Overcoming barriers to coordinating across social protection and humanitarian assistance – building on promising practices

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June 2021

Implemented by

This document was developed alongside others in the SPACE series (all available here).

Executive summary

The importance of strong coordination between actors preparing, designing and implementing shock responses is well accepted. This has been highlighted specifically concerning shock responsive social protection (SRSP) as well as linking humanitarian action and social protection (HA-SP). However, despite unanimous professed acceptance of the principle of coordination, practical experiences of linking shock responses with social protection systems have shown that this can be challenging to put into practice. The COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity for change - the global crisis having galvanised interest in and experimentation with shock responsive social protection (SRSP) and linking humanitarian action and social protection (HA-SP). This paper presents a synthesis of global learning from efforts to coordinate shock responses linked with social protection during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as in response to other shocks, to inform dialogue and future action.

So why is coordination so challenging? Put simply, it is difficult to bring together a multiplicity of actors, from different disciplines, and with different mandates, guiding principles, visions, and interests. Shock responses linked with social protection seek to bridge the development and humanitarian divide. A range of actors (from across government, and among partners) are implicated in planning and implementation, and these actors are siloed – physically, technically, and ideologically.

Experiences from the COVID-19 response and beyond highlight several promising practices that have helped to foster improved coordination between stakeholders within policy/strategic and/or operational (design and implementation) domains. Where these practices were lacking, this contributed to difficulties in the design and implementation of shock responses. These include: joint assessments and options analyses for shock responsive social protection, and social protection linked with humanitarian action; joint strategies between social protection, disaster management and humanitarian stakeholders; forums or platforms convening actors across silos; memorandums, partnership agreements and procedures setting out roles and responsibilities; procedures and systems for sharing registration data; donors taking on and investing in convenor roles; funding mechanisms that encourage harmonisation and collaboration; global donor commitments; and inclusion of local government and civil society organisations.

Analysis of experiences across the COVID-19 responses and beyond identifies common factors that have enabled, or constrained, coordination in practice. The promising practices set out have not been established everywhere. Furthermore, where established, some factors influenced how effective (or not) these practices have been. Factors influencing success include: strong leadership; an ability to reach compromise between divergent views; preparedness planning; dedicated and sustained resources; political will; the influence of the international humanitarian coordination architecture; and contextual factors.

So, what are the key entry points where donors, governments and implementers can take action to address coordination going forward? The paper sets out a series of guiding principles for policymakers to consider at the country level, as well considerations for global level action.

Contents

List of abbreviations

ASP	Adaptive Social Protection
BNGRC	National Office of Risk and Disaster Management
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CERF	United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CWG	Cash Working Groups
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ECT	Emergency Cash Transfer
EPRI	Economic Policy Research Institute
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
FIBE	Ficha Básica de Emergencia
FSC	Food Security Cluster
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HA	Humanitarian Assistance
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRF	Humanitarian Response Forum
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
KFW	Kreditanstalt Für Wiederaufbau (German Development Bank)
KRCS	Kenya Red Cross Society
MCDSS	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MEB	Minimum Expenditure Basket
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MOLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
MoLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Policy

MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoSAVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, Youth and Sport
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPPSPF	Ministry of Population, Social Protection and Promotion of Women
NASSCO	National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office
NCDM	National Council for Disaster Management
NK	Nagorno Karabakh
NSPC	National Social Protection Council
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
NSR	National Social Registry
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SFD	Social Fund for Development
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIUBEN	Unified System of Beneficiaries
SRSP	Shock Responsive Social Protection
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SOWC	The State of the World's Children
SPACE	Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert advice service
SPIAC B	Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board
SPWG	Social Protection Working Group
SWF	Social Welfare Fund
TESPP	Temporary Emergency Social Protection Programme
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNJPSP	United Nations Joint Programme on Social Protection
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme

1. Why this paper is needed

The importance of strong coordination between actors preparing, designing and implementing shock responses is well accepted. This has been highlighted specifically concerning shock responsive social protection[1] (SRSP) as well as linking humanitarian action and social protection (HA-SP). The importance of coordination has been stressed in a range of recent literature on these topics[2], and further complemented by global commitments, made by donors and implementing agencies, to increase linkages between humanitarian action and social protection which also highlight the importance of coordination. For example under the Grand Bargain[3] humanitarian actors made commitments to enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors[4]; ECHO's 10 principles for responding to humanitarian needs through cash transfers linked with social protection stress the need for clear coordination with development actors and governments; the call to action on linking humanitarian action and social protection (HA-SP) from the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) prioritises coordination between governments, development and humanitarian communities; and the Joint Donor Statement from the humanitarian Donor Cash Forum promoting the Common Donor Approach highlights the need for improved donor coordination on cash programmes linked to social protection. Calls to action reaffirming these commitments to shock responses linked with social protection systems during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic also reiterate the need for strong coordination[5].

➜ Note, for this paper, the phrase '**shock responses linked with social protection**' is used, encapsulating both a) responses to shocks via the social protection system (SRSP) and b) responses to shocks in coordination with the social protection system (HA-SP linkages).

However, despite unanimous professed acceptance of the principle of coordination, practical experiences of linking shock responses with social protection systems have shown that this can be challenging to put into practice. Difficulties in the coordination of shock responses linked with social protection have been highlighted in various literature before the COVID-19 pandemic, including CaLP's SOWC II report 2020 and OPM's SRSP synthesis report, while the EU's guidance on 'Social Protection Approaches across the Nexus' describes the effective collaboration and coordination as "perhaps the keystone principle for shock responsive social protection and also its biggest challenge". Indeed, challenges around this coordination were the thematic focus of a dedicated EPRI webinar in 2021. Given the widespread and documented challenges to the coordination of routine social protection and international humanitarian action, it is perhaps not surprising that coordination of actions adding further levels of complexity to these coordination systems should also face difficulties[6].

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[1] Shock responsive social protection (SRSP) refers to the use of social protection systems to mitigate the impact of large-scale shocks (those affecting whole communities, regions or even with national reach) and support households affected by such shocks.

[2] For example CaLP (2020) State of the World's Cash report; World Bank (2020) Adaptive Social Protection; TRANSFORM (2020) Shock Responsive Social Protection; OPM (2018) SRSP Synthesis Report; EU (2019) Social Protection Across the Nexus Reference Document; and OPM (2019) SRSP Synthesis Report for ASEAN Member States.

[3] The Grand Bargain is an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, which aims to get more means into the hands of people in need. The Grand Bargain includes a series of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organisations that would deliver an extra billion dollars over five years for people in need of humanitarian aid.

[4] In 2019 the Grand Bargain cash workstream established a subgroup on linking social protection and cash assistance, with a list of priority actions including fostering greater coordination.

[5] This included, for example, the calls to action of SPIAC-B which highlights the importance of ensuring continued/scaled up and coordinated delivery capacities of social protection and humanitarian response programmes; and the Grand Bargain sub-group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection which calls for humanitarian action linked with social protection through coordinated preparedness and planning between humanitarian actors, governments and development partners.

[6] See the TRANSFORM Social Protection: Coordination Module for details of challenges with coordination of social protection. Challenges with coordination of humanitarian action (and relatedly of multi-sectoral cash assistance) are set out in CALP (2020) State of the World's Cash report; GPPI (2017) White Paper on Cash Coordination, and GPPI (2016) Drivers and Inhibitors of Change in the Humanitarian System.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity for change: policy makers can take stock of and learn from experiences coordinating shock responses linked with social protection during the global COVID-19 responses, and beyond, to inform future action. The global crisis has pushed the topics of shock responsive social protection and linking humanitarian action and social protection very much up the policy agenda of governments, donors and implementers. By the end of 2020, some 215 governments had planned or introduced social protection responses to the pandemic, with social assistance accounting for 60% of these measures[7]. A 2021 reflections exercise with members of the Grand Bargain cash workstream subgroup on linking humanitarian cash and social protection[8], and sessions at the socialprotection.org e-conference in 2020, highlighted that the COVID-19 response has seen a massive shift among humanitarian donors and implementing agencies towards linking responses to social protection systems. Governments also actively requested humanitarian actors to support national social protection responses to COVID-19[9]. While contextual differences between countries, and the diversity of possible approaches when it comes to shock response linked with social protection mean it remains impractical to develop a "global blueprint" for coordination, the COVID-19 responses offer an opportunity for global learning and action. Where coordination faced challenges, there is an opportunity to identify common problems, and reasons for these problems. Where there were new ways of working, this provides an opportunity to distil learning of what has worked well, and why. Meanwhile, the increased attention among policy makers can provide a stimulus for action where changes are needed.

This paper presents a synthesis of global learning from efforts to coordinate shock responses linked with social protection during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as in response to other shocks. It provides answers to the following questions**:**

1. Where coordination has gone well, what are the promising approaches and mechanisms, and what factors have driven success?
2. What can we learn from where there have been problems with coordination - what are the barriers, and what factors influence these?
3. How can these lessons inform coordination of future SRSP efforts - what guiding principles can be distilled for policy makers?

The paper is based on documented learning and interviews with key stakeholders in the Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert helpline (SPACE) and organisations in 15 focal countries (listed in Annex 2). **The paper is directed towards policy makers** in donors, governments, and partners implementing shock responses linked with social protection. While the exercise has collected information and perspectives from a limited number of organisations and key informants, the high level of consistency in the findings, which also correspond closely with key messages in the available literature and global debates on this topic, adds strength to the conclusions drawn.

2. What do we mean by coordination

Coordination of social protection, and coordination of humanitarian action, share similar defining features - though actions happen through separate systems set up for different purposes and involving different stakeholders.

- In social protection, coordination refers to different stakeholders in policy, programming and delivery processes working together (conducting joint activities) with the aim of reducing vulnerability and alleviating poverty. It is defined *as the alignment and harmonisation of all stakeholder activities (at the programme and administration level) coherently and holistically to reach clearly identified and shared objectives*[10]. 'Stakeholders' are wide-ranging and include central and subnational government departments managing the design, implementation and financing of social protection policies and

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[7] Gentilini et al. (2020) Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures "Living paper" (Dec 2020).
[8] In January 2021, 86% (19/22) of polled Grand Bargain subgroup members reported that their organisation had acted on the message of linking humanitarian action with social protection.
[9] For example, Red Cross's experiences, documented here.
[10] Definition taken from TRANSFORM Social Protection: Coordination Module, where more depth on social protection coordination challenges and opportunities are documented.

programmes (typically including a range of ministries in line with the cross-cutting nature of social protection); development partners that financially or technically support government-run social protection policies and programmes; and civil society organisations engaged in social protection services.

- Coordination of humanitarian action is similarly defined, as *bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent and principled response to emergencies*[11]. 'Stakeholders' here typically include the humanitarian country team (HCT), resident coordinator, donors, UN agencies, international non-governmental organisations and members of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, responsible for design and implementation of specific actions in the response, as well as government actors responsible for disaster management and CSOs.

In both systems, coordination between the different actors takes place at different levels, connected both horizontally (across government departments and organisations) and vertically (from centralised to more localised actors). Coordination is also needed within different domains including strategic or policy-related actions, and more operational actions concerning aspects of technical design and processes of implementation. There is no universal approach defining the specific actions or tasks to be carried out, or the extent to which stakeholders in these systems work together since this depends on context. Rather, coordination happens along a continuum, from simpler arrangements around knowledge and information sharing to more complex arrangements where activity design, delivery systems and resources are shared to greater degrees. As a general rule, the greater the degree of integration, the greater the investments needed in terms of time, relationship building and resourcing.

Coordination of shock responses linked with social protection systems can be similarly defined but incorporates a wider range of stakeholders from across these two systems. This also involves stakeholders working together on policy, programming and delivery processes, in an aligned and harmonised way, to reach a common objective. Shock responses linked with social protection seek to bridge the development and humanitarian divide and coordination will necessarily involve stakeholders from both these communities. Coordination between different groups of actors is required, at different levels (both horizontally and vertically), illustrated in Figure 1:

Horizontally:

- Between central government departments including those managing national SP and national disaster management systems.
- Between government and international (and national) partners that fund and deliver humanitarian responses.
- Between government and international (and national) partners that fund and support the delivery of SP.
- Between international (and national) partners in the social protection and the humanitarian spheres.
- Between actors working at more 'local level' along the delivery chain including decentralised government bodies, local government actors and civil society actors.

