

INTEGRITY INSIGHTS



The role of social protection in responding to environmental crises



Read Time: 15 minutes



Client: FCDO



Project timeframe: 2020-2024



Integrity's role

Performance evaluation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)'s Better Assistance in Crisis (BASIC) Programme. Integrity is examining the provision of research, technical assistance and knowledge management and learning services in supporting the new and/or improved use of social protection approaches during crises.



What's the story?

Leveraging learning from the project and our wider understanding of climate change, we discuss the rationale for using social protection approaches in response to climate crises, the challenges faced by implementers and what can be done to improve their use.

Climate change has already wreaked global havoc on the lives of millions. As world leaders seek to agree new commitments to address climate change more widely, it is critical to understand how best to support economies to better prepare for climate crises. Cross-cutting learning from existing crisis can help identify sustainable solutions.

Integrity recently undertook a performance evaluation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)'s Better Assistance in Crisis (BASIC) Programme. As part of this project, Integrity is examining the provision of research, technical assistance and knowledge management and learning services in supporting the new and/or improved use of social protection approaches during crises. Leveraging learning from this project and our wider understanding of climate change, Integrity's Nick Moore and Lamia Renaud discuss the rationale for using social protection approaches in response to climate crises, the challenges faced by implementers and what can be done to improve their use.

Climate-related shocks are an increasing risk to vulnerable communities across the world

With the recent acceleration of climate change, and forecasts of further and more violent changes, there is an urgent global need for improvements to how national governments can respond to expected and unexpected climate crises. Climate-related shocks, which include extreme weather events, famines and protracted droughts and desertification, have a disproportionate impact on the world's poorest.



BARBADOS PRIME MINISTER MIA MOTTLEY, 2021

“ 1.5 Celsius is what we need to stay alive — two degrees is a death sentence for the people of Antigua and Barbuda, for the people of the Maldives, for the people of Dominica and Fiji, for the people of Kenya and Mozambique — and yes, for the people of Samoa and Barbados. ”

DIFFENBAUGH & BURKE, 2019

“ In 2040, 41 percent of the global population will be exposed to the risk of inundations. Southern and southeastern Asia would be among the places hardest hit, with more than two billion people at risk. A 2019 study found climate change has already deepened global economic inequality by around 25 percent. ”

IOM, 2021

“ UN forecasts estimate there could be anywhere between 25 million and 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050. ”

If not addressed, these events can exacerbate inequality and vulnerability; for example, through the introduction of health issues, food insecurity, economic inactivity and losses, and forced displacement.

UN forecasts estimate that there could be anywhere between 25 million and 1 billion environmental migrants by 2050 (Source: IOM)

Establishing policies and systems that can support communities during and after climate-related shocks is a priority now more than ever. When climate shocks hit, governments need to be prepared to respond and support global responses in a more effective, efficient and inclusive manner.

Social protection is increasingly considered a tool to prepare for and respond to climate crises, which affect community safety, food security, health, economic and social stability.

HOW CAN SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION ASSIST WITH THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE?

Social protection refers to all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised. Its universal use is recognised as a key contributing factor to ending all forms of poverty under the first Sustainable Development Goal.

Programming typically involves providing cash transfers, vouchers, food aid, insurance or a combination of these. The overall objective of SP is to reduce the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups¹. That said, social protection can address different issues, with some programmes strictly focused on providing relief from deprivation during crises, while others pursue wider socio-economic objectives, like economic development or social equality.

Governments, global donors, and agencies increasingly recognise that shock-responsive social protection systems have been key in supporting crisis response in recent years. In addition to supporting governments in delivering SP programming, global actors have also provided research services and technical assistance to support the design and delivery of more effective, efficient, and/or equitable social protection programmes and financing models.

1. Devereux, S. and Sabates-Wheeler, R. (2004) Transformative social protection. IDS.



Social protection, security and the climate crisis

We highlight four of the many countries facing acute climate and security risks. Although evidence suggests it could help build resilience to support vulnerable, indigenous or migrant populations, the level of social protection coverage is not enough.



Population covered by at least one SP benefit (%)ⁱ



Illustrative climate risk



Illustrative security risk



Most affected

JORDANⁱⁱ



35% (2020)



Drought, desertification, water scarcity, extreme temperatures, landslides and flash flood, risks of water-borne diseases (malaria, Rift Valley fever, cholera, etc.) following flood events



Increased regional tensions over water access



Refugees, especially children, pregnant and breastfeeding women (Syrians, Iraqis and Palestinians), Bedouin communities



40% (2020)



Extreme water scarcity (Sana'a is the most water stressed city in the world, intrusion of saltwater in groundwater reserves), desertification, arable land degradation and coastal erosion, climate sensitive (water-borne) epidemics including cholera and malaria (from risks of storms surges and floods in coastal regions)



Conflict over water, mass displacement from coastal zones, insurgency



4 million internally displaced people, children, women and pregnant/breastfeeding women (acute malnutrition risks), communities dependent on humanitarian assistance (approximately 20 million people)

YEMEN^v



11% (2019)



Desertification and soil erosion in the north (affecting 11 of the country's 36 states), droughts and floods, dwindling natural resources (water)



Climate risks exacerbating inter-community tensions between herders and farmers (competition over natural resources)



Fulani herders/pastoralists, northern Nigerian farming communities



Not reported



Extended periods of droughts, flash floods, erratic rainfall, cyclones, sand and dust storms, water-borne diseases (malaria, Rift Valley fever, cholera, etc.)



