear resource requirements to ensure the model is implemented fully and effectively.

Leadership and capacity building are considered crucial aspects of the new cash coordination model. The CAG Light Review highlighted diverse experiences with CWG co-chair relationships in IASC/mixed settings, and the significant demand for capacity building support. Multiple parallel training approaches raise concerns about standardisation and consistency, and there is a need for capacity building beyond technical aspects of cash, including strategic leadership and coordination skills. The CAG's role in setting standards and guidance has been well received, with the CWG ToR, Co-chair ToR, and Programmatic Co-chair Election Guidance consistently valued. In Ukraine, for example, the CWG is implementing a rotational arrangement for co-chair roles to ensure inclusive leadership, with elections held in September 2024 for the next period.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ SPIAC-B (2023) 'Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection'

¹¹⁷ CAG (2024) 'Summary Report: Light Review of the New Cash Coordination Model':

¹¹⁸ <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/ukraine/ukraine-cash-working-group-guidance-note-election-2025-cwg-co-chairs-september-2024-enuk>



The CWG in Ukraine lacked sufficient capacity to effectively integrate social protection linkages into cash programming: i) Many members were double-hatting roles, limiting their ability to focus on coordination tasks; ii) Resource sharing disincentives were identified with a notable reluctance among agencies to share resources and expertise; iii) The task team on linkages with social protection had no operational in-country capacity; iv) There were no resources and ability to generate evidence or conduct a mapping of the social protection system; v) There was notable underutilisation of expertise – despite having a full-time social protection expert funded for two years under the CCD, the CWG was hesitant to fully utilise this resource as the individual was based outside of Ukraine; vi) Mandate challenges resulted in tensions between INGOs and UN agencies regarding cash coordination mandates.

MENA learning on nexus coordination¹¹⁹ emphasises the importance of capacity building for both government and humanitarian actors, harmonising assessment tools across agencies, formalising data sharing protocols (with strict privacy safeguards), and supporting vulnerable populations in obtaining legal documentation and streamlining registration processes.

Capacity building for coordination requires a holistic approach that goes beyond technical or strategic skills and includes relationship and trust building.¹²⁰ The traditional focus on technical or hard skills often overshadows the importance of functional or soft skills in capacity development. This narrow perspective fails to address the complex needs of coordinating social protection systems and humanitarian cash. Furthermore, capacity strengthening efforts must recognise the diverse audiences involved in social protection and humanitarian action. Tailored approaches ensure that capacity building initiatives are relevant and effective for each stakeholder group.



UNICEF and CashCap have been working closely for the last 2 years on a capacity strengthening mentoring exchange programme where Cash Caps are based in a UNICEF office for 3 months to be exposed to national social protection systems work and learn on the job. This has been piloted across four countries and products are already being used to further the work of Cash Caps in the social protection space.

¹¹⁹ ICB on Social Protection in the Arab Region/MENA

¹²⁰ Longhurst, D., Harvey, P., Sabates-Wheeler, R., and Slater, R. (2020) 'Part II – Capacity Building Recommendations for CaLP on Linking Social Protection and Humanitarian Cash and Voucher Assistance'. Unpublished report for the Cash Learning Partnership

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations have been informed by the KIIs and focus groups, and align with similar points made in existing published research on coordination as well as the Charter and Forum papers that came out of the Forum on Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict in October 2024, which was co-hosted by FCDO, UNICEF, the World Bank, WFP, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and USAID. A High Level Panel (HLP) for social protection in fragility and conflict was proposed following the forum and is planned for May – Dec 2025).

3.1 Tools, guidance, and processes

3.1.1 Policy note on incentives alignment:

Which is to address misaligned incentives driving fragmented responses (e.g. short-term humanitarian cash vs long term social protection goals). Targeting leaders and senior decision makers for humanitarian cash and social protection development partners, donors and governments with a focus on protracted crisis.

3.1.2 Develop a comprehensive toolkit for humanitarian cash and social protection linkages to support nexus coordination

(this is broader than coordination but is required to facilitate coordination). These should be based on the SPIAC-B Common Principles and include:

Decision making trees for appropriate levels of humanitarian engagement for both technical and strategic joined up humanitarian cash and social protection

Harmonized data sharing protocols

Roadmap outline that can be contextualised for strengthening joined up humanitarian cash and social protection

4.1.3 Advocacy for standards harmonisation:

Create a brief to translate, advocate for, and communicate social protection standards and human rights instruments¹²¹ to humanitarian and social protection actors, including promoting and elevating the SPIAC-B Common Principles, and CAG commitments via the High-Level Panel, targeting strategic as well as technical leadership.

4.1.4 Capacity Building Tools:

SPIAC-B working group to oversee development of tools aimed at addressing knowledge and leadership gaps in nexus coordination.

Develop two-tiered training for strategic and technical audiences to build capacity, common language and understanding.

Targeting donors (see 4.2 below), OCHA, CWG non programmatic/ programmatic co-chairs, development partners and governments in protracted crisis countries and regionally/ globally.

Tools should be built upon existing materials from CashCap / CaLP, piloted in protracted crisis and aligned with the SPIAC-B Common Principles, IASC protection mandates, and CALP's integration frameworks.

Include the development of suggested key performance indicators for different actors

Where possible this will recognise existing social protection systems, programmes, and good practices more systematically, avoiding or minimising duplication and parallel systems, strengthening complementarity through humanitarian responses, providing support to government leadership in social

¹²¹ ILO (2021) 'Building social protection systems: International standards and human rights instruments.

protection coordination and the development of normative frameworks and policies, focusing on long-term engagement and relationship building to build trust, and fostering sustainable coordination mechanisms.

3.2 Donors

3.2.1 Resourcing coordination

Sustained funding for coordination platforms: Continue to provide dedicated and sustained funding to CWG and nexus platforms for coordination, documenting good practice and sharing this within donor coordination forums to influence other donors. Prioritising protracted crisis and leveraging donor commitments to facilitate better coordination and alignment between humanitarian cash and social protection.

Incentives for coordination and dialogue to promote shared understanding: Continue to support dedicated and sustained incentives for humanitarian cash and social protection coordination, including forums for dialogue, partnership agreements, and donor investments in coordination-facilitating roles.

Joint donor cash forum guidance: Work with SPIAC-B to develop joint donor guidance on joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection, with inputs from the High-Level Panel and SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection¹²² and designed around the principles of **'if not social protection, why not?'**. DCF and DAC should provide inputs as part of a steering committee, with leadership from FCDO, EU, and DG ECHO.

Capacity building for donors on nexus leadership: Invest in building donors' technical capacity in joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection to demonstrate leadership in the complex inter-agency dynamics and guide strategic decision-making processes. This should include be targeted to the 10 largest protracted crisis and rolled out via donor forums.

3.2.2 Overcoming funding instrument gaps

DCF coordination review: Conduct a DCF coordination review to identify barriers to common understanding and financing for joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection coordination to addresses the need for better alignment. Include learning from the MENA nexus coordination.

Create DAC/DCF financing frameworks for social protection in fragile contexts: This would support alignment and sequencing of financing strategies and guide individual donors that better aligns and sequences financing modalities, including making it fit for purpose in settings of fragility and conflict where it should be adaptive to local contexts.

Actively fund SRSP analysis and roadmaps: Funding Shock-Responsive Social Protection (SRSP) analysis, system strengthening, and consultative country roadmaps promotes evidence-based, locally owned approaches to linking humanitarian cash and social protection.

3.2.3 Setting incentives for an 'if not social protection, why not?' approach

Donor KPI's for humanitarian and social protection: Incorporate KPIs for humanitarian and development actors in donor proposals, pushing agencies to align strategies/mandates that link humanitarian cash and social protection with country- and regional-level operations. This addresses the need for better alignment, as highlighted in the Grand Bargain commitments

Leveraging World Bank relationships for humanitarian and social protection linkages: Actively engage the World Bank to strengthen linkages and support the growing convergence between humanitarian cash and government social protection, particularly in protracted crises

¹²² SPIAC-B (2024) 'Compendium of Tips. How to operationalise the common principles for linking humanitarian assistance and social protection' (draft)

3.3 Development partner support to joined-up coordination

3.3.1 UN agencies and development partners

Strengthen RCO/DCO Nexus Competencies: RCO/DCO to create a resource pack and webinar series on integrating social protection into humanitarian cash programming incorporating inputs and support from SPIAC-B and CAG. Ensure materials cover practical tools for system alignment, risk analysis, and government engagement. Deliver targeted training in 8 protracted crisis countries focusing on social protection principles, humanitarian-development nexus strategies, and alignment with national systems. Include measurable competency assessments post-training and peer to peer learning where 'champions' are recognised as a resource for others.

KPI's for application of organisational mandates for joined up approaches in protracted crisis: These KPI's would incentivise and measure progress in UN agencies and development partners against their individual mandates. Gaps in progress would inform the case for country-level staffing, capacity building, and strategic support.

UN / DP analysis sharing: Facilitate consensus on joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection through UN social protection platforms and Cash Working Groups in 8 priority countries.

Implement a "continuum approach" in 5 priority countries, integrating coordination roles for governments from the outset of humanitarian interventions. Mainstream coordination principles through encouraging the implementation of a true continuum approach from the outset of humanitarian interventions, rather than preparing for a future 'transition'. For example, by reviewing the UNICEF Coordination Survey (page 15), priority countries could be selected globally, with roadmaps developed by national UN coordination groups.

3.3.2 OCHA and the global CAG

Integrate Social Protection Data into HNRP (OCHA) and Refugee Response Plans (UNHCR)

Processes: Given ongoing discussions within the aid community regarding funding cuts and how to adapt, pilot Humanitarian Response Plans (HNRP's) in the 8 largest protracted crisis that systematically incorporate social protection data into People in Need (PiN) analysis and budget allocations. Also explore possible pilots for RRP's. Develop standardized guidelines (with SPIAC-B input) for harmonizing social protection and humanitarian datasets to identify vulnerable populations, enabling targeted interventions that bridge humanitarian-development divides, leverage existing systems (i.e. use of the same financial service providers) and include cost efficiencies.

Clarify the roles and responsibilities in linking humanitarian cash and social protection (CAG):

Develop as already planned, a two-pager defining the roles and responsibilities of the CWG in linking humanitarian cash and social protection. This paper is due to be complemented by an initiative planned by SPIAC-B with a similar objective from the perspective of Social Protection actors. (planned for Q2 2025 pending funding). Include clear mandates for engaging government actors, aligning with national systems, and integrating the "if not social protection, why not?" principle. These should be endorsed by IASC. Disseminate to all CWGs via the Cash Advisory Group (CAG).

Standardise CWG Tools for Protracted Crises (CAG): Agree on commonly approved tools for CWGs to identify opportunities for joined-up humanitarian cash, with a focus on building national systems and structures, including a decision-making tree and gap analysis templates. This should include agreed questions that humanitarian cash actors may need responses to facilitate their decisions as well as identifying key triggers or thresholds that may allow for a more integrated approach.