Vertically:

- Between actors working at a central or national level and decentralised government bodies, local government actors and civil society actors involved at more 'local level' along the delivery chain.

There are a range of possible actions around which coordination focuses across strategic (policy) and operational (programme and system) domains. This is illustrated in Figure 1. Each action can be on a continuum from simpler to more complex coordination arrangements (from sharing of information through to full integration of delivery systems and resources). National social protection systems can also be leveraged to respond to shocks, and humanitarian action 'linked' with SP in a variety of different ways[12]. Different approaches can require different degrees of integration of systems and will influence the respective roles of different stakeholders in and outside government. This will also influence the main actions around which coordination is focused, and the complexity of coordination.

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[11] Definition taken from OCHA.
[12] See, for example, the World Bank's 'Unbundled' paper, the Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 Expert helpline (SPACE) technical facility and Smith (2021) Grand Bargain Sub-Group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection: Reflections on Member's Activities in the Response to COVID-19.

Figure 1: Levels and domains for coordination of shock responses linked with social protection
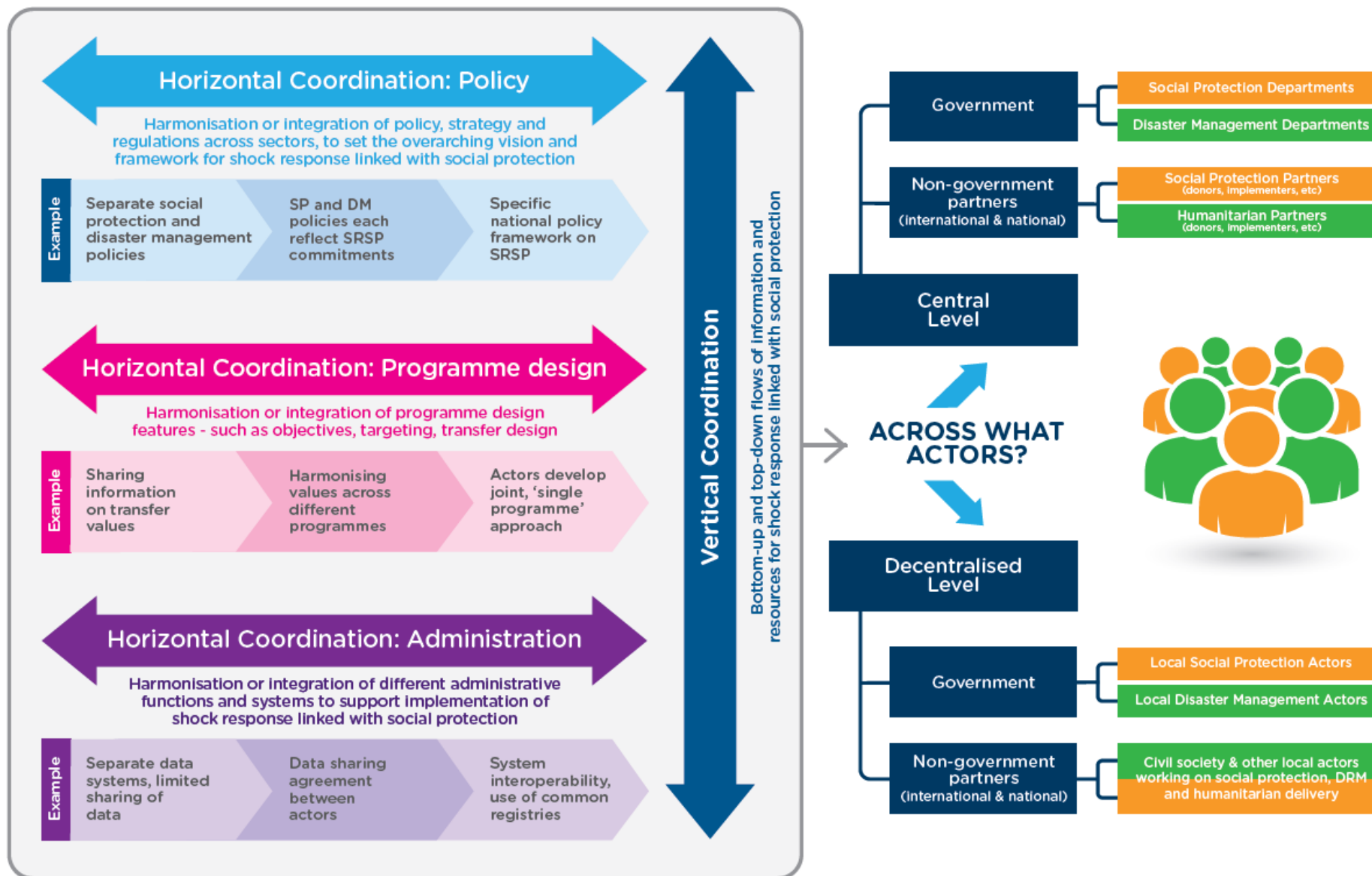
Source: Author's own, adapting the social protection coordination infographic presented in TRANSFORM

This paper primarily focuses on experiences with horizontal coordination, while some limited findings on vertical coordination, regarding the inclusion of decentralised government and civil society organisations, are also included. It presents globally applicable lessons (best practices, challenges, and influential factors - both enablers and barriers) across the diversity of approaches outlined here.

3. Why is coordination challenging?

The challenge in coordinating shock responses linked with social protection can be summed up as one of bridging silos: put simply, it is difficult to bring together a multiplicity of actors, from different disciplines, and with different mandates, guiding principles, visions, and interests. Its inherently multi-disciplinary nature means many actors (from across government, and among partners) are implicated in planning and implementation, and these actors are siloed – physically, technically, and ideologically. Social protection and disaster management responsibilities are often spread across multiple government departments. Social protection and disaster management are generally led by different ministries that are not set up to work together. The same applies to social protection and humanitarian counterparts within donors, where funding channels continue to be separate, and within implementing agencies. International humanitarian assistance is provided in parallel to national social protection structures. Humanitarian actors do not usually attend social protection working groups or task forces and vice versa. Actors in social protection and humanitarian communities do not always speak the same language and there is limited understanding about what the other side is doing. Different partners (donors and implementers) engage in linking shock response with social protection in different ways, following their mandates, interest and expertise. Meanwhile, humanitarian actors are guided by humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality, while development actors by principles of national ownership. These aren't necessarily contradictory, but they do create tensions, especially when it comes to views and approaches to engaging with governments. Overcoming this problem means finding ways to bridge these silos, to bring actors together physically, technically, and ideologically - which is simply not easy to do. **It requires practices and mechanisms, and leadership, to develop common ground, collective end goals and shared ways of working that leverage comparative advantages of each**.

There is also a lack of space for the engagement of decentralised local government actors and civil society organisations. This problem has been identified in studies[13] before COVID-19. NGOs and Red Cross Red Crescent Movement have expressed concerns that discussions and actions on HA-SP, and SRSP, are dominated by bilateral and multilateral donors and UN agencies, working with a limited number of central government representatives, and that other actors such as sub-national authorities and organisations representing civil society and disadvantaged groups risk being excluded. This is despite commitments under the Grand Bargain for greater localisation of humanitarian aid in general and to better integrate gender equality and social inclusion throughout humanitarian responses[14], which have been reiterated in calls for action since the COVID-19 response[15]. There have been concerns raised about the implications of this for effective and accountable programming, particularly around gender equity and social inclusion.

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[13] CaLP (2020) State of the World's Cash report; Smith (2021) Grand Bargain Sub-Group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection: Reflections on Member's Activities in the Response to COVID-19.
[14] See IASC (2018) and Friends of Gender: Guidance notes on how to promote gender equality through the Grand Bargain Commitments.
[15] See SPACE Programming Guidance: Embedding Localisation in the Response to COVID-19.

4. Promising practices for addressing coordination challenges: lessons from COVID-19 and beyond

Experiences of coordinating shock responses linked with social protection in the COVID-19 response (and beyond) highlight several promising practices that have helped to foster improved coordination between stakeholders within policy/strategic and/or operational (design and implementation) domains. Where these practices were lacking, this contributed to difficulties in the design and implementation of shock responses. This section sets out these practices in turn. Further details on the experiences and practices in eight countries can be found in Annex 1 (see hyperlinks in the text).

4.1 Joint assessments and options analyses for shock responsive social protection and social protection and humanitarian assistance

In countries such as Armenia, Cambodia, Tajikistan, Dominican Republic and the Philippines, governments and partners have undertaken feasibility assessments of entry points and barriers to shock response linked with social protection and used this to define programmatic options for ways that shock response can be linked with social protection. These assessments have been consultative and participatory, involving governments and partners working in social protection, disaster management and humanitarian action, and some (the Philippines, Armenia) including some actors local level, and considering the respective strengths and limitations of each system. This has generated common understanding and buy-in across stakeholders, helped to identify how shock responses linked with social protection can fill gaps in and complement the existing national disaster management system, and identified barriers to coordination, to inform future actions. Assessment findings have informed the effective coordination of the COVID-19 response, as seen in Armenia. Here findings informed the government and its partners on what a social protection response could achieve, who would be involved and the roles they could play, while action plans were developed to address the coordination barriers identified.

4.2 Joint strategies between social protection, disaster management and humanitarian stakeholders

Joint strategies are emerging in multiple countries as an essential foundation for improving the coordination of SRSP and HA-SP. They set out a coherent vision for what coordination is trying to achieve, provide a reference point for political stewardship, and clarify the priorities for action to achieve this and who should be engaged. They are a starting point informing several of the other best practices set out below.

In stable contexts with strong government leadership, governments have developed national frameworks, roadmaps or strategies on shock response linked with social protection (such as in Cambodia and the Philippines), or incorporated shock response into joint sector strategies on social protection (as in Madagascar and Zambia). Such strategies typically set a clear objective, highlight the programmatic options to be followed and the next steps and activities for achieving these, and define roles and responsibilities for actors involved. In the absence of such a national strategy, other instruments used during the COVID-19 response include developing joint response strategies between government social protection leads and international humanitarian leads (Armenia, Colombia), and between social protection and humanitarian donors (Malawi, Jordan). Experiences in Colombia shows these strategies do not need to be too prescriptive – simply drafting key principles setting out the vision and areas of collaboration for social protection and humanitarian cash actors was a helpful starting point

for designing the COVID-19 response. In protracted crises, donors are also developing internal strategies that provide a shared vision and joint ways of working between their humanitarian and social protection portfolios. For example, the EC nexus strategy has been operationalised by ECHO and DG NEAR in its COVID-19 responses in the MENA region, while FCDO is embarking on joint business cases in Yemen and Nigeria.

4.3 Forums or platforms convening actors across silos

Such forums in various forms have operated in all COVID-19 social protection responses examined in this paper as well as in other responses. They have enabled the collective discussions needed for reaching high-level agreement on policy and strategic issues, and for designing (and seeking compromises on) the more technical and operational aspects of design and implementation. Bringing stakeholders together in a regular manner has also helped these stakeholders to get to know each other and foster mutual understanding and trust. Where these existed and functioned well already ahead of COVID-19, this has been conducive to effective and timely joint decisions making and action planning, as in Madagascar. Depending on the complexity and geographical scale of the response, and the number of actors, in some contexts having a single forum for addressing all coordination aspects was an effective approach (such as in Madagascar) whereas elsewhere it was more appropriate to address different aspects of coordination through several different forums (such as in Turkey). Effective forums have included:

- **Adaptations to national disaster management mechanisms:** governments are taking steps to integrate social protection departments into national disaster management coordination structures, for the inclusion of SRSP as part of national response plans (such as Cambodia, and Tonga).

