

Strengthen linkages between Humanitarian Assistance and National Social Protection¹ Systems for Effective Responses to Forced Displacements.

SPIAC-B Joint Statement, August 2022

A record 100 million² have been forcibly displaced³ worldwide, and nearly half of them are children. Forced to flee their homes, children and families forcibly displaced are exposed to specific compounding vulnerabilities including loss of incomes and livelihoods, limited access to labour markets and (social) services, in a context of economic fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic, the global food crisis, high inflation and extreme weather events intensified by climate change. **These vulnerabilities are further exacerbated for specific groups** such as women and girls, elderly, people with chronic illness and disability as well as ethnic minorities. **Forced displacement⁴ is increasingly protracted and requires linking humanitarian interventions with longer-term development and systemic action.** At the same time, while *de jure* coverage may in some contexts exist, *de facto* access to social protection systems remains very low for forcibly displaced populations, for example when practical barriers such as discrimination, literacy, documentation requirements. It is inevitable that future conflict, environmental and economic crises will trigger additional forced displacement that will affect not only those people on the move, but also the countries and communities they move to. Two thirds of the world's extreme poor are estimated to live in fragile, conflict and violent settings by 2030, which will affect not only people forced to flee but also the populations of neighbouring communities and entire regions.

Social protection is a universal human right, and a critical enabler to achieving several of the Sustainable Development Goals. This right applies to all – including those who have been forced to flee their homes and those who may one day return as stipulated in International Protection commitments⁵. As we know from past crises, and as the current displacement crisis in Ukraine reminds us, **social protection systems, in coordination within**

humanitarian assistance, can be effective in protecting and promoting the livelihoods of forcibly displaced people and their host communities. **The triggering of the European Union (EU) Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) is an unprecedented act** that allows for the timebound inclusion of millions of refugees in the European economy and society, temporarily addressing legal and operational barriers for access to labour, social insurance, social assistance, and social services. It also came with funding that incentivises countries to supply social assistance⁶. It establishes a precedent for future large-scale displacement crises in that this has allowed several countries in Europe with mature and modern social protection systems to rapidly include refugees and hosting communities at a scale that eclipses traditional humanitarian efforts, whilst others have struggled under limited technical and financial capacities, overall adaptability of their social protection frameworks to this particular shock, or varying degrees of political will and public support.

In the wake of the fastest-ever displacement crisis, **the response to Ukraine has mobilised an unprecedented and welcome level of aid and attention. Other forced displacement crises, however, remain unrelenting and humanitarian conditions are worsening** at a rapid pace when considering the impact of the Ukraine war on global food security and inflation amidst continued climate shocks and global and regional tensions⁷. **The reality is that bulk of displaced populations are hosted in countries which are already struggling to provide adequate social protection coverage for their own citizens** whilst dealing with complex, overlapping dimensions of crisis besides forced displacement. Moreover, in certain specific contexts aligning humanitarian and developmental programming around social protection is not easy or even crises become increasingly protracted and sometimes last longer than a decade.

¹ Within the context of Inter Agency Social Protection Assessments (ISPA), social protection refers to the set of policies and programs aimed at preventing or protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion throughout their lifecycles, with a particular emphasis towards vulnerable groups. Social protection can be provided in cash or in-kind, through non-contributory schemes, providing universal, categorical, or poverty-targeted benefits such as social assistance, contributory schemes with social insurance being the most common form, and by building human capital, productive assets, and access to jobs". <https://ispatools.org/tools/CODI-What-Matters.pdf>

² Forced displacement is the movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters. [IOM Key Migration Terms](#)

³ Estimates say that by 2030, 2/3 of the world's extreme poor will be living in FCV countries. [Fragility and Conflict: On the Front Lines of the Fight against Poverty \(worldbank.org\)](#)

⁴ The New York Declaration in 2016 and the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018.

⁵ [Social Protection for the Forcibly Displaced in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. OECD/EBA. 2022](#)

⁶ The EU adopted a proposal for **Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE)** allowing Member States and regions to provide emergency support to people fleeing from Russia's invasion of Ukraine drawing from EU Cohesion funds, learning from the experience of COVID-19. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_1607

⁷ See for example [CL 170/6](#) of the FAO Council 117th session of June 2022 on the impacts of the Ukraine-Russia conflict on global food security

Many opportunities are missed to draw lessons from delivering emergency assistance year after year, that with relatively limited additional resources could go towards informing nascent social protection frameworks or building them back better.

Given the likelihood for situations of forced displacement to become protracted, it is necessary that displaced persons can shift from humanitarian assistance to social protection and welfare services. The Global Compact for Refugees outlines how international actors can help hosting governments support displaced populations by working with government partners, development cooperation and the private sector to strengthen national systems and offset impacts on host communities. Further, The UN Secretary General's 2022 Action Agenda on Internal Displacement recognizes that "states must recognize action on internal displacement as a national, whole-of-government priority with the rights of IDPs as citizens and residents at the centre"⁸. In this sense, expanding social protection to displaced populations often means adopting an area-based approach benefiting all, ensuring that all vulnerable populations including hosts and displaced people are covered, and supporting transition from emergency response towards government-led and shock responsive social protection delivery systems. This requires systemic collaboration between government, humanitarian and development actors and donors⁹.

Being prepared matters. Ensuring that displaced populations and affected host communities receive adequate humanitarian support from the onset of displacement or major shocks can reduce overall humanitarian need, as well as the need for more expensive responses at a later stage. Expanding social protection systems to enable access for displaced persons over the medium-term can have positive socio-economic outcomes for hosting countries, such as strengthening labour markets ensuring extra funding flows and contributions to social protection systems and the economy and provide a pathway for including refugees and IDPs in the socio-economic structure of the host country in a sustainable way. **In turn, these outcomes can help host communities and countries, reinforcing social cohesion, and promoting access to other social services that are also strengthened by international actors.** In practice, it is often challenging for social protection systems in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) to include forcibly displaced beneficiaries unless the system is mature and flexible enough¹⁰.