3.3.3 Cash Cap, and CaLP

Continue to leverage the Cash Cap capacity-building agreements with UNICEF to strengthen the nexus and social protection competencies of CWG programmatic and non-programmatic leads in developing a common understanding in joined up humanitarian cash and social protection.

Leverage CaLP regional coordination and joint meetings between humanitarian cash and social protection experts to foster common understanding and opportunities for concrete approaches at county level.

Utilize Cash Cap experts to enhance the capacity of CWG's in linking humanitarian cash assistance with social protection systems through targeted training sessions, technical support, and knowledge-sharing initiatives.

3.3.4 OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL PANEL

The HLP on Social Protection in fragility and conflict will run between May to November 2025 and will focus on key challenges, which includes coordination. This research recommends that the following issues on joined up coordination for humanitarian cash and social protection at a global, regional and national level are considered:

Nexus Coordination Platforms that can address the need for predictable and accountable mechanisms for linking humanitarian cash and social protection at a technical and strategic level technical and strategic level linkages for humanitarian cash and social protection

If not social protection, why not?¹²³ feasibility framework to assess the potential of leveraging social protection systems for humanitarian assistance in fragile contexts. Supports the building and strengthening of social protection systems, even when parallel systems are partially used.

Establish a dedicated global fund for social protection focusing on fragility and protracted crises: Address artificial divides in financing instruments by establishing funding mechanisms that enable joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection integration. Ensures resource commitments align with long-term system strengthening goals.

¹²³ Forum on social protection in fragility and conflict: Building and protecting social protection systems through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus. Rome (2024)

ANNEX 1: GLOBAL COMMITMENTS TO COORDINATION BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN CASH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Global donor commitments to coordination

Donors have long recognised the need for efficiency and effectiveness in humanitarian cash operations. In 2019, donors including EU/DG ECHO, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States committed to ensuring *‘that where possible (humanitarian) cash programmes link to existing social protection interventions or build the blocks of future longer-term assistance from the outset.’*¹²⁴

Key donor policy documents from individual donors also commit to strengthen coordination, explicitly or implicitly. FCDO’s 2023 white paper on international development highlights the UK commitment to facilitate stronger coordination between humanitarian and social protection systems and actors.¹²⁵ DG ECHO’s thematic policy document on cash transfers highlights a commitment to operationalise the HDP nexus, and recognises the linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection: *‘(we) will strive to contribute to inclusive social protection systems during periods of fragility, conflict and/or forced displacement to better address, and respond to, the needs of crisis-affected populations.’* DG ECHO further states that, *‘where possible and appropriate, cash responses link to existing social protection systems or are the building blocks of future longer-term assistance from the outset’ and that ‘partners should actively coordinate cash preparedness and contingency planning, under the leadership of the CWG and in coordination with key SP actors.’*¹²⁶

One of the 2019 OECD DAC recommendations on the HDP nexus calls for the provision of *‘appropriate resourcing to empower leadership for cost-effective coordination across the humanitarian, development and peace architecture.’*¹²⁷ It is a policy framework includes FCAS *‘approaches that promote collaboration, complementarity, and coherence between humanitarian, development, and peace assistance, with the goal of achieving collective outcomes and reducing overall vulnerability to crises’*¹²⁸ and aligns with the global push for greater coherence in international assistance, as emphasised in the Grand Bargain commitments and the Sustainable Development Goals.¹²⁹

Global UN and World Bank commitments to linking humanitarian cash and social protection

UNICEF, driven by its dual mandate to provide both humanitarian assistance and development support, consistently identifies coordination between social protection systems and humanitarian assistance as a priority. Including *‘Coordination between the social protection and the humanitarian cash coordination systems is established and functional’* and *‘aligning humanitarian cash transfers as closely as possible to social programmes’* as well as developing *‘joint action plans with national authorities’* as key considerations.¹³⁰ Similarly, the UNICEF Strategic Plan for the 2022–2025 period has a goal that every child has access to inclusive social protection, where UNICEF will

¹²⁴ CALP (2019) *‘Joint Donor Statement on Humanitarian Cash Transfers’*

¹²⁵ FCDO (2023) *‘White Paper: International Development in a Contested World: Ending Extreme Poverty and Tackling Climate Change’*

¹²⁶ DG ECHO (2022) *‘DG ECHO Thematic Policy Document No 3 – Cash Transfers’*

¹²⁷ OECD (2019) *‘DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus’*

¹²⁸ Swithern, S. and Schreiber, D. (2023) *‘Co-ordination across the Humanitarian Development-Peace Nexus’*. OECD Development Co-operation Working Papers, No. 113, OECD Publishing, Paris

¹²⁹ Morinière, L. and Morrison-Métois, S. (2023) *‘Working across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus: What can we learn from evaluations?’* London: ODI/ALNA

¹³⁰ UNICEF (2020) *‘Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action’*

support governments to make their social protection systems shock responsive, while also delivering humanitarian cash interventions to save lives.¹³¹

WFP recognises the vital role social protection plays in helping people meet their essential needs, **reducing the impact of shocks and enhancing their resilience**. WFP's Cash Policy states its commitment to the inter-agency cash coordination structure, highlighting that WFP **'will also help to facilitate links between cash working groups and national social protection systems whenever possible'**. Further, WFP's Strategy for Support to Social Protection recognises **'promoting coordination – and where appropriate, alignment – among social protection actors to enhance institutional effectiveness as a key area of work'**.¹³²

UNHCR's guidance on aligning humanitarian cash assistance with national social safety nets in refugee settings¹³³ states that **'alignment of the relevant elements of cash assistance, if inclusion is not possible, should be the starting point'** and **'humanitarians must justify if they are not working with existing social protection systems'**. Further, it prioritises the use of cash and sustainable resources to **'promote the use of cash for access to national services'** and outlines a commitment to **'leverage cash and cash-based interventions staff, as an entry point to Social Protection'**.

The World Bank highlights the **need 'to continue to expand coverage in fragile, conflict-affected, and vulnerable contexts, and identifies strengthening partnerships between providers of humanitarian assistance and of longer-term social protection programs'** as an avenue for this.¹³⁴ Further, in the 2023 FCV Strategy, there is a pledge to endeavour to **'Systematise partnerships with HDP actors... drawing on the WB's comparative advantage as a development actor, enhancing the impact of operations on the ground....'** **'Coordination in FCV settings will be strengthened through newly established (government led) country platforms.'**¹³⁵

CAG

In early 2022, the IASC endorsed a new model for cash coordination with the goal of ensuring **predictable, accountable, timely, adaptable, and localised coordination of cash assistance**. The IASC covers 27 humanitarian operations in 28 locations with active humanitarian coordination structures. Key features of the new model include:

1. The IS/ICCG, under the existing chair (OCHA for IASC/mixed coordination or UNHCR for refugee coordination arrangements), being responsible for overall cash coordination.
2. The CWG reporting to the IS/ICCG. CWGs in IASC/mixed settings would have non-programmatic and programmatic co-chairs.
3. A global CAG co-chaired by OCHA and UNHCR, which is responsible for capacity building, developing global standards, tools, guidance, and decision-making protocols and supports requests for best practices or other needs from country CWGs.

The IASC-endorsed Cash Coordination Model was rolled out in early 2023, with 90% of identified contexts implementing changes by March 2024.¹³⁶ The process has shown adaptability, with some contexts tailoring approaches to their unique circumstances. While largely successful, challenges persist in funding, local actor participation, and context-specific adaptations.

The CAG ToR states that they **'will focus on developing linkages to social protection bodies where appropriate and provide overviews of best practices and ensure knowledge sharing on the linkages between CVA and social protection'** and that **'cash coordination will consider linkages with social protection systems where relevant and appropriate'**.¹³⁷

¹³¹ UNICEF (2022) 'UNICEF Strategic Plan 2022-2025'

¹³² WFP (2021) [World Food Programme Strategy for Support to Social Protection](#)

¹³³ UNHCR (2019) [Aligning humanitarian cash assistance with national social safety nets in refugee setting](#):

¹³⁴ World Bank (2022) [Social Protection and Jobs – Charting a Course Towards Universal Social Protection](#)

¹³⁵ World Bank (2020) [Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025](#)

¹³⁶ CAG (2024) [Summary Report: Light Review of the new Cash Coordination Model](#)

¹³⁷ IASC (2022) [Global Cash Advisory Group Terms of Reference 2022](#)

The new model for cash coordination¹³⁸ recognises that a key function of CWG is to **‘Provide a clear and predictable entry point for linkages to social protection to the extent appropriate for the response and/or preparedness efforts.’** This may include:

1. Promoting understanding of government policies related to CVA among cash actors.
2. Systematically identifying entry points for social protection linkages; and
3. Participating in and/or liaising with relevant coordination mechanisms, wherever appropriate, such as national disaster management mechanisms and/or social protection bodies.

SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection

The SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection is co-led by the IFRC, UNICEF, and FCDO. In November 2021, through a consultative process, the group became a SPIAC-B working group in order to enhance strategic alignments between humanitarian and development goals.

The working group’s overall aim is to contribute to strengthening the links between humanitarian assistance and social protection, including coordination, with cash transfers as the entry point. The Joint Statement of the Members of SPIAC-B to the World Humanitarian Summit calls on governments and development and humanitarian actors to:

- » In extreme fragility and protracted crises, invest in the development of ‘nascent’ safety nets or social assistance delivery mechanisms, while further strengthening and developing technical and analytical capacity at national and sub-national levels; and
- » In contexts of forced displacement, strengthen the effective reach and design of social protection systems to mitigate forced displacement due to shocks and crises and ensure that host communities, IDPs, and refugees are equitably assisted in the event of crises.

Figure 5 summarises the SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection ‘Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection’.¹³⁹

Figure 5: SPIAC-B Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection



Common Principles for linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection (SPIAC-B, 2024)

In all crisis settings

1. Systematically assess entry points for linking HA-SP when designing and implementing emergency response plans
2. Ensure the meaningful and safe inclusion of vulnerable populations
3. Ensure engagement with local actors when linking HA-SP, taking into consideration the space in the country for civil society engagement
4. Elaborate more flexible financing mechanisms to enable social protection approaches ‘across the nexus
5. Build and strengthen Coordination mechanisms
6. Work towards joint monitoring and evaluation frameworks to measure results and build the evidence base for what does and does not work

In more stable contexts with reoccurring (predictable) climate shocks

- » Make coordinated and complementary contributions to social protection system strengthening humanitarian space:

In fragile and conflict settings

¹³⁸ IASC (2023) [New Cash Coordination Model - FAQs](#)

¹³⁹ SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection ‘[Common Principles for Linking Humanitarian Assistance and Social Protection](#)’.