- **Donor coordination groups:** in more fragile contexts where national social protection systems and government leadership in social protection is still emerging, and international actors continue to play a significant implementing role, groups convening social protection and humanitarian donors offer potential to improve joint planning of transitional approaches across the nexus, such as in Yemen and Somalia. Experiences in Somalia show it is important to reflect on ways to encourage government participation in these groups.

- **High-level taskforces:** during COVID-19 several countries, including Cambodia, Albania and various countries in Latin America established intergovernmental taskforces which were effective at bringing together social protection with other government stakeholders and linking with partners for strategic planning of the COVID-19 social protection response. In Malawi, senior members of the government were brought together with donors through special meetings under the food security cluster. A limiting factor, such as seen in the Dominican Republic, was that not all government departments with a role in managing social protection programmes and providing assistance during the COVID-19 response were equally engaged in these structures.[16]

- **Programme steering committees and inter-agency taskforces:** these have been useful for supporting the coordination of technical design and operations on specific large-scale response programmes. In Turkey, the pre-existing steering committee of the Emergency Social Safety Net for refugees (ESSN) was effective at convening decision-makers on the design of the COVID-19 response. The Taskforce for the Temporary Emergency Social Protection Programme (TESPP) in Tajikistan is another example. These still generally tend to exclude organisations focusing on gender and inclusion however.

- **Cash Working Groups (CWGs) that build links with or include social protection institutions**: there has been a big push under the Grand Bargain to establish cash working groups, which now exist in over 40 countries and are providing an effective forum for coordination of humanitarian cash responses. Building on these existing forums has proven useful for discussing and planning responses linked with social protection (as in Armenia, or Madagascar) as well as for harmonising any

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[16] WFP (2020) SRSP in Latin America and the Caribbean: the Dominican Republic response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

other complementary, parallel humanitarian action around a government's social protection response (as in Tajikistan and Turkey). Enabling factors include setting out this function (to coordinate humanitarian action linked with social protection) clearly in the group's TOR (as in Zambia and Iraq) and promoting government participation and leadership (as in Zambia). Most commonly, the approach taken has been to invite social protection actors (both government and partners) to become members of the CWG (as in Armenia). There have also been efforts to build links between SPWGs and CWGs in the country, through common focal points and shared membership, such as in Nigeria.

4.4 Memorandums, partnership agreements and procedures setting out roles and responsibilities

These tools help to operationalise effective and efficient joint ways of working during preparedness planning, design and implementation. This is helpful on an intergovernmental level, since formal protocols can be a prerequisite for sanctioning new ways of working, providing the necessary authority to actors concerned. This was seen in Tajikistan, where a Letter of Agreement provided a senior endorsement of the responsibilities of each organisation in the TESPP and mobilised the respective government departments, along with detailed standard operating procedures (SOPs) to guide specific actions. This supported effective responses to COVID-19 in the Dominican Republic, Madagascar and Malawi by providing a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between government departments, between government and its partners, and between partner organisations themselves, in line with mandates and relative comparative advantages, to create actionable, strategic partnerships. In Madagascar, having agreed principles in place ahead of COVID-19 supported quick planning and timely roll out of assistance ex-post.

4.5 Procedures and systems for sharing registration data

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the shared use of a common repository of household data (such as social registries, or integrated beneficiary registries and their underlying information systems) to identify beneficiaries for shock response was a relatively uncommon strategy[17]. However, the ambition to work from and make use of such data to inform shock responses of government and partners has grown considerably during the COVID-19 response[18]. While an emerging area, countries with well functioning social registries, or other similar registries offering socioeconomic data on potential beneficiaries, and procedures setting out how actors implementing shock responses can access this data (such as Nigeria, Cambodia), have seen benefits in the COVID-19 response, in terms of reducing duplication of efforts and timeliness of assistance[19]. Similarly in countries with established protocols for emergency targeting linked to social protection data and data management systems, such as in the Dominican Republic (via the Single Beneficiary Selection System SIUBEN social registry), this has supported effective harmonisation of targeting across different actors.[20] Experiences have also highlighted the need for data in such registries to meet the requirements for disaster management and humanitarian as well as social protection programmes and have shown that going forward, joint definition of data, and registry, requirements, is essential. Meanwhile where social protection systems are still emerging, there are

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[17] Barca and Beazley (2019) BUILDING ON GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS FOR SHOCK PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS. DFAT.
[18] Gentilini et al. 2020. 83 countries used this data in some shape or form in the COVID-19 response according to IPC-IG data.
[19] See Beazley et al. (2021) Drivers of Timely and Large-Scale Cash Responses to COVID-19: what does the data say? SPACE.
[20] WFP (2020) SRSP in Latin America and the Caribbean: the Dominican Republic Response to the COVID Pandemic.

efforts to develop similar protocols and systems between humanitarian actors as a means to reduce duplication and support system building, such as in Somalia and <u>Yemen</u>[21].

Of course, similar considerations could also apply to other data – e.g. on poverty/vulnerability/needs.

4.6 Donors taking on and investing in convenor roles

In contexts with a substantial humanitarian footprint and a complex landscape of actors, such as protracted crises, and/or where government leadership on social protection is still emerging, donors have recently taken steps to recruit donor convening roles in country, with an explicit focus on building links and greater coordination across social protection and humanitarian assistance. This includes donor-funded positions in <u>Nigeria</u>, <u>Yemen</u>, Somalia and Lebanon, and more informal convening roles in Malawi and Iraq. While this is a new approach for which evidence of effectiveness still needs to be collected, experiences in <u>Yemen</u> and Iraq[22] have demonstrated benefits including fostering collaboration across social protection and humanitarian actors in the absence of a specific official coordinating body and supporting the development of common strategies for linking humanitarian action and social protection.

4.7 Funding mechanisms encouraging harmonisation and collaboration

Donor approaches to providing funding have also helped to improve coordination of responses in several countries in the COVID-19 pandemic, and beyond. In the Caribbean, <u>Zambia</u>, <u>Malawi</u>, Jordan and Mozambique, donors collectively funded a single, common and coherent response strategy, reducing fragmentation of funding and encouraging harmonisation among partners. In <u>Zambia</u>, Jordan, the Caribbean and Mozambique this was as a single programme envelope with pooled funding (in Mozambique it was managed through a World Bank Trust Fund, in Jordan through a collective fund under USAID and in the Caribbean through a multi-partner trust fund of the UN). In Mozambique, the trust fund provided a way for bilateral donors to finance SRSP through the government in a context where direct budget support was not feasible. In <u>Malawi</u>, social protection and humanitarian funding streams were kept separate but disbursed in a coordinated manner, contributing to a shared vision and common objectives.

4.8 Global donor commitments

Global commitments to improve coordination of HA-SP hold promise but will take time to bear fruit. In 2019, humanitarian donors[23] agreed to the Common Donor Approach for humanitarian cash programming. This recognises the need for improved donor coordination and coherence on humanitarian cash programming and commits these donors to work better together, guided by a set of common principles below, including linking responses with social protection. This Common Donor Approach is being operationalised initially in 'pilot' countries including Somalia, Nigeria and Ethiopia. Donors and other stakeholders considered that these commitments have led to greater connectedness between donors at the global level which is an important starting point to generate the buy-in at the country level, on the need to prioritise linking, and has sent a strong signal to partners. However, there is little yet in the way of practical action at the country level. Efforts in Somalia, with the development of the donor working group and joint action plan, are where efforts are the most advanced.

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[21] See also Schoemaker et al (2021) <u>Linking Humanitarian & Social Protection Information Systems in the COVID-19 Response And Beyond</u>; Goodman et al (2020) <u>REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION SYSTEMS IN PROTRACTED AND RECURRENT CRISES; and Raftree and Kondakhchyan (2021) CALP Case study: Responsible data sharing with governments.</u>
[22] WFP (2019) Identifying opportunities to transition the chronically poor and vulnerable from humanitarian assistance to national schemes, WFP Briefing Note; Smith (2020) Linking CVA and Social Protection in the MENA Region – Iraq Case Study. CaLP..
[23] Including Australia, Canada, Denmark, EU/DG ECHO, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and USA.

4.9 Inclusion of local government and civil society organisations

While decentralised government actors, civil society and organisations representing excluded groups have been underrepresented in coordination discussions and mechanisms for shock responses during the COVID-19 response, there are certain promising practices to learn from. All actors should be strengthening their GESI focus and capacity, and actors with expertise on these issues or representing excluded groups need to be included, to enhance this focus. Meanwhile local government and decentralised authorities have important roles to play in the delivery of social protection and any associated shock response. A consistent lesson learned from across the COVID-19 responses generally has been the continued exclusion of these actors from shock responses linked with social protection. Gender and inclusion actors have not been well represented in inter-governmental structures or forums bringing together government and partners, for example, while CWGs still have not systematically engaged participation of sub-national government actors or civil society organisations. Nevertheless, examples are emerging from certain country responses to COVID-19 that demonstrate ways that these stakeholders can be included in coordination as well as the benefits of doing so. Promising practices have included, for example:

- Linking existing civil society networks to social protection response planning and implementation forums in Albania, which ensured the targeting and inclusion of vulnerable groups.
- Government's engagement with CSOs to improve accountability of social protection in Nigeria, which set the foundation for civil society engagement in an accountability role on the government's social protection response to COVID-19.
- Inclusion of CSOs representing women on Oxfam's consortium implementing the response in Kenya, for effective inclusion of victims of gender-based violence in and coordination of additional women's services alongside the social protection response.
- Efforts to localise coordination of the ESSN in Turkey, with support from IFRC, which has assisted the Turkish Red Crescent to assume leadership and strategic decision-making roles in coordination structures.

These experiences demonstrate potential to localise coordination of SRSP, and to improve inclusion and accountability, providing that such national actors are recognised and adequately included and resourced in response planning. In fact, national Red Cross societies have assumed leadership roles in the coordination of several national responses to COVID-19, including in Eswatini and Serbia, due to the more limited presence of international organisations. Enabling factors including investing in capacity strengthening (and preparedness planning) for local partners, partnership agreements that set out leadership or decision-making roles for local actors; and strategies and regulatory frameworks setting out responsibilities for including civil society organisations.

These practices are summarised in Table 1 including considerations on what specifically contributes to the success of each. Common enablers and barriers are discussed further below.

Table 1: Summary of promising practices and enablers of success

Promising practices for improving coordination	Country examples	Enablers of success
Joint feasibility assessment and options analysis for shock responses linked with social protection.	- Dominican Republic; Armenia; Tajikistan; Cambodia; The Philippines.	- Government leadership. - Time – best to do during the preparedness. - Willingness to engage. - Resources.
Joint strategy bringing together social protection and disaster management or humanitarian stakeholders.	National framework, roadmap or strategy on shock response linked with social protection: - Cambodia; The Philippines; Dominican Republic (ASP strategy); Iraq.	- Leadership from government or donors. - Ability to compromise. - Time (national strategies developed as part of preparedness).

	Integration of shock response into joint sector strategies: • Madagascar; Zambia. Joint response strategies on shock response linked with social protection between government and humanitarian actors, or social protection and humanitarian donors: • Armenia; Colombia; Malawi; Jordan. Strategies linking donor's humanitarian and social protection portfolios: • Yemen; Nigeria; MENA region.	• Flexibility (set direction but not too prescriptive – key principles). • Willingness to engage. • Resources. • Definition of clear and separate niches/roles for different stakeholders.
Forums or platforms convening actors across silos.	Adaptations to national disaster management mechanisms: • Cambodia; Tonga Donor coordination groups: • Yemen; Somalia; Lebanon High-level taskforces: • Cambodia; Malawi; Dominican Republic; Albania; Kyrgyzstan Programme steering committees and taskforces: • Tajikistan; Turkey; Mauritania CWGs that build links with or include social protection institutions: • Armenia; Kenya; Tajikistan; Zambia; Madagascar; Nigeria; Iraq; The Philippines	• Leadership. • Sustained and ideally dedicated resources. • Willingness to engage. • Engagement (and leadership) of government. • Preparedness planning (capacity building, recruiting, defining TORs takes time). • Context (more challenging where membership is broader / maybe a need for different forums/groups to work on different aspects of coordination). • Clear and commonly set objective and workplans that present clear value to participants of the time to be spent on coordination.
Memorandums, partnership agreements or procedures setting out roles and responsibilities.	• Armenia; Tajikistan; Kyrgyzstan; Dominican Republic; Malawi; Kenya; Madagascar; Tonga	• Time to negotiate (preparedness). • Leadership (senior sign-off). • Clear niches for different actors.
Procedures and systems for sharing registration data *(note this can apply to other data too, beyond registration).*	• Dominican Republic; Turkey; Cambodia; Nigeria; Chile; Kenya; Pakistan; Yemen	• Good quality data (accurate; up to date) and good coverage. • System interoperability. • Designed with shared objectives (incentives for all, overcoming concerns). • Willingness to engage. • Leadership of governments and donors.
Donor convenor roles	• Yemen; Somalia; Iraq (more informal); Malawi (adviser); Nigeria	• Willingness to engage. • Leadership of donor. • Dedicated and sustained resource.
Donor funding mechanisms that support harmonisation and collaboration	• Iraq; Zambia; Jordan; Caribbean; Mozambique; Madagascar; Sahel	• Alignment of social protection and humanitarian appeal funding mechanisms.