Climate risks exacerbated inter-community tensions between herders and farmers (competition over natural resources), Coastal zones degradation and loss of livelihood in fishing communities driving piracy, violent extremism



Internally displaced people, refugees, children

NIGERIAⁱⁱⁱ

SOMALIA^{iv}

i. Social protection - ILOSTAT <https://ilostat ilo.org>

ii. World Bank <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org> and USAID <https://www.climatelinks.org>

iii. UN Water, Drought Conditions and Management Strategies in Nigeria. <https://www.ais.unwater.org>

iv. Eklow, K. and Krampe, F. 2019, Climate-related security risks and peacebuilding in Somali, SPIRI Policy Paper No. 53. <https://www.spiri.org>

v. USAID 2017 <https://pdf.usaid.gov> and UN <https://yemen.un.org>

Social protection is expected to have a variety of benefits for households. Importantly, it helps households meet their basic health needs. It also reduces the economic uncertainty of household production (cooking, childcare), investment (purchase of capital equipment or business inputs) and supports longer-term planning. Social protection systems are also thought to produce a range of benefits beyond beneficiary households.

These include economic benefits, such as increased local employment and lower prices due to the ability of households to maintain business activity during crisis. They can also include societal benefits, such as improved community cohesion or perceptions of wellbeing and safety as food security issues are resolved by distributing food vouchers in response to shortages.

WHAT FACTORS PREVENTS THE USE OF SOCIAL PROTECTION IN RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS?

Despite increasing climate risks, the resilience benefits offered by SP, and recent progress in SP system development, the global population covered by one form of social protection is less than 50 percent on average, with more limited coverage in fragile states, many of which suffer from climate-related disasters (as shown). Significantly limited provision of SP will severely limit our ability to end all forms of poverty by 2030.



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Contact us

To find out more about our role on the BASIC programme and our work on climate mitigation; or to discuss how we can help your organisation better learn and adapt to changing and complex environments contact: info@Integrityglobal.com

Because of the above, the continued acceleration of climate change, and the overlap between climate fragility and other aspects of fragility, there is an urgent need to address the challenges that prevent optimal levels of social protection coverage, including:

- **Political incentives** can block the development, implementation or reform of fully inclusive systems.
- Coordination challenges between governments, donors, agencies. This affects the design and delivery of programmes and can result in **duplication of effort**.
- **Ineffective information sharing and evidence gaps**, particularly on how best to design and deliver fit-for-purpose systems in specific contexts.
- **Deployment of support through short-term humanitarian response systems** that focus on immediate needs, despite increasingly protracted crises. This can create inefficient delivery mechanisms in the medium to long term.
- Limited capacity and capability grounded in context can negatively affect the development of systems. This requires **multi-disciplinary teams** with expertise in fields such as population targeting, means testing, management information systems, context monitoring and prediction, product disbursement and context knowledge.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS GOING FORWARDS?

With these complexity and context challenges in mind, there are several options that can help country governments and supporting partners deliver more effective, efficient,

inclusive and sustainable social protection during crises:

- **Make sure solutions are context specific** and consider the realities of the political, economic, technological and fragility contexts of respective countries. This may require robust climate risk assessments and projections to inform contextual understanding, particularly in a climate-affected future.
- **Make sure that local actors, including marginalised groups, are central to the development and reform of SP systems**, policies and programmes, and look to provide capacity building and assistance where required. In the context of climate-driven SP, this may involve working with remote, pastoral or indigenous communities who are less likely to be involved in the development and adaptation of systems, but who are likely to need SP the most.
- Use global knowledge and research to **understand and learn from existing efforts** and consider what is most appropriate to local contexts. This may include looking at evidence and research on the nexus between climate change, humanitarian aid, fragility and SP.
- **Make use of systematic reviews or impact evaluation evidence** to inform decision making when designing or managing SP programmes. This may also include reviewing evidence at the intersection between SP and other relevant themes, such as those cited above, as well as migration, food security, economic livelihood and gender and social inclusion.
- **Use process evaluation and/or implementation research** to test programme assumptions and appraise the effectiveness and efficiency of delivery models that address climate crises.



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