- » Seek entry points to preserve elements of social protection or build the foundations of safety nets in conflict settings where appropriate, based on strong conflict sensitivity, do no harm, protection risk, and other risk analysis:

Countries hosting forcibly displaced populations and migrants

- » Expand access to social protection for forcibly displaced populations and migrants

ANNEX 2: METHODOLOGY

This synthesis note is intended to capture lessons learned and promising practices for country-level, joined-up humanitarian cash and social protection, and review progress since SPACE Coordination Policy Paper in June 2021.¹⁴⁰ The methodology was designed to provide a robust evidence base for better understanding challenges and opportunities and providing guidance on the implementation of more joined-up provisions of social assistance and humanitarian cash. Six countries were selected to represent different levels of fragility and conflict across the world: oPt, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Colombia, and the Philippines. The focus is on humanitarian cash and social assistance.¹⁴¹ The methodology is outlined below.

Data collection

Desk review

The desk review mapped evidence that already existed at global and country level, establishing the report's foundation and ensuring that it built on existing work that has been done on country-level coordination. For selected country case studies, an in-depth desk review was conducted that captured existing evidence and analysis.

KIIs

Building on the desk review, around six KIIs were conducted at each country level, with a further six key informants globally (see Annex 3 for details). There were challenges in accessing relevant key informants in the Philippines, Cameroon, and Colombia. This was further complemented by an extended focus group discussion on coordination across the nexus at the Forum on Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict. Indicative questions can be found below:

- » What **coordination mechanisms exist** between humanitarian cash and social protection? What government involvement is there?
- » What are the **opportunities** within international coordination mechanisms (e.g. DAC, IASC, CAG) to agree on a formal/semi-formal coordination structure?
- » What have been **influencing factors** – enabling or constraining (including incentives from donors / UN / INGOs)?
- » What funding has **incentivised** and encouraged coordination and harmonisation?
- » What inputs / **incentives** are necessary for **sustaining** effective coordination mechanisms? Whose role and responsibility is it /should it be?
- » What is the learning from efforts to undertake **joined-up assessments** or option analysis?
- » What **common tools** exist or could be developed to help coordination of humanitarian cash and social protection?
- » What is the **learning** from efforts to jointly plan and deliver humanitarian cash and social protection to reduce the need for parallel systems?
- » What procedures and systems for **data sharing** have supported coordination?
- » What is the learning from efforts to **strengthen government** roles in coordination?

¹⁴⁰ Smith, G. (2021) 'Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices'

¹⁴¹ In particular, non-contributory assistance, which is often unconditional and in the form of cash.

Data analysis

Following the data collection, the information gathered was further analysed by the research team. Then, three case studies were written up for oPt, Ukraine, and Ethiopia, capturing the evolution of coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection, emerging promising practices, and enabling and constraining factors (see Annex 4).

This synthesis note was prepared based on a pre-agreed outline. A validation session was conducted at the SPIAC-B annual workshop for the SPIAC-B Working Group on Linking Humanitarian (Cash) Assistance and Social Protection in January 2025.

ANNEX 3: KEY INFORMANTS

Country	Name	Organisation
Global	Christian Freres	DAC
Global	Juliet Lang	OCHA
Global	Elsy Ganameh	CAG
Global	Annika Sjoberg	UNHCR
Global	Nupur Kukrety	UNICEF
Global	Sophie Pongracz	STAAR
Global	Tim McInerny	Global Donor Forum
Global	Sophie Swithern	FCDO BASIC
Global	Anna Kondakhchyan	CashCap
Global	Celine Sinitzky	CaLP
Ukraine	Thomas Byrnes	Independent
Ukraine	Philippa Young	CCD
Ukraine	Clara De Camps	CCD
Ukraine	Lukas Voborsky	PeReHID
Ukraine	Paul de Carvalho-Pointillart and Monica Aguilar Folch	CWG
Ukraine	Carlota Rego	UNICEF
Ukraine	Kostiantyn Koshelenko	Deputy Minister for Digital Development
oPt	Momin Badarna and Marialaura Ena	ILO
oPt	Luca Sangalli and Ahmed Abushammaleh	CWG
oPt	Georgina Krause	Gaze Protection Consortium
oPt	Manal Tawfeeq	Ministry for Social Development
oPt	Marc Steinlin and Catherine Widrig	IPK
oPt	Gabrielle Smith	STAAR
oPt	Carla Lacerda	STAAR
Philippines	Fe Kagahastian	Regional CWG
Philippines	Ollie Westerman	CWG
Philippines	Rhodora Alday	Department of Social Welfare & Development
Philippines	Ruth Georget	FAO
Ethiopia	Abdissa Aga	KfW on behalf of Donor Coordination Group
Ethiopia	Ereblina Elezaj	UNICEF
Ethiopia	Girma Kassa	EDRMC
Ethiopia	Ambachew Hassan and William Strangio	CWG / OCHA
Ethiopia	Bisrat Bezuneh and Lili Mohiddin	FCDO / STAAR
Colombia	David Bermudez	OCHA
Colombia	Eric Besse	Urban Cash Consortium
Colombia	Juan Riveros	Venesperenze
Colombia	Diana Carolina Valero Fuentes	WFP

Cameroon	Jean-Jacques Ndongbang and Paul Maire Petroch	UNICEF
Cameroon	Alexandre Gachoud and Alix Derne	OCHA
Cameroon	Patrick Ngomdjom	CARE
Focus Group Discussion	Forum on Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict discussion on coordination	Forum on Social Protection in Fragility and Conflict discussion on coordination FCDO, World Bank, DG ECHO, USAID, UNICEF, CaLP, ILO, OCHA, STAAR, Caritas, Independent

ANNEX 4: CASE STUDY 1: LESSONS FROM OPT

Context

The oPt is in a protracted humanitarian crisis characterised by multiple decades of Israeli military occupation, internal Palestinian political divisions, recurrent escalations of hostilities, and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. The humanitarian situation in Gaza has worsened since the outbreak of conflict on 7 October 2023, with ongoing air, land, and sea bombardment, followed by ground operations from 27 October.

In the oPt, there are several social assistance schemes, and the protracted crisis has led to humanitarian cash and in-kind assistance becoming structural safety nets.¹⁴² However, a lack of coordination between these programmes has resulted in a fragmented system that struggles to address people's needs in Gaza and the West Bank.¹⁴³ A KII informed us that the Palestinian social protection system relies on dwindling external funding, as it has not been financed by the national budget since 2019.¹⁴⁴ Additionally, there have been taxation challenges since 2016.¹⁴⁵ Before 7 October, approximately 40% of households received some form of social assistance from government, non-governmental, and emergency response mechanisms.¹⁴⁶ In August 2023, the National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP) reached 108,936 households, 70% of whom lived in Gaza.¹⁴⁷ UNRWA and WFP also provide complementary long-term social transfers in both regions. Social assistance coverage is concentrated in Gaza, where 35% of the population receive a government benefit and 78% receive assistance via non-government benefit.¹⁴⁸

There has been an increase in humanitarian assistance since 7 October, to meet the sharp increase in immediate needs. This was accompanied by international donor policies putting a hold on the NCTP in Gaza. In 2021, ILO noted that strengthening coordination across the humanitarian cash and social protection nexus would help to reduce duplication, close gaps in coverage and adequacy, and strengthen synergies with government crisis response programming.¹⁴⁹

Coordination groups

There are several humanitarian and social protection coordination groups within oPt:

- » The **national CWG** is a closed group that includes the national CWG coordinator (ACF-Spain), Gaza Cash coordination (OCHA, as the non-technical lead), and representatives from the UN and INGOs with active cash programmes in oPt. Donors and government representatives do not attend these meetings. The CWG meets bimonthly and focuses primarily on policy-level discussions.¹⁵⁰ The CWG reports to the ICCG, which reports to the HCT, and is integrated into the IASC humanitarian coordination structure. There are two other sub-national CWGs that operate beneath the national group:
- » **Gaza CWG** is chaired by the Gaza Cash Coordinator (OCHA) and, according to its ToR, should also be coordinated by one programmatic agency.¹⁵¹ This smaller group is composed of the UN and

¹⁴² ILO (2024) 'Beyond the crisis: strengthening nexus coherence for social protection in the Occupied Palestinian Territory'

¹⁴³ ILO (2023) 'Operationalizing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus for social protection in the Occupied Palestinian Territory'

¹⁴⁴ ILO (2023) 'Operationalizing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus for social protection in the Occupied Palestinian Territory'

¹⁴⁵ As of 2016, taxation in the State of Palestine is subject to the Oslo Accords, notably the Protocol on Economic Relations. Formally, the Palestinian Authority is entitled to collect taxes from the Palestinians in the Palestinian territories, but some 75% of Palestinian Authority's total tax revenue was as of 2014 collected by Israel on behalf of the PA and transferred to the Palestinian Authority monthly. However, Israel regularly and increasingly withholds taxes it owes.

¹⁴⁶ ILO (2023) 'Operationalizing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus for social protection in the Occupied Palestinian Territory'

¹⁴⁷ EU (2024) 'The European Joint Strategy in Support of Palestine 2021-2024 – Implementation Report 2022-2023'

¹⁴⁸ UNICEF (2022) 'Strengthening Nexus Coherence and Responsiveness of the Palestinian social protection sector'

¹⁴⁹ ILO (2021) 'On the road to universal social protection: A social protection floor assessment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory'

¹⁵⁰ OCHA (2023) 'CWG: CVA Coordination Structure in oPt – September 2023'

¹⁵¹ OCHA (2023) 'Cash Working Group: CVA Coordination Structure in oPt – September 2023'

INGOs. Since October 2023, it has been meeting weekly to coordinate programme design and delivery. Additionally, there is a sub-working group dedicated to MPCA in Gaza that meets regularly.

- » **West Bank CWG** is co-chaired by the national CWG co-chair (ACF), and according to the CWG should also be chaired by OCHA West Bank.¹⁵² There is also the potential to identify a programmatic chair in the future. The group aims to meet monthly and includes UN agencies and INGOs to coordinate programme design and delivery. Additionally, KIIs told us that there is a sub-working group focused on MPCA in the West Bank, which also meets regularly.

The Social Protection Sector Working Group (SPSWG), co-chaired by the MoSD and the EU with technical support from UNICEF, reviews ongoing social protection policies and strategies. The workplan of the SPSWG is aligned with the National Social Development Sector Strategy 2017–2022, which is consistent with the Palestinian National Policy Agenda for the same period.

- » **The SP-CVA-TWG** was established in 2022 to facilitate collaboration among previously isolated social protection and humanitarian actors. This group was initiated as part of an EU-funded project focused on the HDP nexus, and its ToR were developed with inputs from various stakeholders. The SP-CVA-TWG is co-chaired by MoSD and OCHA (formerly represented by the Deputy Representative), with ILO as the secretariat. STAAR provides facilitation and technical advisory support. The group reports to the SPSWG, which operates outside the IASC coordination structure. It has three main workstreams: Routine Social Protection, SRSP, and Referrals. After 7 October, the frequency of 'Spearhead group' meetings became monthly, while sub-working groups, referred to as 'Sprints', were held weekly. The sprints focus on the 3SSN (involving MoSD, UNRWA, and WFP), as well as on programme harmonisation and data sharing. A workshop in August 2024 clarified the group's objectives in the context of the conflict, but KIIs informed us that the TWG has encountered challenges in turning discussions into actionable steps, engaging development stakeholders, and securing guidance and buy-in from senior strategic humanitarian actors and leadership.
- » **Gaza Protection Consortium** was established in 2020 to deliver an integrated and multi-sectoral intervention to households impacted by emergencies. It is chaired by Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), with key partners including Medecins du Monde and Mercy Corps. This collaboration allows for a comprehensive and coordinated approach that offers specialised services in protection, health, shelter, and WASH, in addition to in-kind assistance and MPCA.¹⁵³ According to KIIs, the group has limited engagement with government.