5. Drivers of good or bad coordination

Analysis of experiences across the COVID-19 responses and beyond identifies common factors that enabled, and constrained, coordination in practice. The promising practices discussed above have not been established everywhere. Furthermore, where established, there are factors that influenced how effective (or not) these practices have been, further discussed below.

5.1 Strong leadership

National governments are the duty bearer with responsibility for SRSP and where possible should lead discussions on policy, strategy and programme design and manage coordination platforms. Government leadership from social protection authorities was a driver ensuring inclusivity and collaboration in the feasibility assessments and strategy development in Cambodia, ensuring investment in preparedness for shock responsive social protection in the Dominican Republic, and facilitating compromise among implementing partners in Zambia. Government co-leadership of coordination forums for SRSP was beneficial for the response in Madagascar, where the government's leading role in the Cash Working Group helped to galvanise action and facilitate rapid response; this was also the case in Turkey.

Where government social protection systems and institutions are still developing, and humanitarian partners play a significant implementation role, the strong leadership of donors has been crucial for driving necessary coordination among partners. This has been important at both operational and strategic levels. Effective donor coordination has been seen in Iraq, Malawi and Yemen, where donors came together to harmonise their requests to partners and set the foundations for linking humanitarian assistance with social protection. The programme has been supported by multiple development and humanitarian partners, both donors and implementers. It was supported by existing social protection donors as well as additional development and humanitarian donors, ensuring a single programme approach. In Somalia, in contrast, the Technical Assistance Facility set up to support the donor group has not been led as effectively and has not been as influential at fostering collaboration. For humanitarian donors, having social protection expertise in-country is proving important for effective leadership and influencing policy dialogue on linking HA-SP.

Where governments lead on SRSP, donors and implementers still have important convening roles to play, to support coordinated planning and action. In Armenia and Tajikistan, UNICEF played a steering role convening dialogue across government and with partners, influencing the COVID-19 responses of government and wider humanitarian partners, while in Haiti the Resident Coordinator created space for dialogue on humanitarian assistance linked with social protection through the inclusion of this as a response mechanism in the Humanitarian Response Plan[24]. In Zambia, donors championed the development of a joint 'one programme' approach to social protection and SRSP, mobilising all partners behind a nationally led vision. When COVID-19 hit this formed the basis for the emergency cash transfer programme, jointly supported by development and humanitarian donors.

Leadership needs to be sustained. In Iraq the good progress in coordinating efforts for linking humanitarian action with social protection before 2020 subsequently stalled because key champions in the leading organisations (FCDO and ECHO) left post. Indeed this is a challenge with all the donor convening roles mentioned above, being short term posts financed outside of country office budgets. This leadership should not depend on individuals but be institutionalised.

5.2 Converging views, and ability to reach compromise between stakeholders

Linking shock responses with social protection brings together disciplines with different mindsets, principles, and objectives. Achieving joint and harmonised ways of working implies a

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[24] Magheru (2020) Country mapping – large scale cash transfers for COVID-19 response: Haiti report. CaLP and OCHA.

coming together of different viewpoints, which demands that certain compromises are made. In the COVID-19 responses, this issue has been clearly illustrated in the setting of transfer values. National governments, social protection partners and humanitarian partners each have different lenses through which they defined transfer values for shock responses linked with social protection. In many of the countries examined (including Zambia, Kenya, Turkey, Armenia), coordinating cash transfer values was challenging. Lack of flexibility on viewpoints and methods led to protracted negotiations that delayed responses (in Zambia). In Kenya, this led to different transfer values being used by different actors. A key contributing factor is whether the intervention was perceived from a social protection perspective (where strengthening national systems and ensuring affordability and sustainability for governments have been driving factors) or as a humanitarian intervention (where achieving humanitarian principles and meeting emergency needs have influenced decisions)[25]. Progress has been made where there has been the ability of both sides to reflect on each other's position and reach common ground (as in Armenia, also in Turkey). While the ability to do this will to some extent be influenced by personalities and relationships between the key interlocutors, it can also be supported by having facilitation and negotiation skills within the actors steering coordination. Another – more fundamental - issue to highlight here concerns the difficulty of seeking compromise in contexts of conflict and insecurity. Experiences in Nigeria, and Ethiopia, show that in such contexts, if coordination with the government is perceived to undermine humanitarian principles, such as risking exclusion of large sections of those in need or putting communities at risk, then this is understandably a much more sensitive and difficult thing to find a middle ground on. There remains limited evidence on the feasibility and appropriateness of linking shock responses with social protection in such contexts. Recent dialogue between WFP and the government in Nigeria, for humanitarian registration of displaced households linking with the national social registry, hold promise that solutions can be found in some (though perhaps not all) contexts.

5.3 Preparedness planning

Preparedness emerges as a critical enabler of effective coordination, with many if not all of the good practices outlined above requiring time to do them well. Undertaking preparedness measures ahead of a crisis, such as setting up coordination structures and mechanisms, undertaking joint feasibility assessments, sector reviews and options analysis, developing joint strategies, discussing transfer values, defining roles and responsibilities, or investing in data management systems and protocols for data sharing, has been pivotal to success in many countries. For example, Madagascar's Tosika Fameno is an example of how the pre-existing, well-functioning CWG enabled rapid development and rollout of a new cash transfer scheme.[26] In Zambia, collective ways of working between actors were already established and needed only modification. In Malawi, efforts to develop joint ways of working on SRSP between the UN actors had been ongoing since 2018 and responsibilities were becoming clearly defined. In Tajikistan and Armenia, the government and partners had already undertaken a detailed feasibility assessment and options analysis for shock response linked with social protection in 2017.

Besides the time needed to carry out these good practice activities themselves, time must often also be spent on relationship and trust building, awareness raising and sensitisation. This has proved necessary to build the requisite mutual understanding and commitment to engage, across stakeholders. In the examples reviewed, inter-sectoral coordination in the COVID-19 response was particularly strong where long-term relationships and trust had been built over time, prior to the shock. For example, this was the case in the Dominican Republic and Madagascar. It was important in Armenia and Tajikistan, where country exchange visits, training and convening multi-stakeholder workshops in country were carried out over a period of some 18 months prior to COVID-19. A gap in this regard is the limited inclusion of decentralised and local government actors and civil society organisations in preparedness planning. Mechanisms to work with these actors, and build relationships and trust, also need to be in place in advance, to enable open dialogue and co-design during a response (such as was seen in Nigeria). This is currently generally lacking and is a key area for further work.

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[25] For more guidance on this topic see McLean et al (2021) Transfer Values: how much is enough? Balancing social protection and humanitarian considerations
[26] The Grand Bargain Sub-Group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection: Case Studies.

5.4 Dedicated and sustained resources

Implementing the coordination practices outlined above requires investment. Coordination mechanisms need to be resourced and chaired. Before COVID-19 there was already good evidence that these groups work best when there are dedicated resources – ideally a specific coordination function, or as a minimum, a recognised and budgeted portion of a staff members role[27]. The experiences of COVID-19 have highlighted this further. In Armenia and Tajikistan, leading the respective convening and coordination activities took some 60% of the time of UNICEF's social policy and disaster risk reduction focal points. Lack of resources for coordination is the main barrier identified in CaLP and OCHA's studies on large scale cash responses to COVID-19[28]. Similarly, activities such as options analysis and strategy development, also require resources to lead these. In Armenia, Cambodia, the Philippines and Tajikistan, specific budgets were allocated by donors and UN organisations to undertake these activities. Meanwhile, the dedicated donor convenor roles seen in Yemen, Somalia and Nigeria have been set up based on recognition of the effort that is required to do this well (leading bilateral and multilateral dialogues, convening and chairing meetings, tracking accountability, joint action planning, etc.). This is also challenging for national governments, where staffing constraints can limit time for coordination. In Cambodia, setting up a dedicated, resourced coordination structure (the National Social Protection Council, with a well functioning General Secretariat) has improved inter-governmental coordination of routine social protection and the social protection response to COVID-19. Similarly, the engagement of local actors such as seen in Albania also needs to be resourced.

Moreover, these investments are needed for the medium to longer term. The case of Iraq illustrates the importance of sustaining these investments. In the years before COVID-19, FCDO Iraq was driving the coordination of humanitarian action linked with social protection and good progress had been made, including developing a shared roadmap for aligning humanitarian action and social protection programmes, for the eventual transition of the chronically poor and vulnerable households from the humanitarian into the social protection system, and progress had been made on several of the activities outlined in the roadmap. To achieve this, FCDO had funded three positions supporting coordination including a CWG position in the common cash consortium of INGOs, a data analyst in UNHCR and technical assistance under the World Bank. However following the change of staff and reduction in the portfolio of FCDO in Iraq, these positions were discontinued, and momentum stalled. The abovementioned donor convenor positions have been quite short term to date. FCDO in Yemen is actively seeking funds to continue the position into 2021 to sustain progress made.

5.5 Willingness to coordinate

Willingness among stakeholders from different disciplines to work together is a prerequisite. Where there has been strong willingness to work together, whether across government departments (such as in Cambodia and Madagascar), between government and development partners (as in Nigeria), between social protection and humanitarian donors (as in Jordan) or between international implementing organisations (as in Malawi), this contributed to smoother and more timely planning and implementation and helped to overcome problems and bottlenecks.

There were problems where this willingness was more limited. In several countries (Somalia, Lebanon, Yemen, Malawi, Tajikistan), humanitarian donors, and implementing organisations, pointed to difficulties in coordinating with social protection donors on shock responses linked with social protection, and a reluctance among these donors to join coordinated planning processes between social protection and humanitarian actors. Meanwhile, there have also been challenges in implementing organisations working together – for example, difficulties or delays to develop common approaches, agree on the division of roles and responsibilities, or share data (such as in Yemen) - and cases where government departments responsible for an emergency response did not coordinate with social protection departments (as in Kenya). This has also contributed to the lack of engagement of local actors.

Analysis suggests that these attitudes towards coordination and willingness to collaborate are influenced by several factors, which create incentives (or disincentives) to work together.

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[27] See CaLP (2020) Cash Coordination Tipsheet, for example, for discussion on resourcing CWGs.
[28] Including in Haiti, Cameroon, Somalia, and Yemen

The first factor concerns awareness and understanding of the respective roles and added value of others. The COVID-19 pandemic appears to have helped foster greater understanding between stakeholders at different levels. The nature of the pandemic and socioeconomic impact has made clear the role of social protection in shock response, while the scale of the issue has galvanised a spirit of collaboration across different stakeholders.

- **It needs to be clear to actors in government that social protection departments have a mandate and role to play in shock response.** In Cambodia, at the start of the pandemic, the National Social Protection Council was not clear on its role in any emergency response. Once this was clarified by high-level government, coordination across government and with the UN Resident Coordinator worked well.