International humanitarian and development actors have a responsibility to jointly support these countries to the full extent possible to achieve SDG and Universal Social Protection ambitions to scale up access to social protection for all.

We, representatives of donors, the United Nations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and INGOs comprising the Social Protection Interagency Coordination Board (SPIAC-B) hereby resolve to strengthen inclusive social protection systems and labour markets around the world to be better prepared to support individuals and families fleeing - whether temporarily or in the long-term – from life-threatening risks in the face of conflict, economic and environmental shocks.

SPIAC-B calls on national governments and multilateral institutions to ensure that social protection systems are comprehensive and adaptable, strengthening their anticipatory and shock responsive capacities and ensuring that these systems are inclusive of forcibly displaced persons, including refugees, irrespective of their nationality, gender, ethnicity, age, disability, and identity. We call for putting in place mechanisms for portability of social security benefits where appropriate, and for anticipating and addressing legal, administrative, and practical barriers to access social protection and jobs in host locations. We also recommend that international and national policy frameworks are consequently bolstered through interinstitutional agreements, and that sources of financing are pre-emptively identified for a variety of contexts. In doing so, governments and practitioners must continue to learn and apply lessons of successes and challenges of social protection responses to major shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine conflict and the currently evolving global food crisis.

SPIAC-B calls on international humanitarian and development actors to actively collaborate in aligning their support to national social protection systems of both countries of origin and countries hosting the forcibly displaced, ensuring the efficient delivery of humanitarian in-kind and cash assistance when government systems and their shock-responsive capacities are surpassed whilst also foreseeing opportunities for this assistance to strengthen government response capacity. This alignment ensures that no-one is left behind and is in line with the principles of the Grand Bargain and the Global Compact on Refugees. In the short term this involves identifying and filling gaps of national social protection systems at the onset of forced displacement

⁸ The United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement: https://www.un.org/en/content/action-agenda-on-internal-displacement/assets/pdf/Action-Agenda-on-Internal-Displacement_EN.pdf

⁹ There are numerous well-documented examples in recent years of providing social safety nets to the forcibly displaced, and efforts to link this to national social protection systems. See several useful resources here: <https://www.unhcr.org/social-protection.html>

¹⁰ Social Protection for the Forcibly Displaced in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. OECD/EBA, 2022

informed by conflict- and protection-sensitive analyses and designing humanitarian assistance from the onset in manners that have higher likelihood to make lasting improvements to national systems. In the medium- to long term this involves supporting governments in strengthening both core social protection systems as well as dedicated shock responsive components and systems for anticipatory actions. In this process access and supply barriers for the forcibly displaced persons to national social protection systems should be addressed to either manage protracted displacement or as part of achieving a durable solution to displacement. This also involves systematically monitoring the impact of inclusion on forcibly displaced people and ensuring that adequate accountability and feedback mechanisms are systematically in place.

SPIAC-B calls on bilateral and multilateral donors and International Financial Institutions to align their short- and long-term funding mechanisms to better support efforts for the transitioning from emergency response to sustainable and inclusive social protection systems in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus. Such strategic funding would ensure that the efforts and lessons of humanitarian actors in specific cases of protracted forced displacement crises would contribute to building, or building back better, strong, inclusive, and resilient social protection systems for all.

Further References

[Aligning Humanitarian Cash Assistance with National Social Safety Nets in Refugee Settings: Key Considerations and Learning \(2019\)](#)

[C097 - Migration for Employment Convention \(Revised\), 1949 \(No. 97\)](#)

[C102 - Social Security \(Minimum Standards\) Convention, 1952 \(No. 102\)](#)

[Emerging Lessons from World Bank Group Social Protection Investments in Refugee-hosting Areas \(2021\)](#)

[Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers, Refugees, and their Families: Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners](#)

[Handbook on social health protection for refugees: Approaches, lessons learned and practical tools to assess coverage options \(ILO-UNHCR\)](#)

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-rights-all-migrant-workers>

[Inclusion of Refugees in Government Social Protection Systems in Africa \(2021\)](#)

[Increasing links between humanitarian cash and social protection for an effective response to the Covid-19 Pandemic](#)

[Leave No-one Behind: Promoting Effective Access of Refugees in Social Protection Systems in Post-Pandemic Europe. Integration Policy Brief I \(2021\)](#)

[Life Amidst a Pandemic: Hunger, Migration and Displacement in the East and Horn of Africa. International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) and World Food Programme \(WFP\). 2021](#)

[Migration, Displacement and Shock-Responsive Social Protection in the Eastern Caribbean, WFP, December 2021](#)

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[Ukraine Conflict, Addressing Acute Needs, Protecting Displaced Populations and Maintaining Food Systems, WFP Response Strategy, April 2022](#)

[Understanding the adverse divers and implications of migration from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Panamá and San José. International Organization for Migration \(IOM\) and World Food Programme \(WFP\). 2022](#)

[UN collaboration on social protection: Reaching consensus on how to accelerate social protection systems-building](#)

[UNHCR - Global Trends in Forced Displacement – 2020](#)

[The Refugee Convention, 1951](#)

The SPIAC-B will continue to support global and national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery efforts by monitoring and aggregating emerging evidence and practices from SPIAC-B members and their constituents. We will facilitate rapid learning from the pandemic so that countries can continue to strengthen their social protection systems. Learning is further facilitated by the range of social, political and international partners providing information on the latest challenges, crafting effective responses and supporting implementation.