Evolution over time

Since 2021, various stakeholders have been working to strengthen the connections between social protection and humanitarian assistance, particularly in cash support. In 2021/22, funded by FCDO and ECHO, UNICEF commissioned an SRSP assessment and option analysis¹⁵⁴ and corresponding action plan¹⁵⁵ for working with the national system. The plan includes activities such as confirming and testing the feasibility of the options, piloting them, and engaging in policy dialogue over a three-year period (starting in 2023). Unfortunately, these options and pilots were not ready to address the impacts of the recent conflict. The paper highlights that making informed decisions about the best SRSP options is complicated by the fragmentation, complexity, and coordination challenges present in oPt's social protection system.

In 2021, an EU-funded project on 'Strengthening Nexus Coherence and Responsiveness in the Palestinian Social Protection Sector' launched.¹⁵⁶ The project was implemented by ILO, UNICEF, and Oxfam and aimed to improve coordination between the humanitarian and social protection sectors. This

¹⁵² OCHA (2023) 'Cash Working Group: CVA Coordination Structure in oPt – September 2023'

¹⁵³ NRC (2024) 'Gaza Crisis Response Plan'

¹⁵⁴ Smith, G. (2022) 'Assessing System Readiness for Shock Responsive Social Protection' (unpublished)

¹⁵⁵ Smith G., and Madi, A. (2022) 'State of Palestine – Shock Responsive Social Protection Readiness (SRSP) Action Plan' (unpublished)

¹⁵⁶ ILO (2024) 'Strengthening Nexus Coherence and Responsiveness in the Palestinian Social Protection Sector'

was achieved by generating resources and documents,¹⁵⁷ creating a social assistance roadmap for 2021–2024 (which remains unpublished) and establishing the SP-CVA-TWG.

Before the SP-CVA-TWG, coordination among development and humanitarian actors regarding social protection was minimal. The SPSWG experienced low attendance, with no humanitarian actors, and its sessions primarily focused on limited information sharing. Further, the CWGs experienced limited attendance of non-humanitarian actors. According to KIIs, most discussions focused on strengthening links between social protection and humanitarian assistance and took place in bilateral meetings among stakeholders.

The SP-CVA-TWG, as a nexus coordination working group, has significantly enhanced relationships, dialogue, and collaboration between MoSD and humanitarian actors. It has become a crucial platform for considering, discussing, and planning joint actions. In early 2023, multiple workstreams were established, allowing participants to address practical alignment questions on various technical topics. Additionally, STAAR and ILO funded IPK, a non-technical organisation specialising in facilitation, to help ensure all parties were aligned. According to KIIs, their approach involved investing in building relationships and trust. STAAR also deployed a technical adviser in May 2024 to support both the oPt CWG and the TWG in enhancing coherence, joint planning, and delivery since the latest escalation of the war.

After 7 October, coordination among humanitarian and social protection actors adapted to address the increased humanitarian need. However, long-term sustainable alignment of humanitarian cash assistance and social protection remains a focus. The SP-CVA-TWG paused some of its workstreams but continued to hold information-sharing coordination meetings throughout 2023 and 2024. In 2024, Workstream 1 was restructured into a spearhead group with two specific focus areas. The first focus area on data sharing successfully extended the MoSD Social Registry List (which had 85,000 beneficiaries) to humanitarian cash actors for use in targeting recipients.

The second area of focus is 3SSN, which is based on recommendations from a SP-CVA-TWG synthesis report regarding nexus approaches in oPt.¹⁵⁸ The 3SSN is a collaborative initiative involving the three largest organisations providing routine humanitarian and social assistance: MoSD, UNRWA, and WFP (who together cover and host data on nearly 100% of the Palestinian population in need). They align programmatic approaches, share data, and increase adequacy of assistance. The goal is to strengthen MoSD's routine and shock-responsive social protection systems and to ensure that resources and capacities are extended to support as many individuals as possible for as long as possible. Since September 2023, the 3SSN has been meeting to develop a statement of intent and to establish a Steering Committee management group to oversee this process. However, as KIIs pointed out, Israel's recent decision to ban UNRWA calls into question its future role in operationalising the 3SSN.

3.4 Emerging promising practices¹⁵⁹

The SP-CVA-TWG received support from IPK, which prototyped a technique borrowed from problem-driven iterative action.¹⁶⁰ IPK's approach focused on building relationships and co-creating a vision that reflected the complexities of oPt, rather than imposing an external system design. It aimed for co-ownership of SP-CVA-TWG research to strengthen linkages.

In March 2023 the SP-CVA-TWG began conducting relationship-building workshops, during which attendees discussed the underlying causes of coordination barriers. This resulted in a shared vision and the co-creation of a mission statement and roadmap. The approach centred on small acts of coordination within the three SP-CVA-TWG workstreams. These efforts addressed broader issues of alignment and

¹⁵⁷ Including: [Synthesis of recent studies related to the social protection cash voucher assistance nexus in oPt \(2023\)](#); [Assessing social protection adequacy in oPt \(2023\)](#) Assessment and mapping of cash transfer payment modalities and frequencies in oPt (2024); ["Targeting by proxy: An assessment of targeting efficiency of the proxy means test in oPt \(2023\)](#); ["Policy Dynamics and their Implications for Social Protection in oPt \(2023\)](#); [Towards a Social Pension for all older people in oPt \(2023\)](#); [Policy Dynamics and their Implications for Social Protection in oPt \(2023\)](#)

¹⁵⁸ ILO (2023) ["Synthesis of Recent Studies Related to the SPCVA nexus in the OPT"](#)

¹⁵⁹ This section draws extensively on KII data

¹⁶⁰ For more information, see the [PDIA Principles](#)

transfer, while actively shifting the focus from merely sharing information to creating a practical forum for collaborative work. Participants gained a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives, built trust, and worked together to seek solutions. Ultimately, this approach cultivated a solution-oriented mindset and facilitated compromises among individuals with differing viewpoints.

The SP-CVA-TWG has facilitated the engagement of participants who previously had not coordinated with each other (i.e. MoSD and UNRWA). The group has enhanced participants' understanding of poverty and vulnerability from MoSD's viewpoint, as well as the immediate needs from the perspective of humanitarian organisations. It has also contributed to reducing duplication among the triple safety nets provided by MoSD, WFP, and UNRWA by encouraging data sharing and programme harmonisation, as well as piloting active de-duplication processes. Moreover, key humanitarian actors have been invited to participate in the SPSWG, strengthening coordination across the nexus and moving closer to a common understanding of humanitarian cash and social protection linkages. It has also identified opportunities for enhancing these linkages and improved government engagement with humanitarian actors.

Moreover, the group is laying the groundwork for sustainable coordination going forward. There is a long-standing commitment to having quarterly meetings, along with monthly or more frequent meetings for sub-groups. Dedicated support through IPK and the SP-CVA-TWG Technical Advisor (through STAAR) is fostering ownership and progress in reforms. However, it is important to note that the group is not linked to any institutional coordination structure of the RCO or other humanitarian and development body.

The SP-CVA-TWG fundamentally aims to align the long-term safety nets of MoSD, WFP, and UNRWA, primarily through data sharing but also through coordinated programme design and implementation. This has resulted in the development of data-sharing memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between UNRWA and WFP in collaboration with MoSD, drawing from an existing MoU between UNICEF and MoSD. Additionally, there has been progress in the West Bank to align programming between MoSD and UNRWA.

» **Donors have committed funding to support the linkages between social protection and humanitarian cash.** EU/DG ECHO and FCDO have been key donors, funding UNICEF's SRSP work, the EU nexus project that led to the formation of the SP-CVA-TWG, and two STAAR facilities that support nexus coordination in oPt. The EU also attend the SP-CVA-TWG, co-chair the SPSWG with MoSD, and finance MoSD's NCTP through the Pegase programme. Moreover, they support provision of on-demand capacity support to MoSD's IT systems, paving a way forward for better coordination with humanitarian actors on data sharing and improving the national social registry. This position is sponsored by the EU and jointly supported by ILO and UNICEF under the strategic guidance of the SP-CVA-TWG.

» **Data sharing is central to all discussions on linking humanitarian cash and social protection.** Motivated by the severity of immediate needs, the MoSD shared the details of 85,000 households after 7 October, despite no data-sharing agreement being in place. Upon requests from MoSD for humanitarian actors to share the details of households that had received assistance, a number of CWG actors including primarily OCHA and the INGOs cited humanitarian principles for not informing MoSD of their listed beneficiaries who had received humanitarian assistance (although some key UN actors did gain permission to share data bilaterally). As a result, MoSD was unable to identify remaining gaps, vulnerabilities, and duplications on data it had previously shared, while several humanitarian actors were prevented from sharing data due to security concerns. This challenge resulted in an increasing breakdown of trust between the Gaza CWG and MoSD.

Neutral facilitation and exploring what was feasible with different actors has enabled coordination. Humanitarian principles were frequently cited as a barrier to coordination with MoSD before the SP-CVA-TWG. ILO was well placed as a non-operational actor to look at what was practically feasible between technical staff on the ground (e.g. prototypes from previous workstreams), rather than discussing the idea of coordination at a macro level (where these issues generally surfaced yet could not be resolved conceptually).

Influencing factors¹⁶¹

Coordination is driven by the commitment of key individuals

- » The success of the SP-CVA-TWG is driven by the commitment of key individuals in ILO, CWG, and STAAR, among other operational agencies. Committed individuals have pushed for more frequent meetings, bilateral meetings with key actors (including donors), and regular adaptation and re-evaluation of the technical focus and agenda of meetings.
- » The positive gains seen in the 3SSN are also being driven by an interest at a senior level in UNRWA regional office in moving toward greater alignment between humanitarian cash and social assistance.

Active government engagement

- » The commitment of key MoSD staff has been high throughout, particularly at the technical level, which has enabled coordination to continue.
- » It is critical that MoSD has been engaged in the process from the development side. As a nexus coordination group, the SP-CVA-TWG would not be as effective without government engagement, as other long-term UNRWA and WFP programmes are ultimately considered (and largely funded) through humanitarian resources and are not considered to be development programmes.