- **Social protection donors need to be informed about the work and vision of humanitarian actors and understand how this relates to social protection programming and systems development.** For example, the World Bank has begun to engage in safety net provisions in several fragile contexts. It has understandably taken some time for Bank stakeholders to understand the role of the humanitarian system in safety net provision and understand humanitarian perspectives or the need for joint ways of working. In 2021 collaboration is now being seen in Somalia, Yemen and Lebanon, with the Bank joining the in-country humanitarian donor groups and discussions taking place between senior figures on how to improve this coordination going forward.

- **Lack of awareness was also reportedly an issue among some EU member states in the COVID-19 response in the Middle East and North Africa region**. Where these donors' capacity to engage on social protection issues in-country was more limited, funding decisions were taken in headquarters, without an understanding of the strategic vision of donors in-country for linking humanitarian action with social protection.

- **There is also a need for humanitarian actors and governments to understand and appreciate the respective roles that each side can play.** There are examples, such as seen in Somalia, where humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality have inhibited the development of partnerships with the government for COVID-19 response. Equally, a perceived concern of governments that humanitarian actors are taking decisions without considering government concerns or in a way that undermines government ownership can also limit willingness to work together. In Somalia for example, the TAF is seen by the government as a donor-conceived, donor-driven idea and there has been limited engagement with it by the government.

- **However, as mentioned above, this can understandably be more problematic (and, potentially, not possible) in active conflict settings.** In such settings humanitarian actors may appreciate that government have roles to play in any shock response linked with social protection but also need to be cognisant of the risks of programming a response in this way, if governments are party to the conflict.[29]

- **Awareness and understanding of the respective role and added value of decentralised and local government actors and civil society has been enhanced in the COVID-19 response but requires more commitment to ensure effective coordination.** The incentive to work with such actors more intentionally has been magnified by COVID-19 as they are often the first and sometimes only actors able to respond and play a critical role in designing any response. However, generally speaking, there remains a tendency among international actors in the humanitarian system to perceive national systems and competencies as being limited. This is no doubt unconsciously driven in part by cultural (western) biases inherent in international humanitarian aid and much more is needed to change mindsets and risk perception to ensure more proactive engagement with these local actors. It may also be a simple matter of not knowing where to begin and feeling overwhelmed by the number of actors and which to engage.

- **The second factor concerns the self-interest of the different stakeholders, and whether these align or compete.** Bringing together stakeholders, and systems, from different disciplines can imply the rationalisation and streamlining of these functions or systems. While this may well make sense for

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[29] For example, the dilemmas facing coordination of SRSP in Tigray, Ethiopia in 2021 https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/social-protection-during-conflict-reflections-on-tigray/.

the efficiency and effectiveness of the response, it goes against the interest of any individual actors as their 'system' stands to lose out as a result - whether in terms of budget allocation, prestige or influence, resource mobilisation potential or market share. These political economy challenges have been noted to impede coordination of shock responsive social protection activities between the disaster management and social protection departments of government, for example[30] and between international partners working on humanitarian action linked with social protection[31], as well as in debates on localisation of aid, which involves ceding of power and funding from international to local actors.

- **Experiences from the COVID-19 responses and beyond suggest that coordination goes more smoothly where these different actors have less overlap of functions and where distinct respective roles can be maintained.** In the case of governments, in countries where national disaster response frameworks are still mainly based on in-kind provision, there is less 'to lose' from developing a cash-based social protection response – it is a new tool rather than a competing tool.

- **Similarly for operational agencies, coordination of shock response linked with social protection has been more challenging where there are multiple actors involved in the operational delivery of assistance**. For example, as seen in Yemen, or Lebanon, where there are more overlap of actions and mandates and where the perceived implication has been one of winners and losers. In Armenia, this challenge was avoided by different international organisations maintaining separate programmes and funding streams, but where each played a separate complementary 'layer' in the social protection response. In places such as Madagascar, Malawi, Jordan and the Dominican Republic where funds were combined to support particular programmes, this challenge was avoided because partners already played different and complementary roles in the social protection system and these comparative advantages were maintained in the COVID-19 cash response. Finally in Cambodia and Mauritania, when developing the national shock responsive social protection framework, this issue was avoided because WFP and UNICEF occupy very different niches in the SRSP space (on disaster management/early warning systems and social protection programme and system building, respectively).

The third factor concerns the high level of effort versus low perceived returns from coordination. As mentioned earlier, coordination requires time and effort, and the gains to be made may not be particularly clear to or be equally shared between the parties involved. Where a particular stakeholder or organisation holds much of the funding and power, for example, it may be difficult to appreciate fully the benefits to be had from coordinating more broadly compared to driving forward with your bilateral relationships (i.e. it's quicker and easier to do it yourself). This can also explain the more limited coordination of the World Bank with other stakeholders, where they are the most significant donor, as well as the limited coordination with local actors across countries (which may also require commensurate capacity support and technical assistance). A key factor here is the still limited evidence base demonstrating the benefits from investing in the coordination of shock responses linked with social protection (be that for beneficiaries, or the different actors engaging in the process in terms of improved ways of working).[32]

5.6 Influence of the international humanitarian coordination architecture

The limitations of a system that encourages a siloed, sectoral approach over holistic programming are well documented, and these also constrain the coordination of SRSP and HA-SP. The international humanitarian coordination system was not designed to accommodate the linkages to social protection systems that are now being seen in programming – in the words of one key informant, 'we are trying to drive a Ferrari with the engine of a Fiat'. There is no 'social protection pillar' in the humanitarian response architecture, and thus no agreed locus for where, and by who, a social protection response should be managed[33]. When the humanitarian coordination system was activated

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[30] OPM (2018) SRSP synthesis report.
[31] EU (2019) Social Protection Approaches across the Nexus.
[32] EU (2019) Social Protection Approaches across the Nexus.
[33] Relatedly, there is also still no clear recognised place for cash coordination in this architecture.

during the COVID-19 response, this led to problems in Malawi and Zambia, for example, where it created confusion about where and by whom it should be coordinated. Lack of inclusion of social protection in the humanitarian response architecture also means there is no accountability for improving coordination of shock responses linked with social protection as there are no lines of responsibility defined. This makes global commitments of humanitarian stakeholders to improving coordination of humanitarian action linked with social protection somewhat toothless and action remains dependent on goodwill. The system provides insufficient space for engagement with governments, contributing to a lack of knowledge among humanitarian actors of government systems, capacities, responsibilities and constraints. Finally, as shown in Malawi, putting funds through the humanitarian coordination system divides funding streams for and can fragment approaches to shock responses linked with social protection, and also constrains links to social protection policy and dialogue, needed to influence long term change.

5.7 Influence of context

Experiences suggest that influential contextual factors include geographical scale and scope; the humanitarian landscape in the country; and the extent of fragmentation in and maturity of the social protection system. For example, shock responses linked with social protection have been more straightforward to coordinate:

- In smaller territories (Armenia, Albania, small island states) where the number of actors to convene across government and outside government is more limited.

- Where the number of government actors to be involved has been rationalised, meaning fewer different institutions to engage (for example in Chile, where the Ministry of Social Development rather than the ministry for disaster risk management manages the Ficha Básica de Emergencia (FIBE) post-disaster needs assessment tool implementation and data management; also in Ecuador).

- In more stable governance contexts (such as Kenya and Zambia) where humanitarian donors and implementing partners can more easily be aligned towards supporting national development objectives and system building.

- Where national social protection systems are well defined and 'institutionalised', data management systems well developed, or clear and complementary support roles for social protection partners also well defined (such as Turkey, the Philippines, Armenia and the Dominican Republic).

- Where formal structures for coordination between government and civil society are present, such as in Nigeria.

This can be compared to the complex operating contexts such as Yemen, Nigeria or Somalia, where there is a huge territory, large humanitarian footprint in the country, a newly emerging (or re-emerging as in Yemen) social protection system, a range of operational agencies all still geared towards direct implementation and where roles and niches in social protection are still being defined.

While it is not possible to make concrete statements about whether the manner of linking shock responses with social protection enables or constrains coordination, there are some suggestions that coordination of options requiring greater integration of humanitarian action with social protection may face greater barriers. On the one hand, vertical expansion of existing government programmes could be considered quite straightforward to coordinate, operationally speaking, at least where these interventions are government-led, since there is no new operational footprint or operational roles and responsibilities to define. On the other hand, there could be barriers to humanitarian actors engaging with this option, if it were perceived to reduce their role and influence. Recent reflections of the Grand Bargain subgroup on linking humanitarian cash and social protection showed that it has been more common for humanitarian partners to leverage certain parts of national social protection systems but maintain separate programmes during the global COVID-19 response. This may be an indication that making progress further along the 'integration spectrum' for linking humanitarian action with social protection requires more effort to coordinate, in terms of establishing trust, building political will, etc. Meanwhile from the side of government-led social protection responses to the pandemic there was far more focus on developing new temporary social protection programmes than expanding existing

programmes[34]. This may be a reflection on the low coverage of existing schemes but, as was seen in Madagascar, this may also reflect government concerns about sustainability and exit, with a separate temporary programme being easier to communicate to households.

6. Recommendations

What are the key entry points where donors and implementers can take action to address coordination going forward? This section sets out a series of guiding principles to consider at country level, as well considerations for global level action. In contexts with cyclical crises, these actions should be taken before the shock hits. Several of these, especially in fragile contexts and protracted emergencies, are best conceived not as short-term actions but as continuous processes.

6.1 Guiding principles at country level

1. **Understand political economy:** understanding the drivers that create, or undermine, the willingness to work together, across government, between government and humanitarian actors, between donors and between international partners, and with local actors, will help create the right incentives for coordinating shock responses linked with social protection.

2. **Make the necessary preparedness investments:** advocate for and finance joint feasibility assessments, joint sector reviews, options analyses, strategic planning frameworks, SOPs setting out roles and responsibilities, and develop joint strategies for data platforms and data sharing protocols. These should be government led where possible and donors and partners should support government to assume this leadership role and advocate to other stakeholders to follow the government´s lead. These set the foundations for improved coordination by defining clear and mutually agreed objectives and a shared vision, processes and systems for shock response linked with social protection across the humanitarian and development communities.

3. **Invest in the human resources and structures needed for effective coordination, with a focus on governments where possible.** It is important for governments to invest in human resources to lead coordination structures. Donors and partners can support this as needed, both technically and financially, and by committing to using and supporting these nationally defined structures rather than creating parallel structures. Recruiting 'convenor' roles to work across and on behalf of all donors and partners can be important in contexts where government leadership is still being built, while ensuring government is engaged to the extent possible. Fund positions -ideally based in government departments - with the requisite skills to lead coordination forums, as well as positions or mechanisms that proactively engage local actors as part of coordination mechanisms. Set clear objectives for coordination structures and ensure TORs promote government leadership where possible.

4. **Promote improved inter-governmental coordination of shock response linked with social protection:** donors can set incentives and accountabilities as part of government financing arrangements as well as through technical advice – such as on the structures and mechanisms needed to work better together, or on opportunities to rationalise and streamline engagement across different departments.

5. **Encourage relationship building and mutual understanding:** helping government, social protection partners and humanitarian partners to get to know each other is a simple, but often overlooked, activity. This also applies to organisations bringing gender equality and social inclusion expertise to discussions, as well as local and national actors. Convening spaces and activities where these different actors can learn about the respective roles, aspirations and concerns of their

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[34] Gentilini et al (2020) Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures "Living paper" (Dec 2020)

counterparts, and discuss openly and frankly key challenges and opportunities, can build trust and help to identify areas of mutual benefit (what each side can bring to the table).

6. **Give greater consideration to the feasibility and appropriateness of responses linked with social protection in active conflict settings**. While national governments are the duty bearer with responsibility for social protection delivery, and where possible should lead discussions on policy, strategy and programme design of shock responses linked with social protection and manage coordination platforms, this is fundamentally more challenging in contexts where a government is implicated in a conflict. In such settings as seen in Ethiopia in 2021, there may be a need for international humanitarian actors to maintain a capacity to i) be critical of government and ii) act independently from the government when needed, as well as being supportive.