Capacity and relationship building

- » ILO and UNICEF (with possible further support from the World Bank and donors) are boosting MoSD capacity and with IPK and STAAR supported a SP-CVA-TWG virtual workshop series in July and August 2024 focused on jointly building the next steps between a wider range of actors. It is likely that this will need to be followed by more in-person meetings to ensure follow-up actions happen.

Research and tools

- » Since 2020, there has been a lot of research in oPt exploring how to link social protection with humanitarian cash. A synthesis report aimed at informing the work of the SP-CVA-TWG¹⁶² identified 31 documents exploring this topic, finding 20 of them to be high quality with a rigorous presentation of evidence. Documents and research have continued to be developed since conflict broke out in October 2023.¹⁶³
- » To complement this evidence base, some tools created to support the coordination process are co-created with the input of a range of actors leading to genuine ownership of different stakeholders (e.g. the SP-CVA-TWG Terms of Reference, mission statement, and roadmap).
- » STAAR technical advice will contribute to the evidence generated and linkages made by mapping alignment opportunities and potential overlaps between humanitarian cash and social assistance.

Jointly planning and delivering assistance

- » The CWG has made some efforts to develop linkages with social protection. For example, the MEB was shared with MoSD so that when they receive financing and can restart programme transfers there would be an alignment with CWG approaches (e.g. transfer value) and actors would target the same households with social assistance and cash top-ups.
- » Even though joint programme delivery is not possible until MoSD has suitable funding, humanitarians used the MoSD social registry to target households at the outset of the 7 October response.

¹⁶¹ This section draws extensively on KII data.

¹⁶² ILO (2023) 'Synthesis of recent studies related to SPCVA nexus in OPT'

¹⁶³ [Blog 1](#) (Aug 2023); [Blog 2](#) (Jul 2024); [Webinar 1](#) (Jul 2023); [Webinar 2](#) (May 2024).

Preparedness

- » Before 7 October, UNICEF was working on a SRSP protocol for MoSD, which was completed in 2024. However, this protocol was not in place to inform the MoSD response, meaning that the most suitable frameworks for response planning were those already developed under the CWG.
- » The CWG had agreed a survival MEB before 7 October, and this informed the first one-off transfers to individuals.

Constraining factors

Diverging mandates, funding, and self-preservation

- » Diverging mandates, funding, and a tendency for self-preservation of humanitarian programmes and actors were identified as key constraints to coordination in SP-CVA-TWG workshops in March 2023. Similar issues emerged through the virtual workshop series in 2024. Palestine has a social protection strategy, programmes, and a limited social registry. Some humanitarian actors have the desire to continue running their programmes as they always have done, with minor adjustments to design (e.g. caseload or transfer value), but without re-evaluating how their programmes could complement the national social protection system by filling gaps on delivery and policy. This is something the SP-CVA-TWG was set up to try to work on, particularly through the 3SSN focus area. A systematic de-duplication system along with clearer data frameworks and data governance structure could help.

Independent UN programming

- » WFP has initiated cash pilots in Gaza, demonstrating its commitment to addressing urgent needs. However, this independent approach has highlighted the opportunity for enhanced collaboration with the agencies that have been delivering cash assistance. Strengthening coordination could foster a more unified response and improve overall effectiveness in meeting the needs of the population.

Impact of conflict

- » Since 7 October, there have been significant coordination challenges, partly due to the scale of the emergency in comparison to capacities. Humanitarian actors require additional support from MoSD due to the level of need, but MoSD staff have irregular salaries and are only expected to work part time. This leads to a mismatch in demand and supply from the national system. Moreover, meetings are being held online due to the conflict, making it more challenging to have 'offline' discussions or maintain informal working relationships between actors. As a result, discord can become difficult to resolve, and personal relationships can become more distant. Additionally, despite being engaged in supporting the linkages, both MoSD and humanitarian actors have had little capacity to drive the process.

Tools and frameworks

- » Various MoUs on data sharing between MoSD and UN agencies are in different stages of development. The SPC-VA-TWG's work has led to MoUs between UNRWA and WFP on data sharing that are in the process of being approved.
- » The CWG co-chairs through OCHA host personally identifiable data from MoSD on 85,000 households, without an agreement with MoSD. This is problematic as data sharing and access to data is not part of a CWG co-chair's responsibility, particularly as the CWG is not a legal entity and OCHA is not an operational cash delivery actor. Rather, their responsibility is to encourage increased and improved data sharing between actors that respects affected people's privacy and to help identify de-duplication approaches.
- » The EU nexus project led to the creation of a social assistance road map for 2021 to 2024 (unpublished).

- » UNICEF have developed an SRSP protocol (unpublished) for activation during shocks in West Bank and Gaza.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ UNICEF (2022) State of Palestine – SRSP Readiness Action Plan (unpublished).

ANNEX 5: CASE STUDY 2: LESSONS FROM UKRAINE

Context

Before the start of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, there was a small humanitarian footprint with plans to phase out humanitarian assistance by 2023 in areas controlled by the government. Ukraine has an extensive social protection system that covers approximately 22 million people, which was utilised to respond to shocks such as the 2014 Russian invasion and COVID-19.¹⁶⁵

Once the conflict started, humanitarian organisations quickly mobilised to provide support, issuing humanitarian CVA to 6 million people in 2022. This represented 42% of the overall humanitarian response at a cost of US\$ 1.2 billion.¹⁶⁶ In 2023, this number decreased to 4 million people, costing US\$ 660 million. The share of CVA as a percentage of total humanitarian response fell to 32% in 2023 and subsequently 22% in 2024. Additionally, the proportion of MPCA within CVA declined significantly, from 98% in 2022 to 53% in 2023.¹⁶⁷

Coordination groups

The **CWG** was introduced in 2014 and was fully established by 2016.¹⁶⁸ Its role and importance have significantly increased during the current crisis. In 2022, the group was formalised as a working group under the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group, aligning it with the 2022 IASC cash coordination model.¹⁶⁹ The CWG reports to the Humanitarian Country Team for strategic direction. The new ToR for the CWG limit membership to operational actors from humanitarian organisations, excluding government and other non-humanitarian actors. Meetings are restricted to actors based in Ukraine only, with a preference for in-person attendance.

The CWG initially established a task team focused on the linkages between humanitarian cash and the social protection system, which mainly served to inform humanitarian actors about social protection as opposed to reviewing steps to align both systems. This team was disbanded in October 2022 and replaced by the PeReHID initiative, a dedicated forum designed to understand and operationalise the linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection.

The **SP SWG** was established in 2019 to coordinate government reforms with development partner strategies, programmes, and projects.¹⁷⁰ It is led by the MOSP, with UNICEF and the Council of Europe as co-chairs. During the invasion, the SP SWG became dormant, but it was reactivated in December 2024.

The **PeReHID initiative** is a technical assistance collaboration between the MOSP, FCDO, DG ECHO, USAID/BHA, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), UNICEF, IOM, UNHCR, WFP, CCD, DRC, NRC, R2P, and STAAR Facility. The overall objective of PeReHID is to support the transition of parts of the humanitarian caseload into an inclusive, shock-responsive national social protection system. To this end, the initiative fosters a shared understanding between the Government of Ukraine and humanitarian actors on increasing alignment and linking humanitarian cash transfers and humanitarian services with national social assistance and social service programmes. It supports the government's agenda to reform the social protection system to make it more adequate, adaptive, and shock-responsive

¹⁶⁵ STAAR (2023) 'Assessing the Current Level of Alignment Between Humanitarian and Social Protection Programmes in Ukraine in November 2022'.

¹⁶⁶ OCHA (2024) 'Multi-purpose Cash Assistance – Ukraine 2023 Response Analysis Snapshot'.

¹⁶⁷ PeReHID (2024) 'Humanitarian Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: Recommendations for a Better Cash Response'.

¹⁶⁸ OCHA (2022) 'Ukraine Cash Work Group Factsheet March 2022'.

¹⁶⁹ OCHA (2022) 'Ukraine Cash Work Group: Terms of Reference, October 2022'.

¹⁷⁰ Government of Ukraine (n.d.) 'Sectoral Working Groups: Social Policy'.

to the current conflict.¹⁷¹ PeReHID will conclude in March 2025, with a subgroup focused on humanitarian assistance and social protection within the SP SWG set to succeed it.

The **CCD Shared Services Hub** is formed of a group of experts and was piloted by CCD in response to the conflict. It combines the efforts of a Collaboration Advisor, who facilitates relationships between humanitarian agencies operating in Ukraine and Poland, with technical experts, such as the Social Protection Advisor. This collaboration creates a coordination mechanism that enhances the CWG's work. The Hub is not an implementing agency but works closely with CCD agencies to provide dedicated resources that can address gaps in the response, such as operationalising social protection linkages. The CCD and PeReHID share a strategic collaboration MoU, which according to KIIs brings together the policy and strategic engagement of PeReHID with the operational focus of CCD efforts.

Evolutions over time

The limited humanitarian presence before 2022 hindered coordination with the national social protection system when the conflict began. Cash coordination with national systems was limited to select activities and, ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}s such, there were discussions about potentially closing down the CWG.¹⁷² At the onset of the conflict, humanitarian operations quickly scaled up to meet rising needs. However, this expansion occurred independently of the national system. Our KIIs informed us that several factors contributed to this situation, including a lack of preparedness, humanitarian actors prioritising rapid support for those in need, a limited understanding of Ukraine's complex social protection systems among humanitarian actors, and strict data protection laws in Ukraine that hindered data-sharing agreements.¹⁷³

In an effort to link the humanitarian response with social protection, the CWG reached out to different parts of government to identify opportunities to this end. However, ^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}, progress was limited because no platform existed to bring together humanitarian and social protection actors. The CWG launched a task team on 'Linking Humanitarian Cash Transfers to Social Protection', but the function did not evolve beyond information sharing and was deactivated in July 2023.

Recognising the need for stronger linkages between the humanitarian and social protection sectors, key humanitarian stakeholders have begun coordinating with national systems. Donors,¹⁷⁴ UN organisations,¹⁷⁵ and the CWG¹⁷⁶ have all recognised the importance of, and made commitments to, strengthening these linkages. To support this, CCD created resources and tools to support humanitarian actors in better understanding Ukraine's social protection system, including options for aligning the two systems. These include a comprehensive mapping of Ukraine's social protection system.¹⁷⁷ This has subsequently informed papers on aligning humanitarian cash programming with the social protection system that provide analysis of the extent the systems are aligned.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, a Social Protection Calculator has been developed for INGOs to encourage the integration of a social protection perspective into their cash programming.¹⁷⁹ These resources were further expanded on and developed by a wider collaboration of actors within PeReHID.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷¹ Socialprotection.org (2024) 'About PeReHID Initiative'.

¹⁷² Key Aid Consulting (2022) 'Rapid Reflection on Cash Coordination for the Ukrainian Response'.

¹⁷³ Key informant interviews.

¹⁷⁴ OCHA (2024) 'Common Donor Messaging on Humanitarian Cash Assistance in the Response in Ukraine'.

¹⁷⁵ Including: OCHA (2023) Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan; UNHCR (2024) UNHCR's 2024 Plans; and WFP (2022) Ukraine Transitional Interim CSP 2023-24.

¹⁷⁶ UN OCHA (2022) Ukraine Cash Work Group: Terms of Reference, October 2022.

¹⁷⁷ CCD (2023) 'Ukraine Social Protection Matrix'.

¹⁷⁸ CCD and UCC (2023) 'Live Discussion Paper: Alignment Options for Humanitarian cash with the Ukrainian Social Protection System'; CCD and UCC (2023) 'Reflection Paper: Operational Alignment of Humanitarian Cash Programming with Ukraine's Social Protection System'.

¹⁷⁹ For more information, see Webinar - Linking Social Protection to Short-term Humanitarian Aid Response: Walk the Talk (from timestamp 1:09:00 onwards).

¹⁸⁰ These resources include 'Humanitarian-Social Protection Nexus in Ukraine: Situational Analysis and Recommendations for the Transition', and 'Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: Compendium'.

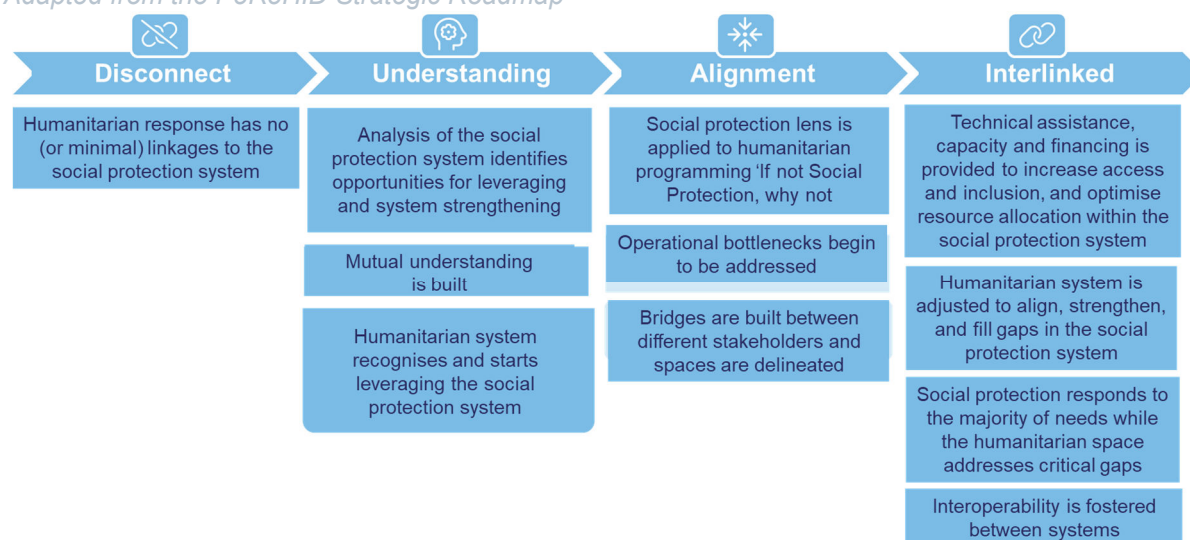
Several humanitarian organisations have been working with government by providing programme top-ups or by supporting programme implementation, including:

- » The Prykhyostok programme, developed by the Ukrainian Red Cross Society in collaboration with the Ministry for Communities, Territories, and Infrastructure Development, which provides cash transfers to hosts offering free accommodation to IDPs.¹⁸¹
- » The Social Benefits Top-Up Cash Assistance Programme, led by WFP in partnership with the MOSP and the Pension Fund of Ukraine, which supports elderly pensioners and individuals with disabilities living in the areas most affected by the conflict.¹⁸²
- » UNICEF top-up of the Government's Assistance for Low-Income Families in districts identified as 'cold spots'. Support included MPCA and cash for winter clothes for children.¹⁸³
- » UNHCR covers part of the Government's expanding Housing and Utilities Subsidy caseload.

PeReHID is a significant step toward the transition from humanitarian cash transfers to an SRSP system. As a multi-stakeholder partnership between government, donors, UN organisations, and INGOs, the initiative has dedicated resources and buy-in to take steps toward linking the humanitarian and social protection systems. The initiative has followed the process outlined in Figure 6 to link the systems.

Figure 6: Process of linking the humanitarian and social protection systems.

Adapted from the PeReHID Strategic Roadmap



Strict data protection laws in Ukraine limit opportunities for alignment between the humanitarian and social protection systems. Early in the conflict, concerns about data privacy restricted the government's ability to share beneficiary information from its registries with humanitarian organisations, as citizens had not signed any informed consent documents that would allow this. To address this, the MOSP launched eDopomoga, a digital platform that enables the state, humanitarian actors, and volunteers to provide financial support to individuals in Ukraine.¹⁸⁴ eDopomoga included a clause where citizens would allow their data to be shared with humanitarian actors, and 14 humanitarian organisations have used the platform to reach nearly 4 million beneficiaries from government records. However, challenges with the platform resulted in a significant proportion of registrants not being served, leading humanitarian organisations to discontinue its use.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ PeReHID (2024) 'Leveraging the Social Protection System for Humanitarian Cash Programmes in Ukraine, Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: Compendium'; and 'Humanitarian Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: Recommendations for a Better Cash Response'.

¹⁸² WFP (2024) 'National Social Protection System Support in Ukraine – Social Benefits Top-up'.

¹⁸³ PeReHID (2024) 'Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: Compendium'.

¹⁸⁴ <https://edopomoga.gov.ua/en/>

¹⁸⁵ Key Informant Interviews.

Attempts to use government systems for de-duplication have also been unsuccessful. In 2022, the Ministry of Digital Transformation began creating an aid de-duplication system on the Diia Platform.¹⁸⁶ This was intended to provide a solution for integrated aid coordination under government oversight, but legal, regulatory, and institutional challenges halted its development.¹⁸⁷ A KII stated that a government-led de-duplication system was not politically feasible, as many humanitarian actors did not want to host humanitarian data in a government system. As a result, humanitarian organisations chose to rely on Building Blocks, a parallel blockchain network created by WFP, which identifies recipients using national government tax IDs.¹⁸⁸ This was initially only used for MPCA, but its scope has now expanded. From February 2022 to September 2023, the de-duplication efforts saved US\$ 163.2 million.¹⁸⁹ A UNHCR de-duplication platform called SIDAR was also used for de-duplicating cash for shelter.¹⁹⁰

Emerging promising practices

PeReHID was created to transition the humanitarian caseload into an SRSP system by government, donors, UN agencies, and INGOs. The initiative was officially endorsed by an Order by the MOSP,¹⁹¹ which provides a legal framework for coordinating cash assistance efforts. As a partnership, PeReHID benefits from buy-in from key stakeholders allowing for strategic dialogue between social protection and humanitarian actors. Financing from DG ECHO, FCDO, USAID, and SDC has allowed the PeReHID Technical Assistance Facility to have a team of dedicated experts. The processes underpinning the initiative are participatory, and KIIs spoke positively about how this collaborative approach encourages discussions among stakeholders who might otherwise operate in isolation or only connect at high-level meetings.

PeReHID has invested time and resources in capturing experiences and lessons learned from previous coordination efforts, which are used to inform recommendations and guide next steps. For example, in a paper examining the alignment between humanitarian cash transfers and Ukraine's social protection system, PeReHID and CCD highlight the potential benefits of data sharing between government and humanitarian actors. They discuss the practical limitations and challenges encountered by the eDopomoga and Diia de-duplication projects. These findings have been incorporated into recommendations across several papers¹⁹² and informed a strategic priority in the PeReHID roadmap. A similar process of learning has informed other recommendations, including the formation of a Humanitarian-Social Protection Nexus Forum. This is an open platform intended to bring together actors across both sectors to support coordination where the application of a social protection lens in humanitarian programme design is encouraged.

INGOs, through the CCD, have been actively involved in fostering linkages between the humanitarian and social protection systems. Operating outside the formal humanitarian coordination structures allowed the CCD to work with greater flexibility, resulting in the rapid delivery of innovative solutions. These included a live filterable CCD social protection mapping tool,¹⁹³ design and operational alignment papers, and an easy-to-use calculator for humanitarian organisations to determine the social protection benefits to which an individual is entitled.¹⁹⁴ KIIs spoke of how, despite functioning outside of

¹⁸⁶ The Diia Platform is Ukraine's national digital ecosystem, through which citizens access various public services.

¹⁸⁷ PeReHID (2024) '[Alignment and Complementarity Between Humanitarian Cash Transfers and the Social Protection System in Ukraine](#)'

¹⁸⁸ WFP (2022) '[Building Blocks Ukraine Inter-Organizational Usage](#)'.

¹⁸⁹ PeReHID (2024) '[Humanitarian Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: Recommendations for a Better Cash Response](#)'.

¹⁹⁰ PeReHID (2024) '[Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: Compendium](#)'.

¹⁹¹ MOSP (2023) Ministry of Social Policy, Order 186-N, On the Establishment of the Working Group (Coordination Center) of the PeReHID Humanitarian Aid and International Development Reform Project for Ukraine on the Transition from Emergency Humanitarian Aid to the Creation of a Sustainable System of Social Protection of the Population Aimed at Overcoming Shocks Caused by the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation Against Ukraine.

¹⁹² Including: PeReHID (2024) '[Humanitarian-Social Protection Nexus in Ukraine: Situational Analysis and recommendations for the Transition](#)'; and PeReHID (2024) '[Humanitarian Cash and Voucher Assistance in Ukraine: recommendations for a Better Cash Response](#)'

¹⁹³ CCD (2023) '[Ukraine Social Protection Matrix](#)'.