7. **Promote joint strategies and funding between donors:** in contexts with high levels of humanitarian funding, and/or in contexts where social protection donors are interested to fund shock responsive social protection, advocate for and lead the development of a common strategic approach for linking shock response with social protection across these donors. Mobilising behind a joint strategy will also help to ensure that donors and implementers speak with one voice to the government. Explore multi-donor trust funds and other mechanisms that enable the pooling of funding behind a single strategy and reduce the risk of fragmentation. Humanitarian donors can speak as one voice to the main social protection donors in-country, presenting a rationale and evidence to incentivise collaboration. Donors with greater technical capacity in-country (and backstopping globally) can take on a leadership role in coordination, to streamline the engagement required from others.

8. **Incentivise collaboration of humanitarian actors with government:** donors can sensitise the resident coordinator/senior humanitarian leaders in-country on their responsibilities to consider and include social protection in humanitarian planning processes and to coordinate with government social protection and disaster management departments. Donors can also push for evidence that this been considered when making funding decisions. Where these exist, donors should ensure that the interventions proposed reflect and contribute to any national strategy for linking shock response with social protection.

9. **Incentivise collaboration between international agencies:** donor funding at the country level is a key entry point for influencing implementing agencies, especially if it covers a longer duration where nexus programming can be effectively explored. Donors can consider funding collaborative ways of working – incentivising agencies to develop a single joint programme approach rather than competitive bidding, and supporting the engagement of local actors through procurement mechanisms[35]. In contexts where there is an overlap of roles and rationalisation is necessary, work with these organisations, and government, to identify how roles can be adapted or redefined to fill new niches according to the evolving strategic needs in-country and respective comparative advantages. This can include a move away from traditional roles as 'implementers', towards supporting the development of national policies, capacities, systems and programmes and ensuring accountability. Donors can also include coordination objectives and outcomes as part of funding agreements. This can support governments to take on a leading role in coordination, and also make implementers accountable for their responsibility to coordinate with governments and to participate in forums bringing together social protection and humanitarian counterparts on aspects of design and implementation.

10. **Build the evidence base on what does and doesn't work:** coordination comes at a cost and it is important for those investing time and effort (and funds) in these activities to see some benefits – to their organisation and, ultimately, in terms of quality of programming for the populations being served. It is also important to move beyond consideration of 'possible promising practices' as outlined here to a more concrete understanding of which practices, structures and mechanisms add the most value. To do this, coordination needs to be monitored, and measurable outputs and outcomes expected from this activity set and measured.

11. **Bring decentralised and local government actors and civil society, particularly those focused on GESI, to the table:** paying explicit attention to the inclusion of these actors in coordination

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[35] Such as set out in Pongracz, S. (2021) Shaping Markets for Cash Delivery.

mechanisms is needed. Spending time to map and understand the key strengths of these actors and how their activities can contribute to the achievement of SRSP and HA-SP objectives can help facilitate this. The creation of common tools for gender analysis, assessment and evaluation can also help social protection, humanitarian and GESI-focused organisations work together to integrate gender and inclusion issues into government-led shock-responsive procedures, guidance, and standards. Evidence and knowledge-sharing on the intersections between gender and inclusion, humanitarian response and social protection systems can be strengthened through advanced planning and information sharing amongst actors, including the development of common strategies across key actors to work towards common goals for addressing inequality and empowerment.

6.2 Considerations for actions needed at the global level

12. **A global structure to help tackle coordination:** while coordination of SRSP and HA-SP in a country will be context-specific and cannot be 'prescribed', country-level actors can often benefit from some sort of global framework, or structure, that sets a clear policy agenda and guidance for country-level actions. Currently there is no such structure or framework housing this discussion or agreed policy agenda or coordination templates. This could also help to ensure that global level commitments contribute to tangible actions at a country level. Global actors can reflect on whether, and where, there is a need to put something in place – perhaps as part of the upcoming Grand Bargain extension, or under SPIAC-B or USP 2030.

13. **Humanitarian reform:** these findings are another example of the need for reform of the humanitarian architecture. A place for effective coordination of an (inherently multi-sectoral) social protection response needs to be defined and lines of accountability defined.

14. **Global engagement of humanitarian donors with the World Bank:** it could be worthwhile for humanitarian donors and the World Bank (major donor working on social protection systems building in many fragile contexts as well as priority climate-vulnerable countries) to develop a common vision and principles for joint engagement on SRSP and HA-SP, to guide country-level actions.

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Annex 1: Case Studies

Case Study 1: Lessons from Armenia[36]

Experiences coordinating the COVID-19 social protection response: Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA) and UNICEF co-led the rapid and joint design and implementation of a social protection pillar in a joint response plan. This included a new government-funded temporary programme (emergency child grant) to families not covered by social assistance; government-funded emergency top-ups to existing Family Benefit recipients; and a UNICEF-funded emergency top-up for Family Benefit recipients living with disabilities, channelled through the government. Amounts across the three interventions were harmonised. The wider UN response to COVID-19 was also linked with the social protection system. WFP revised the school feeding programme into a cash-based emergency response for children that were enrolled in the Family Benefit, channelling funds in the same way as UNICEF. A similar approach has subsequently been adopted by government and humanitarian partners in response to the Nagorno Karabakh (NK) conflict.

Promising practices supporting coordination:

- **Joint feasibility assessment:** MOLSA and UNICEF completed a detailed feasibility assessment and options analysis which identified the programmatic entry points for shock responses linked with social protection, along with the roles for different actors and the barriers to address for effective coordination.

- **Cash Working Group linking social protection and humanitarian actors:** UNICEF and WFP set up a Cash Working Group (CWG) under the Disaster Management Country Team to coordinate humanitarian cash preparedness and response actions across national and international non-governmental organisations, government bodies and UN agencies. This provided an effective forum for a joint discussion on transfer values, planning the vertical expansions of partners, and the design of the subsequent NK cash response of government and partners.

Drivers influencing (or constraining) success:

- **Preparedness planning:** MOLSA and UNICEF began the process of building SRSP and HA-SP in 2017, starting with the feasibility assessment, for which the design, data collection, analysis and reporting took around three months. This informed design and implementation of activities over the next 18 months to reduce key barriers to coordination - namely the siloing of disaster management and social protection institutions and functions in government, concerns about mandate creep from Ministry of Emergency Situations, and lack of structure bringing together international partners planning emergency cash assistance and government. This process included informal co-convening and sensitisation of DM and SP departments of government (a study tour to Nepal, in-country joint trainings and action planning, and a high-level conference) to generate the understanding and political buy-in needed. While the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic undoubtedly also highlighted the relevance of the role of MOLSA in emergency response, generating this prior cross-governmental buy into the concept of SRSP and setting out the mechanisms for government-led SRSP and roles for partners meant that this could be swiftly operationalised.

- **Leadership and resourcing:** UNICEF has assumed the lead role in the coordination of SRSP and HA-SP activities since 2018, chairing the CWG and convening the joint governmental discussions. This has been a key enabler in keeping focused momentum on the topic across government and partners. This has taken around 60% of UNICEF's Disaster Risk Reduction and Social Policy focal points time since 2018.

- **Compromise:** effective coordination of HA-SP has required certain compromises from both government and international partners, to reach common solutions. International partners aimed to design these emergency cash transfers in line with good humanitarian practice (considering the Minimum Expenditure Basket and what would be adequate to meet the gap in needs) whereas MOLSA was concerned with what was politically feasible, considering routine social protection transfer values. These different perspectives were discussed in the CWG and a middle ground reached. In the NK response, the

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[36] Source: Smith (2021) Preparing social protection systems for shock response: A case study of UNICEF's experiences in Armenia. UNICEF.

government agreed to a transfer value aligned with the minimum wage rather than the lower-value social protection benefit, as well as additional top-ups for vulnerable groups.

Case Study 2: Lessons from Cambodia[37]

Experiences coordinating the COVID-19 social protection response: the government responded to COVID-19 through the social protection system. A temporary emergency cash transfer programme was implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, Youth and Sport (MoSAVY), based on data in the Ministry of Planning's (MoP's) national poverty database (known as IDPoor), which saw the rapid registration of over 180,000 new households. This was through a strong inter-ministerial collaboration involving the Ministry of Economy and Finance, (MEF), MoSAVY, MoP and Ministry of Interior (MoI), under the coordination of the National Social Protection Council (NSPC). Meanwhile, severe flooding affected parts of the country in 2020 and members of the Cambodia Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF) - UN organisations and INGOs - were interested to align their emergency cash assistance programmes with and complement the government's COVID-19 social protection response in flood-affected areas. This was more challenging to move forward since there is no institutional coordination mechanism linking disaster management and social protection departments, or government social protection institutions and the HRF. The government's social protection response to COVID-19 targeted those households registered in the national 'IDPoor' database managed by MoP. Several HRF partners were interested to use IDPoor data to inform targeting of their flood responses. These organisations were able to get details of which household were registered in IDPoor through the local commune councils. However, there was no institutionalised central protocol enabling access to this data for partners and no integration of data systems (WFP is the only organisation with an API established with IDPoor). These experiences demonstrated that the social protection system offers great potential to meet the needs of those affected by shocks, if coordination can be improved. In late 2020 the NSPC with support from WFP embarked on a series of measures to improve intergovernmental coordination of shock response linked with social protection.

Promising practices supporting coordination:

- **Joint feasibility assessment:** NSPC commissioned a detailed assessment examining the entry points and barriers for shock response linked with social protection, in a broad and consultative process that sought to address the concerns and ensure endorsement of all stakeholders across social protection and disaster management sides of the government and social protection and humanitarian partners (donors and implementers).

- **Developing a joint strategy, joint coordination structures and defining roles:** the assessment results are feeding into the development of a draft national SRSP framework. This will set a collective policy direction, programmatic options for shock responses linked with the social protection system, and a 'roadmap' of priority actions for institutionalising these in Cambodia. It will outline the roles and responsibilities for actors in and outside government, which will be the foundation for developing more detailed operational procedures. It includes steps for institutionalising the use of IDPoor data, and data management system, by HRF actors. Coordination mechanisms will also be set out in the framework and stakeholders are discussing a range of possible options to build linkages between disaster management and social protection institutions. Options under discussion include ensuring representation of NSPC in the National Council for Disaster Management (NCDM) steering committee; establishing an inter-ministerial sub-committee on SRSP; and strengthening links between the NSPC, the HRF and the donor social protection working group.

Drivers influencing (or constraining) success:

- **Senior leadership in government:** progress in building the social protection system, and strengthening its shock responsive capabilities, has been enabled by the strong leadership of the NSPC. The general secretariat is well staffed and demonstrably committed to SRSP. The NSPC is chaired by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, an influential ministry within government. The NSPC successfully convened government actors and partners during the COVID-19 response and subsequent SRSP framework design process, working in a spirit of collaboration and seeking joint solutions.

- **Willingness to engage:** the experiences of SRSP in action during the pandemic has increased visibility and awareness of the importance of SRSP across government and partners, contributing to active

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[37] Source: Author's own, based on experiences leading the consultations for the SRSP Framework.

engagement of all stakeholders in the consultation process. Meanwhile in the Cambodia disaster management system there is currently no cash assistance activity. Therefore, institutionalising a mechanism for cash response under the responsibility of MoSAVY was perceived to fill a gap in rather than step on the responsibilities of disaster management authorities.

- **Complementary rather than competing roles for partners:** The main UN actors involved in SRSP in Cambodia to date are WFP and UNICEF. UNICEF has historically engaged in technical assistance for long term social assistance programme and system development in Cambodia. These systems were used to deliver the shock response to COVID-19 and these systems underpin SRSP operations in the SRSP framework. WFP leads on school feeding and has had a role in cash-based social assistance, supporting the Scholarship programme, but going forward this is being incorporated into the government's 'Family Package', bringing together all cash-based social assistance programmes, for which UNICEF is providing the technical assistance. WFP meanwhile has led the technical assistance to design the SRSP framework and plays a leading role in disaster management system development – specifically on early warning system development and vulnerability analysis. WFP also chairs the HRF. The roles of these two agencies are thus quite complementary and this has helped to minimise possible overlaps - and thus the potential for competition – when defining roles for operationalising the SRSP framework. There are clear, and differentiated, roles for both agencies in taking forward SRSP in Cambodia and both can add value to the implementation of the framework.