¹⁹⁴ For more information, see [Webinar - Linking Social Protection to Short-term Humanitarian Aid Response: Walk the Talk](#) (from timestamp 1:09:00 onwards).

formal structures, the CCD employed a broad participatory approach by maintaining relationships with all key humanitarian and social protection stakeholders, ensuring that its outputs aligned with important developments. The calculator was also integrated into the PeReHID Joint Learning Framework.¹⁹⁵

Resources, research, and platforms for coordination between humanitarian cash and social protection are becoming increasingly publicly available. At the onset of the conflict, coordination groups had closed participation, limiting opportunities for social protection and humanitarian actors to come together to discuss coordination issues. KIIs stated that, after recognising this barrier, CCD intentionally made their mapping, analysis, and tools publicly available so all actors could benefit. The majority of PeReHID papers are also available online in both Ukrainian and English. In addition, the initiative is pushing for the Humanitarian-Social Protection Nexus Forum to be open to any actor, to foster the exchange of good practice in this area and serve as a learning space.¹⁹⁶

Influencing factors¹⁹⁷

Funding has facilitated the production of dedicated resources to strengthen the linkages between humanitarian cash and social protection, including:

- » In 2022, FCDO (via STAAR) funded research exploring how humanitarian and social protection linkages could be strengthened in Ukraine.
- » The CCD Shared Services Hub was created under the Disaster Emergency Committee's Collective Initiative funding, which requires multi-agency collaboration and innovative approaches. This allowed CCD to encourage a social protection agenda despite limited buy-in from many humanitarian actors.
- » The large resourcing of PeReHID is funded by a range of donors (including USAID, FCDO, DG ECHO and SDC).
- » The Government of Ukraine is dedicated to strengthening its digital systems and the shock responsiveness of its social protection system:
- » In response to the conflict, it implemented SRSP measures without the assistance of humanitarian organisations and the IDP allowance became the main source of income for many displaced people. Notably, according to KIIs, in 2023 shock-responsive social assistance spending was four times higher than the overall MPCA investment.
- » The MOSP has underscored its commitment to PeReHID by signing Order 186-N.¹⁹⁸

Constraining factors¹⁹⁹

Inactive or limited participation in coordination groups

- » The CWG only allowed the membership and participation of operational actors based in country, meaning many were not able to attend (including donors and the government). In the summer of 2024, the CWG unanimously voted to allow government participation, but this has not materialised yet.
- » Task team 5 of the CWG (focused on the linkages with social protection) centred on information sharing as opposed to operationalising the linkages between social protection and humanitarian cash. It was disbanded in July 2023. Key challenges this team faced were that it had no operational capacity in-country and no resources and ability to generate evidence or conduct a mapping of the social protection system.
- » The SP SWG has not been active since the conflict began.²⁰⁰ It was reactivated in December 2024 with support from the FCDO-funded SPIRIT programme.

¹⁹⁵ PeReHID (2024) 'Learning Framework for the Transition of Humanitarian Cash Transfers to the Social Protection System in Ukraine'.

¹⁹⁶ PeReHID (2024) 'Humanitarian-Social Protection Nexus in Ukraine: Situational Analysis and recommendations for the Transition'.

¹⁹⁷ This section draws extensively from KII data.

¹⁹⁸ MOSP (2023).

¹⁹⁹ This section draws extensively from KII data.

²⁰⁰ STAAR (2022) 'Strengthening Humanitarian-Social Protection Linkages within Ukraine – October Review'.

- » PeReHID did establish a Humanitarian-Social Protection Nexus Forum in 2024, which meets ad hoc on selected topics.

Lack of experience working with government

- » Working with government systems is still relatively novel for humanitarian organisations in Ukraine. Time investments in building the experience through pilots are required before the approach can be gradually expanded and mainstreamed.²⁰¹
- » The government is willing to work with humanitarian organisations, but their human resources capacity is limited to maintain operational engagement. Strengthening capacity and creating space for government involvement in humanitarian coordination was a struggle as humanitarians disagreed with government participation. This trend is now reversing.

Strict data protection laws in Ukraine and concern over violating humanitarian principles limits data sharing.

- » The MOSP is governed by strict data protection laws limiting its ability to share beneficiary information from its registries with humanitarian organisations. Other attempts to share data (including bilateral agreements, eDopomoga, or the Diia de-duplication platform) have had limited success. Progress is being made to overcome these challenges through decree-based top-up programmes. Large humanitarian programmes are also investing in more substantial data-sharing agreements. However, data-sharing challenges for smaller humanitarian actors persist.
- » Concerns over violating humanitarian principles means that humanitarian actors prefer to use parallel data systems. For example, many humanitarians prefer the use of Building Blocks for de-duplication rather than government systems.

²⁰¹ PeReHID (2024) '[Leveraging the Social Protection System for Humanitarian Cash Programmes in Ukraine](#)'.

ANNEX 6: CASE STUDY 3: LESSONS FROM ETHIOPIA

Context

Ethiopia has a long history of chronic food insecurity, which is worsening due to increasingly adverse climatic shocks and conflict, undermining agriculture and pastoral livelihoods, which account for 85% of all employment.²⁰² The 2022 drought was the worst in 40 years and severely affected southern and eastern parts of the country.²⁰³ Ethiopia has also faced overlapping shocks, including locust invasion, COVID-19, the global rise of food prices, and increasing conflict. As a result, the number of people in need of assistance surged from 8.9 million in 2019 to 21.4 million in 2024, peaking in 2022 with 29.7 million people in need.²⁰⁴

The centralisation of political power and the lack of representation of certain ethnic groups among the ruling elite have created ethnic tensions between regional and central authorities in Ethiopia. These tensions contributed to the outbreak of the war in Tigray in November 2020, which subsequently spread to other regions, including Amhara and Afar. Since the conclusion of the war in Tigray in November 2022, new conflicts have emerged within and between various regions of Ethiopia. In 2024, Ethiopia was ranked as the world's 12th most fragile state.²⁰⁵

The PSNP is the country's flagship social assistance initiative. Since its launch in 2005, it has undergone several phases of development. Initially, it reached 4.8 million direct beneficiaries across 192 woredas this number grew to 8 million beneficiaries in 408 woredas in 2020.²⁰⁶ Assistance includes conditional cash or in-kind transfers as part of a public works programme during the lean season. Approximately 15% of beneficiaries receive unconditional cash transfers.²⁰⁷ From its beginning, one of the primary goals was to scale up its efforts in response to increasing local needs during shocks, specifically those related to climate and drought. This was intended to reduce reliance on emergency appeals.²⁰⁸ Over time, this shock-responsive component has evolved, and by 2020 it reached an additional 3.8 million people.²⁰⁹ Research has shown that the PSNP can effectively protect individuals from the impacts of drought.²¹⁰

Coordination mechanisms

The PSNP Donor Working Group was established in 2005 and includes all donors for the programme (EU, World Bank, Irish Aid, USAID, GAC, FCDO, Austrian Development Cooperation, German Cooperation, DANIDA, SIDA, UNICEF, and WFP). FCDO, USAID, GAC, and Irish Aid are actively engaged. The group is responsible for financing the PSNP and addressing issues between donor priorities and government interests.²¹¹

The PSNP Coordination and Management Committee is a federal government-led group chaired by the Food Security Directorate and consists of all directors responsible for PSNP from various implementing agencies. The group holds quarterly meetings to review progress, resolve bottlenecks, and address any inter-agency coordination issues.²¹² The Committee reports to the PSNP Joint Strategic Oversight Committee and oversees several technical committees,²¹³ including a Livelihoods and Agricultural Support

²⁰² FAO (2024) 'Ethiopia at a Glance'.

²⁰³ World Bank (2024) 'Ethiopia – Country Overview'.

²⁰⁴ OCHA (February 2024) 'Humanitarian Response Plan 2024'; OCHA (July 2022) 'Humanitarian Response Plan 2022'.

²⁰⁵ Fund for Peace (2024) 'Fragile States Index'.

²⁰⁶ World Bank (2023) 'Implementation Complement and Results Report for the Ethiopia Rural Productive Safety Net Project'.

²⁰⁷ Devereux, S. (2008) 'Ethiopia Productive Safety Net Programme'.

²⁰⁸ World Bank (2004) 'Productive Safety Net Project'.

²⁰⁹ World Bank (2020) 'Proposal Appraisal Document – Strengthen Ethiopia's Safety Net Project'.

²¹⁰ Knippenberg, E. and Hoddinott, J. (2017) 'Shocks, Social Protection and Resilience: Evidence from Ethiopia'.

²¹¹ Reach Project (2019) 'Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme: Addressing Food Insecurity with Food and Cash Transfers'.

²¹² MoA (2021) 'PSNP General Programme Implementation Manual'.

²¹³ MoA (2022) 'PSNP 5 Governance Structure'.

Services Technical Committee and a sub-committee on shock-responsive safety nets.²¹⁴ The group also works with regional-level government workers through a consultative process.

The **CWG** was re-established in 2016 and updated its structure in 2022 to align with the cash coordination model endorsed by the IASC.²¹⁵ The CWG operates using a decentralised area-based approach to promote more holistic, multi-sectoral, and integrated interventions in each region. There are seven sub-national CWGs, co-led by the government departments of Disaster Risk Management and the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs, with humanitarian organisations providing technical support. Each regional group is created at the request of humanitarian agencies. The CWG is managed by a coordination team and a Strategic Advisory Group. The ToR for the Ethiopia CWG emphasises the importance of strong linkages with the PSNP.²¹⁶ KIIs revealed that the CWG has had as many as 85 members, and meetings tend to consist of over 60 participants.

The **SAG** offered guidance to the CWG coordination team and the broader CWG on identifying opportunities, challenges, risks, and strengths. It consisted of eight elected members, with two seats reserved for representatives from government agencies: the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and the EDRMC. The group was tasked with actively promoting and supporting connections to social protection initiatives,²¹⁷ but was disbanded in 2024 by OCHA due to perceived inefficiencies and variable government engagement.

The **ECC** is a designated location where government agencies at all levels can collaborate and make executive decisions in response to emergencies.²¹⁸ The ECC plays a crucial role in facilitating communication among high-level officials from the EDRMC. These coordination platforms have, in the view of KIIs, proven to be particularly effective in the conflict affected regions of Tigray and Amhara. In Ethiopia, the government coordination structures at regional/ zonal levels are not homogeneous and they differ from one region to another in terms of structure, name, leadership, and capacity.

The **HCT** is chaired by Ethiopia's humanitarian coordinator and addresses strategic issues facing the humanitarian community in Ethiopia. It works alongside the government and the Disaster Risk Management Technical Working Group. The ICCG and the Ethiopia CWG report to the HCT. There is also communication between the HCT and the PSNP donor working group.

The **Ethiopia Food Security Cluster** is split into two different coordination platforms: the food cluster led by WFP and the Government of Ethiopia, and the agriculture taskforce led by FAO and the government of Ethiopia.²¹⁹ The Food Cluster plays a role in managing the coordination between different programmes supporting food security, including humanitarian assistance programmes and the PSNP.

Evolution over time

The launch of the PSNP in 2005 transformed the landscape of humanitarian assistance in Ethiopia.

Previously, efforts to address food insecurity primarily relied on humanitarian food assistance (HFA). Initially, PSNP catered to a caseload comprised mainly of food-insecure individuals from shock-prone areas, establishing another system for delivering cash and food transfers to vulnerable households. As a result of the PSNP's implementation, the humanitarian caseload shifted to focus on providing temporary relief to households facing transitory food insecurity.²²⁰

PSNP was designed to scale up in response to shocks and has been effectively used as a tool for this. From the outset, 20% of PSNP's budget was allocated at regional and woreda levels to respond to shocks identified by an early warning system through qualitative assessments conducted at the woreda level.²²¹ The shock-responsive component was first activated in 2008 when PSNP provided assistance to

²¹⁴ Oxford Policy Management (2024) 'Building Resilience Ethiopia Learning Note: Shock-Responsive Safety Net Workstream'.

²¹⁵ Ethiopia CWG (2023) 'Ethiopia Cash Working Group Terms of Reference 2023'.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ethiopia CWG (2022) 'Terms of Reference – Strategic Advisory Group'.

²¹⁸ EDRMC (2019) 'Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) Guide'.