Case Study 3: Lessons from Madagascar[38]

Experiences coordinating the COVID-19 social protection response: the Ministry of Population, Social Protection and Promotion of Women (MPPSPF) in partnership with the National Office of Risk and Disaster Management (BNGRC) and partners effectively coordinated delivery of a joint national emergency cash programme, Tosika Fameono. UNICEF and the World Bank channelled their funds through the "Fonds d'Intervention pour le Développement" (FID), a national agency implementing social protection programmes. Meanwhile other UN agencies (WFP, UNDP), the European Union through NGOs (ACF, CARE, SOS Village d'Enfants, Humanity and Inclusion) and the Red Cross (through the IFRC) mobilised and pooled humanitarian funds to complement this Government response. This was one of the most timely social protection responses globally, with the first payments made four weeks after the beginning of the lockdown.

Promising practices supporting coordination:

- **Establishing a Cash Working Group:** this was set up before COVID-19 to support cash programming in the drought response. It was jointly led by the Ministry of Population, Social Protection and Promotion of Women (MPPSPF), the National Office of Risk and Disaster Management (BNGRC) and UNICEF (co-lead for the development partners). This forum was effective at convening all stakeholders in and outside government and from social protection and emergency sectors. Much of the prior work of the group on things such as setting benefit levels in emergencies was used and adapted for the COVID-19 response.

- **A joint strategy for shock response:** the new National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) for 2019-2023 articulates the role of social protection in shock response. Humanitarian and development partners including the World Bank, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP and INGOs have jointly aligned their workstreams to support the implementation of this strategy. When COVID-19 hit, having one joint partner strategy aligned with the government strategy helped humanitarian actors progressively mobilise additional resources and bring onboard new partners in the subsequent months (for example, Catholic Relief Services and the Madagascar Red Cross).

Drivers influencing (or constraining) success:

- **Preparedness planning:** success was based on prior strong collaboration on linking shock response with social protection between humanitarian and social protection actors, that had focused on drought response in previous years. The main donors and UNICEF had built strong and trusted relationships with the government, which enabled transparent dialogue on needs and challenges and a collaborative spirit to work towards new solutions.

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[38] Source: The Grand Bargain Sub-Group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection: Case Studies; key informant interviews.

- **Political will:** there was demonstrable commitment to act on linking shock response with social protection from government social protection and disaster management authorities. Working through the social protection system was top of the agenda for humanitarian agencies as well – linked to high levels of understanding of this as an effective approach, from the previous drought responses. From the government's side, willingness was also partly due to the programme design, which was easy to communicate to communities as a temporary and short-term intervention.

Case Study 4: Lessons from Malawi[39]

Experiences coordinating the COVID-19 social protection response: in Malawi large swathes of the population are vulnerable to recurrent cyclical food insecurity during the lean season, and these needs have historically been filled through the international humanitarian system. Over the past five years humanitarian and social protection donors and UN agencies have been interested to develop SRSP capability in the national system to address these seasonal acute needs in a predictable and sustainable way. In the 2019 lean season and in response to Cyclone Idai, several social protection donors (Irish Aid, EU, KfW) worked together to provide emergency top-ups to social protection beneficiaries, while humanitarian donors reached those outside the social protection system to fill gaps. When COVID-19 hit in early 2020, the government's National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan outlined the intention to provide emergency cash transfers in urban areas. Several international actors including the United Nations (ILO, UNICEF and WFP), World Bank, African Development Bank, European Union, FCDO, Embassy of Ireland, GIZ and KfW came together to support the government in implementing a three-month cash assistance linked to the national social protection system. Operational coordination - between the UN agencies involved in implementation, and between these agencies, the government and private sector financial service providers - was smooth and effective, according to the comparative advantage of each.

Promising practices supporting coordination:

- **Convening special participatory meetings under the food security cluster (FSC):** in the 2019 lean season response, FCDO convened a series of special SRSP meetings under the FSC. These brought together the social protection and humanitarian donors and three responsible ministries in government - Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Gender (responsible for social protection) and the Department of Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs – for joint strategic planning.

Drivers influencing (or constraining) success:

- **Senior leadership from donors:** before 2018, while there had been growing interest among WFP, UNICEF and ILO technical teams to work together there had been no firm incentive to invest further – no donor or senior management team was prioritising this. Then in 2018 FCDO facilitated the start of more active collaboration and joint ways of working between UN agencies when its resilience funding was awarded to a consortium rather than through competitive bidding.

- **Clearly defined spaces for operational organisations:** partners supporting the government on social protection (UN and other development partners) were not in competition with each other for roles, or funding, in the design and implementation of the COVID-19 response. Rather they had respective and complementary technical roles or niches that had become well defined in the discussions and experiences of SRSP. For example, UNICEF worked on payment mechanisms and Grievance Redress Mechanisms, in collaboration with GIZ, while WFP and ILO worked on targeting and data analysis in partnership with GIZ. GIZ also directly financed a supplementary COVID-19 awareness intervention.

- **Dedicated resources in the country to engage in interagency policy dialogue:** FCDO allocated a dedicated advisory role to develop the resilience programme business case. This allowed FCDO to engage in, understand and influence the direction of these debates on SRSP.

- **Engagement of some social protection donors**: in 2019, the World Bank (the main social protection donor in Malawi) did not participate in the joint donor initiative on SRSP. This changed during the COVID-19 response, where the Bank has contributed significantly to the joint response to COVID-19. The lack of

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[39] Sources: Roelen, Archibald and Lowe (2021) Crisis as Opportunity for Urban Cash Transfers; key informant interviews.

prior engagement in these discussions means there remains a learning curve, which has limited application of lessons learned from SRSP in previous years.

- **Limitations of the humanitarian coordination system:** the COVID-19 response was coordinated through the humanitarian cluster system and this contributed to various challenges. With no obvious home for social protection activities, the programme was coordinated under the protection cluster, where a sub-group on social protection was created. The special meetings were chaired by the government through the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and Reform Strategy while implementation was facilitated through the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare.   This created some confusion in the scope of protection vis-a-vis social protection activities. It also segregated funding streams, leading to limited visibility of funding gaps, and limited dialogue on how the emergency programme could be an entry point for longer-term systems strengthening.

Case Study 5: Lessons from Kenya[40]

Experiences coordinating the COVID-19 social protection response: the government of Kenya, with support from various partners, has been actively pursuing SRSP for several years, first under the Hunger Safety Net Programme managed by the National Drought Management Authority and more recently through efforts to build shock response capability into other schemes under the wider National Safety Net Programme (collectively known as Inua Jamii or NSNP) managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and development of a Single Registry. When populations in informal urban settlements were affected by COVID-19, the government of Kenya implemented temporary cash assistance to meet these needs. A range of international partners also implemented emergency cash transfers in urban areas, which linked with the national social protection system and the national COVID-19 response in different ways. This included UNICEF (supported a horizontal and vertical expansion of NSNP in five counties), an EC-funded consortium of Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS), Oxfam and other INGOs (supporting top-ups to Inua Jamii beneficiaries and additional households identified as vulnerable by local leaders), and WFP (cash grants to households in Nairobi and Mombasa, who had not been supported by the government's COVID-19 cash transfer). Whereas MoLSP and partners had expected the government's emergency cash assistance to be implemented through and expand the NSNP, given the efforts in recent years to develop these systems and processes, in fact all resources went to the Ministry of Interior and were administered by local government officials outside the social protection system. Each partner intervention appears to have coordinated well bilaterally with the NSNP Secretariat and other relevant ministries and utilised information from the Single Registry to support their targeting needs - though a lack of clear procedures for data sharing did contribute to delays. There were however challenges in coordination across these partner interventions, which were designed independently and without any overarching vision or strategy. Transfer values varied across interventions and there has been no mechanism or agreement for data sharing across these interventions to minimise duplication. The government did not play a convening role to foster coordination between these partner interventions.

Promising practices supporting coordination:

- **Broadening membership of the CWG:** this group is chaired by KRCS and successfully convened and coordinated the NGO response to COVID-19, while also developing the revised minimum expenditure basket (MEB) calculations for the COVID-19 crisis. KRCS is reaching out to MoLSP to engage in this group, a necessary next step for a joint discussion on setting harmonised transfer values.

- **Establishing a social protection sector working group:** while a steering committee exists under MoLSP to bring the government and partners together, this had not been functioning during the COVID-19 response. In 2021 UNICEF and FCDO co-convened a new sector working group for social protection partners to develop joint and harmonised strategies to support social protection provision in Kenya, and SRSP will be a feature of this group. There remains a need to forge links between these coordination forums.

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[40] Sources: https://maintainsprogramme.org/rc/towards-shock-responsive-social-protection-lessons-from-the-covid-19-response-in-kenya/; key informant interviews.

Drivers influencing (or constraining) success:

- **Diverging views among humanitarian and social protection stakeholders:** UNICEF and WFP, which both work on social protection system strengthening Kenya and saw the COVID-19 response as an entry point for strengthening social protection provisions, set the transfer value on their cash assistance taking into account the routine transfer value on the NSNP and the value of the government's emergency cash assistance. WFP provided households with 4000 KSH/month, aligned with the Government's response, covering half of a household's food and nutrition needs. UNICEF provided the same, topping up the routine Inua Jamii value to this amount. In contrast the NGO consortium provided transfers of over 7000 KSH based on 50% of the multi-sector MEB that the CWG (led by KRCS) adjusted for COVID-19. There have been no joint discussions on setting transfer values across the CWG members and those working on social protection.

- **The willingness of government departments to collaborate, linked to lack of clear policy direction and competition for resources:** before COVID-19, studies had noted that while there was interest in institutionalising SRSP among the government departments responsible for the NSNP, there was also a risk of competing mandates and interests creating barriers. Firstly, between those with a stake in social protection delivery (MoLSP and NDMA), in terms of where responsibilities (and budgets) will sit, and secondly between these departments and wider government ministries with a possible role to play in disaster response. There has been a draft social protection policy including an SRSP pillar for several years but the process of generating cross-governmental support for this has reportedly been difficult, for these same reasons. Without a policy framework firmly clarifying the role of social protection in shock response there is always the risk that responsibility and budgets for these activities will be administered to the more politically powerful department, as happened during the COVID-19 response.

Case Study 6: Lessons from Nigeria[41]

Experiences coordinating the COVID-19 social protection response: the government of Nigeria, under the National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO), prioritised a social protection response to COVID-19. It accelerated the rollout of the National Cash Transfer Programme (NCTP) and designed a new urban cash transfer programme to reach those living in urban areas, using household data collected through the national social registry (NSR). There was strong cross-government collaboration on the design and implementation of the new urban programme, which required inputs and support from the Ministry of Population, Bureau of Statistics, Ministry for Communication and Digital Economy and the National Communications Commission. A range of development partners supporting social protection in Nigeria also designed and implemented cash interventions that aimed to link with and fill gaps in this national social protection response, also using data from the NSR. Partners' experiences in coordinating with the government to access NSR data were positive – though there were delays to programming due to limited information on NSR coverage, data fields and capacity gaps. The experience demonstrated the value of having access to common, robust and comprehensive registers for rapid identification of those in need across social protection and emergency programmes. However, more support to improve the coordination of shock responses linked with social protection is certainly needed. There is a multiplicity of actors moving to support SRSP and no overall common vision for or strategic coordination of these interventions. The geographical scale and complexity of programming in Nigeria also means that in practice there are still silos, including between and even within organisations working on both humanitarian and social protection programming. Meanwhile humanitarian actors implementing cash assistance in conflict-affected areas are not yet sufficiently engaged in social protection structures or the planning of SRSP. The cash responses to COVID-19 of these humanitarian actors were still conceived and implemented separately to the social protection system.

Promising practices supporting coordination:

- **An active development partners group with broad membership:** there was a concerted effort of the social protection development partners group to coordinate the responses of its members with the social protection efforts of government, through inviting the participation of NASSCO, and wider humanitarian

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[41] Source: Smith (2021) Using Social Protection to Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria: SPACE Case Study.

organisations. The group led by FCDO commissioned a mapping exercise to build a picture of who is doing what, where, and identify gaps to fill in the COVID-19 response.

- **Developing MOUs for sharing social protection data:** when accessing data from the NSR, partners found NASSCO to be professional and easy to work with, with clear processes and roles and responsibilities set out for data sharing. These MOUs for data sharing were arranged without too much difficulty and were mindful of data protection concerns.

- **Recruiting a donor convening role**: FCDO has recruited a dedicated adviser to work on the issue of coordinating social protection across the nexus in Nigeria. The objective of the role is to foster joint ways of working internally between FCDO's humanitarian and social protection teams, as well as externally, through engagement with the humanitarian country team, Cash Working Group and social protection working group.

Drivers influencing (or constraining) success:

- **Political will, space to compromise, and clear incentives:** NASSCO has a policy priority to transform the NSR into a data platform for use across all social and emergency programmes and were interested to support this vision if possible. There was willingness from government and social protection partners to work from this common platform, as there was a common expectation that this would generate mutual benefits such as enabling a more cost-efficient response, as well as reducing duplication and filling gaps. Another driving factor was that this approach was being actively promoted by donors providing funding for partner COVID-19 responses. However, the same view has not been shared by humanitarian actors. These actors, while interested in principle in developing the NSR for this purpose, have understandable reservations about whether this could generate risks or compromise humanitarian principles, in the context of active conflict in the north of the country. Finally, for humanitarian actors that already had well-established cash transfer delivery systems in place, there was little immediate perceived benefit to be gained from broader operational coordination with national systems, which are still at their emergent stages in many localities in the North East. The positive experiences of agencies engaging in data sharing with NASSCO during the COVID-19 response are however opening up space for dialogue with humanitarian actors on this topic, which holds potential for solutions and common ground to be found. WFP is reportedly in discussion with NASSCO about developing a joint, coordinated approach to registration of newly displaced households in the conflict-affected northwest states, to support a harmonised approach to targeting and registration among partners and strengthen the NSR. The way forward being discussed is that WFP will register the displaced following humanitarian principles, and in the process will collect data fields required for the NSR and will put in place an agreement for sharing this data further with NASSCO for broadening the NSR. This data will then also serve as a repository that other organisations planning displacement responses can use.

Case Study 7: Lessons from Yemen[42]

Experiences coordinating the COVID-19 social protection response: before the escalation of the conflict in 2014, social protection in Yemen was provided under the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) and the Social Fund for Development (SFD). Since 2014 the SWF has struggled to maintain operations and the international humanitarian system has been relied on to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. While humanitarian assistance is meeting critical needs and remains relevant in this complex and fluid context, relying on the humanitarian system to meet structural deprivation is unsustainable and inefficient. This has led to growing acknowledgement from donors of the need to find ways to transition international assistance towards something more appropriate for a protracted crisis, and in a way that supports the eventual restoration of safety net systems. Since 2017 the World Bank has funded UNICEF to continue cash payments to the 1.5m registered beneficiaries of the SWF (using the 2014 SWF beneficiary list). Other donors continued to fund WFP to provide humanitarian assistance and NGOs for urgent displacement responses, with risks of duplication and gaps since these are siloed interventions. A study on entry points for linking humanitarian action with social protection commissioned by FCDO in 2019 recommended that this fragmented system should become more integrated, and channels rationalised. Before COVID-19, there had been limited

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[42] Source: Smith (2020) Linking CVA and Social Protection in the MENA Region – Yemen Case Study, CALP; World Bank (2020) EMERGENCY SOCIAL PROTECTION ENHANCEMENT AND COVID-19 RESPONSE PROJECT: Project Appraisal Document; key informant interviews.

progress to move the agenda further forward, including lack of agreement on which organisation is best placed to lead and support different aspects of a transitional system and reluctance of the World Bank to engage with humanitarian actors on planning and design. There has been progress noted since 2020, however, with greater collaboration visible between the humanitarian and development donors, and cross-fertilisation of ideas influencing the design of the Bank's COVID-19 response. The World Bank has agreed to increase the transfer value, through a vertical expansion of the SP system run through the Social Welfare Fund/ Social Fund for Development, and to increase the transfer to a sub-group of ultra-vulnerable households. These have been partly financed by humanitarian donors to the Yemen Emergency Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF). This COVID-19 response has been an entry point for these donors to move forward with joint planning on how to collectively support a transitional 'safety net' system for Yemen.

Promising practices supporting coordination:

- **Establishing an inclusive donor working group on cash and social protection:** this forum created space for development donors, including the World Bank, and humanitarian donors to discuss social protection needs in this fragile context. Collectively these donors fund the majority of assistance to households in Yemen and are well placed to influence the design of a joint vision in line with what best serves needs.

- **Setting up a donor convenor and creation of joint vision and workplan:** FCDO funded a six-month technical position, intending to mobilise all stakeholders to achieve collective progress on the recommendations of the study on linking humanitarian action with social protection. This position was instrumental in mobilising actors to develop a common vision for linking humanitarian action with social protection in Yemen and an action plan for all stakeholders. This envisages a continuum of support based on needs, including short term support for the newly displaced, intermediary support through WFP, and eventual referral to a national 'safety net' transitioning from UNICEF to SFD management. The action plan defines roles for key donors, the Social Fund for Development, UN agencies, the Cash and Markets Working Group, and NGOs under the Cash Consortium in Yemen. In FCDO it has resulted in planning a joint humanitarian-social protection business case guiding FCDO's support to Yemen from 2021 onwards.

Drivers influencing (or constraining) success:

- **Donor leadership and willingness to engage, linked to incentives:** a key enabler was an alliance formed between three donors in 2020. This was brought about by the engagement and leadership of both FCDO's humanitarian and social development advisers. This helped firstly in terms of defining the strategic direction for linking humanitarian action with social protection since other humanitarian donors in Yemen lacked social protection expertise in-country, and secondly by improving engagement with the World Bank (FCDO were contributing funds to the Bank's UNICEF-implemented programme and had developed good relationships). On this basis the Bank agreed to join the new joint donor working group. The findings of an evaluation of the World Bank's support in Yemen, meanwhile, highlighted that the (albeit unplanned for) overlaps of WFP's humanitarian intervention at the household level had led to improved nutritional outcomes for the Bank's/SFD's beneficiaries. This demonstrated the possible benefits of a harmonised strategy across development and humanitarian agencies and set a clear incentive to invest in coordination. Other donors in- country have since also come on board and the strategy development has been signed up to by FCDO, USAID, ECHO, EUD and World Bank.

- **Dedicated, and sustained, resources for coordination:** the dedicated support of the donor convenor role was considered by stakeholders to be essential for the progress made to date. However, it was a short term post. Without sustained support there is a risk that momentum will stall. FCDO is actively seeking funding for the continuity of the role.

- **Competition for funding and space between UN agencies:** FCDO's study in 2019 highlighted that the competing agendas of UN agencies, both working in the same space of cash delivery and each with a desire to maintain their organisational footprint and systems, may constrain efforts to improve coordination of humanitarian action and social protection. Before COVID-19, this did appear to be constraining collaboration and sharing of information between these organisations. This risk remains in the design of the joint vision, which implies a necessary transition of roles in the cash delivery space.

Case Study 8: Lessons from Zambia[43]

Experiences coordinating the COVID-19 social protection response: the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) designed an emergency cash transfer (ECT) to COVID-19, undertaking a vertical and horizontal expansion of the national social assistance programme, the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme. The programme has been supported by multiple development and humanitarian partners, both donors and implementers. It was supported by existing social protection donors as well as additional development and humanitarian donors, ensuring a single programme approach. Donors include the European Union, KFW, Ireland, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), FCDO, United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and some international NGOs. This joint plan was put in place rapidly, in early April 2020. However, there were then delays, when the Ministry had to coordinate divergent approaches by partners regarding programme design, and the programme implementation only started between July and October depending on the area.

Promising practices supporting coordination:

- **An existing joint strategy, supported by joint funding:** in Zambia, social protection actors in government and UN partners had already been working collectively on a jointly designed, jointly funded programme to build social protection for the past few years. This was in its second phase and had set out a clear joint vision, division of roles and responsibilities and shared systems (UNJPSP II). The programme had already had an experience of shock response in the 2019 drought and shock responsive social protection was a new programme priority of Phase II. This programme was also being funded jointly by development donors. This provided an entry point, adapting the UNJPSPII for a similarly coherent approach to the social protection response to COVID. There was also an existing partnership with the World Bank, which facilitated a strategic approach where the ECT would feed into longer-term financing of a further-expanded SCT.

- **Strengthening the cash working group:** the CWG from the drought response 2019 was revitalised and much expanded in May 2020 to bring together all stakeholders from development and humanitarian communities, chaired by the MCDSS. The group successfully facilitated discussion and decision making across stakeholders which was needed to overcome the coordination barriers below.

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Drivers influencing (or constraining) success:

- **Political will:** across government social protection and disaster management departments, and across partners, there was already a joint understanding of the importance and a willingness to respond through social protection. This willingness kept people engaged to find solutions to the coordination barriers below.

- **Activation of the humanitarian coordination system:** in April 2020 OCHA launched a flash appeal in Zambia and the humanitarian coordination system was activated. Whereas previously all actors were oriented around a shared understanding of a social protection response through the social protection system, now with the opportunity to leverage additional humanitarian funding, actors under the food security cluster (FSC), led by WFP, began to push for a specific humanitarian food security response, with different objectives and design features. In the international humanitarian architecture, there remains no clear place for coordination of a social protection response. In Zambia, given the strong momentum for shock-responsive emergency response and large donor appetite, for the first time in the country a social protection pillar was subsequently created, led by UNICEF. This gave a locus for coordination of the social protection response.

- **Diverging views and ability to reach compromise:** UNICEF, ILO and others working in long-term social protection in Zambia were viewing the COVID-19 crisis as a long-term development, or social protection, problem and this thinking influenced the design of the proposed transfer value

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[43] Source: key informant interviews.

(contributing to needs, topping up the routine social protection value but taking into account widespread chronic poverty). In contrast, upon activation of the OCHA flash appeal, FSC actors approached the crisis as a humanitarian problem, and insisted on a design that would cover the entire food basket, in line with humanitarian principles of adequacy. Since both pillars built on a cash transfer strategy, the MCDSS now had to convene the partners towards a harmonised approach, which was challenging and time-consuming.

- **Strong leadership in donors and government:** the initial joint 'one programme' approach was driven by development donors. Meanwhile strong leadership by the government was a key enabler in overcoming the abovementioned challenges. The Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit helped the coordination of the ECT, by insisting to any partners approaching them that any type of cash transfer response was the mandate of MCDSS, Meanwhile MCDSS, in its role leading the CWG, also pushed the need for *adequate coverage* of the population, not only *adequate benefit size* and stressed the need to seek compromise accordingly with the transfer value.

Annex 2: Key informants

Organisation	Name
FCDO	Tom Russell
FCDO	Heidi Carrubba
SPACE team	Valentina Barca
SPACE team	Ed Archibald
SPACE team	Courtenay Cabot Venton
SPACE team	Calum McClean
SPACE team	Rodolfo Beazley
ECHO	Massimo Larosa
BRC	David Peppiatt
Kenya RCS	Peter Murgor
UNICEF Kenya	Esther Omosa
UNICEF Kenya	Robert Ngala
IFRC Turkey	Jonathan Brass
Turkish Red Crescent	Orhan Hacimehmet
OCHA	Juliet Lang
OCHA	Louise Gentzel
CaLP	Thomas Byrne
CaLP	Sophie Tholstrup
Oxfam GB/Common Cash Delivery Platform	Larissa Pelham
Open Government Partnership in Nigeria	Maureen kariuki
NASSCO	Apera Iorwa
CWG Nigeria	Ayobamidele Ajayi
FCDO Malawi	Kash Hussain
UNICEF Zambia	Daniel Kumitz
WFP Caribbean RO	Sarah Bailey
UNICEF ESA RO	Tayllor Spadafora

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