²¹⁹ Food Security Cluster (2024) 'Ethiopia Food Security Cluster'.

²²⁰ Hailu, D. (2024) 'A review of the shock responsive social protection in Ethiopia' (unpublished).

²²¹ Ibid.

1.49 million food-insecure households. This was followed by additional transfers benefiting 4.43 million households, alongside an increase in the value of the transfers to address high inflation. In response to the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa, the programme scaled up to support an additional 3.1 million beneficiaries for three months, while also extending the duration of transfers for 6.5 million beneficiaries. PSNP was widely credited with preventing the worst impacts of the drought.²²² Similar scale-ups occurred in 2016, 2017, and 2020.

The transfer of responsibilities for HFA from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to the newly formed EDRMC has created challenges that continue to impact coordination between humanitarian assistance and the PSNP. Prior to 2015, one minister within the MoA oversaw both the Food Security Coordination Directorate, which managed the PSNP, and the Early Warning and Response Directorate, which handled HFA. In 2016, EDRMC assumed responsibility for coordinating disaster management and implementing food security initiatives, while the MoA retained responsibility for the food security sector and the PSNP.²²³ This institutional set-up has resulted in divided responsibilities, parallel distribution structures, differing transfer values, and slower decision-making processes, which have led to late and unpredictable emergency assistance and sub-optimal coverage. Further, there have been instances where the same donor has financed both the PSNP and humanitarian assistance but without coordination.²²⁴ Cash transfers for the PSNP are channelled through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation, while cash transfers for HFA are managed by the EDRMC. This division creates coordination challenges between the two systems.²²⁵

Over the past decade, humanitarian needs have risen significantly, leading to a corresponding increase in the humanitarian footprint.²²⁶ Cash assistance has also become an increasingly popular modality. In 2016, the CWG was reestablished to coordinate cash assistance efforts. The number of households receiving multi-purpose cash assistance increased dramatically, from 130,000 households in 2021 to 434,000 households in 2022.²²⁷ One example of a cash programme is the Shock Responsive Cash Transfer, implemented by UNICEF and the Regional Bureaus of Labour and Social Affairs, and funded by FCDO. It supports IDPs who are unable to access their PSNP benefits in the woredas to which they have moved as a result of conflict. In 2023, this programme reached 62,000 households.²²⁸

Recognising the challenges, the PSNP 5 design aimed to implement a series of reforms to improve coordination between the PSNP and HFA. To address the issues of slow decision making which limited the shock responsiveness of PSNP²²⁹, PSNP 5 included plans to consolidate the operational management of HFA and PSNP under the MoA, while EDRMC was to continue coordinating early warning systems, and disaster preparedness and response.²³⁰ **However, these reforms did not occur** and the EDRMC, which transitioned from the Ministry of Peace to the Prime Minister's Office in 2021, retained its responsibility for HFA.

In November 2020, the conflict in Tigray created a series of challenges for both PSNP and HFA. Before the conflict erupted, the PSNP was operational in 55 of Tigray's 94 woredas. However, when the PSNP was suspended across the region, 1 million people lost access to this programme. In the Amhara and Afar regions, although the PSNP was never officially suspended, the conflict between June 2021 and March 2022 created difficulties in some woredas, resulting in approximately 335,000 PSNP beneficiaries not receiving their cash assistance.²³¹ As the PSNP was suspended in Tigray, addressing the needs of the

²²² World Bank (2022) 'Strengthen Ethiopia's Adaptive Safety Net Project: Second Additional Financing'.

²²³ SPaN (2019) 'Guidance Package on Social Protection Across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: The Ethiopia Case Study'.

²²⁴ Lind, J. et al. (2024) 'BASIC Working Paper 28 – Conflict Disruptions to Social Assistance in a Multi-Hazard Context: Assessing Responses to the Northern Ethiopia Crisis'.

²²⁵ SPaN (2019) 'Guidance Package on Social Protection Across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus: The Ethiopia Case Study'.

²²⁶ OCHA (February 2023) 'Humanitarian Response Plan 2023'.

²²⁷ OCHA (July 2022) 'Humanitarian Response Plan 2022'.

²²⁸ UNICEF (2023) 'UNICEF Ethiopia Country Office Annual Report 2023'.

²²⁹ World Bank (2020) 'Ethiopia – Strengthen Ethiopia's Adaptive Safety Net Project'.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Lind, J et al. (2024) 'BASIC Working Paper 28 – Conflict Disruptions to Social Assistance in a Multi-Hazard Context: Assessing Responses to the Northern Ethiopia Crisis'.

region required an independent humanitarian response. This response encountered several challenges, including inadequate financing and a blockade of Tigray. In June 2023, food aid from the US and UN was halted after it was discovered that humanitarian assistance was being diverted to commercial mills and markets.²³² In Amhara and Afar, slow needs assessments and federal political divisions trickled down to the woredas, leading to chaotic coordination, particularly in areas housing both the Food Security Coordination Directorate and HFA offices.²³³

Tensions between the humanitarian community and the federal government have also hindered effective coordination. During the war in Tigray, the federal government-imposed blockade of aid violated core humanitarian principles and severely hampered the response efforts. In September 2021, the government expelled seven UN officials, who were known for their principled approach to humanitarian work. Furthermore, as humanitarian data in Ethiopia can only be published with government approval, several key tools and documents, including OCHA's situation reports, have been rendered unavailable at the government's request.²³⁴

Emerging promising practices

Without clear guidance on implementing the PSNP in conflict-affected areas, stakeholders utilised a traffic light system to coordinate their response.²³⁵ This system assessed how programme operations were impacted by conflict, with red signalling that a household required immediate cash relief and green indicating that the household could be supported by the PSNP. Strong collaboration among USAID, the Ethiopian government, and donors such as FCDO contributed to the success of this approach. Donors and humanitarian organisations found the system to be effective, suggesting it can be used for coordinated responses to future conflict-related shocks.²³⁶

The SAG has enhanced coordination between the government, donors, and humanitarian organisations. Given the extensive humanitarian landscape in Ethiopia, which includes up to 85 organisations and as many as 60 participants attending CWG meetings, decision making can be challenging. Consequently, according to KIIs, the SAG has facilitated strategic coordination and ensured the inclusion of government and donor considerations. SAG members are elected to represent the perspectives of the larger CWG, with two seats for government (EDRMC and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs). The MoA has also participated in certain meetings. This structure created an important platform for government and humanitarian actors to discuss coordination issues. While there were mixed views on the effectiveness of the SAG, most key informants found it to be a valuable resource.

Coordination at a regional level is not hampered to the same extent by intra-ministerial politics, meaning there is better data sharing, collaboration, and positive programme-related outcomes. At a federal level, a constraint to coordination is competition between key ministries (including the EDMRC and MoA). KIIs indicated that, at regional level, these political dynamics do not hamper coordination and regional social protection, and humanitarian actors take a proactive role in promoting coordination among each other.

The World Bank has recently taken a stronger interest in the linkages between humanitarian cash and the PSNP and is actively supporting the discussion (alongside FCDO and DG ECHO) on platforms to replace the disbanded SAG. This support is particularly important because the World Bank, through the nature of its funding to the government, has a strategic relationship that supports longer-term collaboration and can engage with ministerial departments that are otherwise difficult to access.

²³² Harter, F. (2023) 'The Guardian – Food Aid Suspended in Ethiopia after widespread and coordinated thievery'; and Paravicini, G. (2024) 'UN Food Agency Failed to act as U.S. aid was looted in Ethiopia'.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ IAHE (May 2024) 'Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Response to the Crisis in Northern Ethiopia'.

²³⁵ Smith, G. (2024) 'Ethiopia Case Study: Lessons and Promising Practices for Preserving and Strengthening Social Protection in Conflict Settings'.

²³⁶ Lind, J. et al. (2024) 'BASIC Working Paper 28 – Conflict Disruptions to Social Assistance in a Multi-Hazard Context: Assessing Responses to the Northern Ethiopia Crisis'.

Influencing factors²³⁷

3.4.1 The coordination process is driven by key individuals

- » The success of the SAG was driven by key individuals from UNICEF and other organisations, who helped create it, drive its agenda, and invited and encouraged government participation.
- » KIIs suggested the PSNP donor working group is driven by individuals from certain donors. Factors contributing to this include members with preexisting experience and insights on how social protection and humanitarian assistance coordination works in other contexts, who are passionate about supporting these linkages and working for organisations that are strengthening social protection.
- » The World Bank has an individual in post, in country, who has been explicitly tasked with strengthening humanitarian and development linkages

3.4.2 Donors have financed dedicated support staff

- » CashCap seconded an expert to support the day-to-day coordination of the working group, while FCDO later funded a full-time national cash coordinator through UNICEF.
- » Following the conflict in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar, through the support of STAAR, a conflict sensitivity cash coordinator and advisor have been providing support to the CWG and UNICEF to ensure the approach is conflict sensitive.

3.4.3 Strong government that takes the lead on humanitarian coordination

- » The Government of Ethiopia plays a leadership role in humanitarian coordination by spearheading humanitarian assessments and implementing responses with its partners. Previously this role sat with the MoA, but since 2016 has moved to the EDRMC.

3.5 Constraining factors

3.5.1 Operational management of the PSNP and HFA sits with two different government agencies (MoA and EDRMC), constraining coordination between the two systems

- » There is competition between the MoA and EDRMC over resources and leadership for SRSP, which has led to challenges in cooperation.
- » Plans under PSNP 5 to consolidate PSNP and HFA under one system have not been implemented. These institutional divisions appear to have become more entrenched after a 2021 post-election ministerial restructure moved the EDRMC out of the Ministry of Peace and into the Prime Minister's Office, increasing its political standing.

3.5.2 PSNP was not designed to operate in conflict settings or respond to conflict-related shocks, thereby increasing the caseload of an already strained humanitarian system

- » For example, people who were displaced from their homes were not eligible to receive PSNP support if they move out of their woreda, meaning IDPs had to rely on humanitarian assistance. However, an analysis of social assistance in three woredas during the conflict found that humanitarian assistance was less predictable and less timely for conflict-affected people, compared to PSNP transfers.²³⁸
- » The federal government also imposed strict humanitarian access controls to Tigray during conflict, which raised tensions between the government and humanitarian actors.

²³⁷ This section draws extensively from KII data.

²³⁸ Tefera Taye, M. et al. (2024) 'Basic Working Paper 27 - Conflict, Displacement, and Social Assistance in Three Districts of Ethiopia'.

3.5.3 Donors are not committed to the PSNP 5 shock component responding to conflict as it is currently implemented

- » While most major donors were involved in the design of PSNP 5, only a few have demonstrated commitment to the shock-response component. The response was designed for climate-related shocks like drought and consequently had several limitations in responding effectively to the conflict (e.g. IDPs not being able to receive PSNP support). Multiple donors redirected funding initially allocated to the PSNP5 shock response to HFA.²³⁹

²³⁹ Hailu, D. (2024) 'A review of the shock responsive social protection system in Ethiopia' (unpublished).

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